



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



**HOLD FAST!
TILL I COME**

—Revelation 2, 25.

CONTENTS

KINGS AND PRIESTS

by H. H. Shackcloth

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. Hewitt

IMMORTALITY

by W. W. Fereday

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

by Wm. Hoste

ZEPHANIAH

by E. R. Bower

NOTES ON REVELATION

by James Flanigan

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by Jack Strachan

COMMITTEE'S REPORT

WHAT THEN ?

When all the great plants of our cities
Have turned out their last finished work
When our merchants have settled from business,
And dismissed all their workmen and clerks :
When the banks have raked in their last penny,
And paid out their last dividend :
When the "Judge of the world" says "Close for the night,"
And asks for a balance—WHAT THEN ?

When the choirs have sung their last anthem,
And God's children have prayed their last prayer ;
When the people have heard their last sermon,
And the sound is died out in the air :
When the Bible lies closed on the altar :
And the pews are all empty of men :
When each one stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened—WHAT THEN ?

When the actors have played their last drama,
And the drunkard has drunk all his rum :
When the film has flashed its last picture,
And the race-horse has had its last run :
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished
And gone out in the darkness again
When the trumpet of ages is sounded,
And we stand before Him—WHAT THEN ?

When the bugle's last call sinks in silence,
And the long marching armies stand still,
When the captain has given his last orders,
And they have captured the last town and hill :
When the flag has been hauled from the mast-head,
And the armies rejoice o'er the slain :
When the world that rejected our Saviour
Is asked for a reason—WHAT THEN ?

When the Lord shall descend for His children,
And his own are caught up in the air :
When the world shall see empty spaces,
And the saints are free from despair :
When the Lord shall pour forth His judgment :
And men flee to the rocks and the dens :
When they cry to the Lord for forgiveness,
And He shall deny them—WHAT THEN ?

KINGS AND PRIESTS

by H. H. SHACKCLOTH, Burnham Market, Norfolk.

It is a well-known dictum of Scripture interpretation that the 'law of first mention' often has an important bearing on subsequent references to a particular subject. That of the believers' priesthood is a case in point.

Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt for but a short period, possibly a few weeks when God revealed to Moses the grandeur of His plan for His redeemed people. During this brief period the patience of Moses had been tested almost to breaking point, through the discontent of the people. As a result God in His mercy had provided the manna; later on, meat too until He, in a manner of speaking, said they would be satiated until "it come out of your nostrils." Water was miraculously given at Meribah, and victory over Amalek granted. God's long-suffering would seem to have been tested to its limit of endurance during the wilderness journey (1 Cor. 10, 5-11).

Then came His word of grace! In spite of their murmurings God states His ultimate high purposes for His people in these terms; if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exod. 19.5,6).

The history of Israel culminating in the corrective ministry of the prophets indicates only too plainly that at no time did this exalted purpose of God find fulfilment in the nation as a whole.

If, as the writer assumes, we are to accept this statement at its face value, then the entire nation was destined for a position of unparalleled high privilege. Whether or not the secession of Levi from the other tribes for the purpose of the priesthood in Israel was God's original purpose it would seem inappropriate to conjecture; suffice it to say that the subsequent history of the New Testament Church has vindicated those who recognise the universal priesthood of believers.

If a similar relationship with Israel at the time appears to have been the Divine intention we must accept without question that the typical teaching of the Levitical priest-

hood would in no way have been unrevealed to us, even though the manner of its operation were not given.

Sadly we reflect that by the time the New Testament came to be written, Paul must state that 'Israel which followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness,' and both priesthood and people needed 'a new Covenant which made the enactment of the first obsolete, because it had decayed and waxed old, ready to vanish away.' (Heb. 8.13).

Fortunately, God's ultimate purposes in whatever context we consider them, can never be said to have failed, for 'he changeth times and seasons, he removeth Kings and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding, he revealeth the deep and secret things.' (Daniel 2, 21,22).

The same is equally true of his Kingdom of priests. What a distinction is ours to be explicitly told by Peter, 'Ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;' and again, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light' (1 Peter 2. 5,9).

If after the Exodus universal priesthood was the Divine order, and, if as priests their function was primarily to minister to God for His own pleasure and glory, and each age serves its generation that all might be blessed. How does the history of the church measure up to this noble concept? It is to be regretted that the first purpose has all too often been set aside to make way for the second to the detriment of both.

We refer to the tendency in far too many gatherings of believers to relegate the Lord's supper to the minor part of a meeting of general character. In the worst cases the partaking of the bread and wine is reduced to a mere adjunct of the service.

If then the priorities relating to our priesthood are to suffer a reversal, or to be in any way down graded, the effectiveness of our service will suffer a similar fate in spite of all efforts to achieve some apparent success. The plain fact is that our ministry to God, together with that directed to the needs of men is intended to be one harmonious whole,

and if one part suffers the other suffers with it. As Paul says 'that in all things He might be pre-eminent' (Col. 1.18). Any variation of God's ideal is to place human wisdom above the Divine, with chaos the unavoidable result.

We may well ask, 'What experience can ever conceivably compare with the Spirit led worship of a church, chosen of God, and redeemed by Christ. It is the failure to recognise the full potential of this which causes Christians to introduce practices which detract from the main purpose of spiritual worship.

If priestly worship is to be fully experienced there is perforce a price to be paid. We may frown upon that which is deliberately prepared as a contribution to the service but this in no way precludes the heart preparation which finds its roots in pre-occupation with Christ and His word. One fears that meditation has become a dying art. It follows that no subterfuge can mitigate the paucity of spirit which has nothing to offer in spiritual worship. What indeed can compare with the memorable occasions when one was aware of the nearness of the Lord when we gathered for His supper; a veritable experience of days of heaven upon earth?

This is not to say that evangelical witness is any less important. Is it not a time to say, 'Let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.' (Heb. 6.1).

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(10) THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

To deny the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus is to undermine His atoning work. Men belittle His Person yet profess to follow His example and teaching, refuse to accept His miraculous birth and resurrection.

Religious infidelity call His miraculous birth a biological impossibility and a theological superfluity. True believers still bow in worship, for great is the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3.16).

There is much evidence to support the Incarnation and Virgin Birth of our Lord. Presented (1) Prophetically (Gen. 3.15; Isa. 7.14; 9.6,7; Micah 5.2). (2) Typically — Isaac's birth (Gen. 21), the Tabernacle with John 1.14. (3) Historically (Matt. 1.18; Luke 1.31). (4) Doctrinally — the Holy One, His sinlessness (Luke 1.35). (5) Evangelically (1 Tim. 1.15; 2 Tim. 2.8).

THE CLEAR PROPHECIES

The first statement to the Devil hints at the Advent of Christ in the flesh—"the Seed of the Woman" and His achievement at Calvary (Gen. 3.15). He is the "Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matt. 1.1). This fulfilled the line of Abraham (Gen. 22.18); Isaac (Gen. 26.4); Jacob (Gen. 28.14); from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49.10); and of the House of David (Psa. 89).

Micah 5.2 emphasizes where He would be born. Come from Bethlehem as to His manifestation in flesh; "from of old" as to His dealings with Israel; "from everlasting," as to His place with God (John 1.1).

The pre-incarnate Christ is seen in relation to time, in relation to man and in relation to eternity.

Isa. 7.14 tells us how he could come and who He was. The word translated "virgin" is "almah", used seven times in the O.T. and is clearly used of a woman who was a virgin. In v. 13 "the house of David" is addressed to assure Ahaz that neither house nor city would be exterminated or destroyed. The prophecy foretold an incarnation, Immanuel, God with us, by a supernatural medium, the Virgin Birth. The two things are distinct "His incarnation is the FACT that He became Man. His virgin birth is the MEANS by which He became man". F. F. Bruce.

In Luke 2.34 the mother and the sign go together and the sign is twofold, a virgin birth and an incarnation (Luke 1.30-35).

Before this great miracle and mystery, ours to believe, not to explain, and to worship, not to explore.

THE CONVINCING PRESENTATION

In the two lists of genealogies we have confirmation or verification (Deut. 19.15; Job. 33.14; Ps. 62.11). They reveal different standpoints, yet there is a meeting point of lineage, both of Joseph and of Mary who are akin.

Matthew is concerned with the kingship of Jesus, and Luke His humanity, both writers are one in their witness to the Virgin Birth and to the Deity of our Lord (Matt. 1.23; Luke 1.32).

Matthew presents Jesus as the legal and royal heir to the promises and prophecies given to Abraham and David (ch. 1.1). Luke gives us the line of Mary, showing Jesus physical descent (Luke 3.23-38; Rom. 1.3).

Both genealogies give the descent of Joseph—Matthew's the REAL, and Luke the LEGAL descent. Mary was of Davidic descent and was the daughter of Heli, though there is no mention of her name. Hence Christ was legally, regally and maternally "of the seed of David." The miracle was not in His birth but in His conception. The birth of the Redeemer was wrought entirely by the will and by the power of God (Luke 1.35).

He possessed two natures (Divine and Human) but One Personality. He was wholly Man and wholly God, not part God and part Man. Jesus received His human nature in a supernatural way. The mystery was accepted by Mary (Luke 1.38).

Our Lord's birth was an advent; He did not come from the human race; He came into it from above. He was born INTO this world not FROM it. He is God Incarnate, God coming into human flesh, coming into it from the outside (John 1.14).

Study the many names given to our Lord at His birth all stressing His deity, dignity and glory.

THE CHEERING PURPOSE

There are many reasons for the incarnation of Christ. His coming in flesh was a fundamental part of God's plan of salvation (Heb. 2.14; 10.5; 2 Cor. 5.21; Gal. 4.4,5). Mighty movements in heaven above must have preceded the appearing of the Son of God on earth (Heb. 10.5-7). (1) To reveal God to men (John 1.18; 14.9; 1 Tim. 3.16). To manifest life in all its fulness (1 John 1.2), and the love of God (1 John 4.9). (2) As the Prophet of God (Deut. 18.15,18; Matt. 21.11; Acts 3.20,22; Luke 7.16). (3) As a Preacher (Psa. 40.7,9; Isa. 61.1; Matt. 4.17; Mark 2.2;

Luke 8.1). (4) As a teacher (John 3.2; 8.2; 8.28; Mark 6.34; Matt. 26.55).

His ministry meant Preaching, proclaiming the Gospel; Teaching, the exposition of the Gospel; Healing, the illustration of the Gospel, with miracles as parables of grace. (5) To defeat the Devil and the power of death (Heb. 2. v. 14,15; Phil. 2.8; 1 John 3.8). (6) To become a Priest for His people (Heb. 2.17; 3.1; 5.10; 9.11). (7) The new and living way into God's presence (Heb. 10.20). (8) To be the King (Matt. 2.6; Psa. 45; 72; Rev. 19.16). These are only some of the reasons for His incarnation. What is our response to Him for coming into Manhood? Give God thanks (2 Cor. 9.15). The shepherds behold Him, proclaim Him, praise Him. He is worthy of our attention and adoration (Luke 2.15-20).

THE CONTINUAL PRAISE

When Heaven's King came down to save, Heaven's choir came down to sing (Luke 2.13-15). In the account given of our Lord's birth there is a sevenfold witness through the mouths of believing souls.

Revelation brought rapture and a warm-hearted response. Zacharias praised God that He had visited men (Luke 1.68, 76-79). The shepherds praised the Saviour (Luke 2.11,20); the wise men worshipped the King (Matt. 2.11); Simeon praised the Light of the world (Luke 2.30-32). The three women added their praise; Elizabeth was filled with holy joy (Luke 1.41-45); Mary celebrated the mercy of God and magnified the Lord (Luke 1.47-51) and Anna celebrated the redemption provided (Luke 2.38).

All who heard wondered, Mary pondered and the shepherds praised (Luke 2.18-20). May we follow their good example. May we share the sentiment expressed by Richard Crashaw in his "Hymn of Nativity":—

Gloomy night embraced the place
Where the Noble Infant lay
The Babe look'd up and shew'd His face;
In spite of darkness, it was day.
It was Thy Day, sweet! and did rise
Not from the East, but from Thine eyes . . .
We saw Thee; and we bless the sight
We saw Thee by thine own sweet light.

IMMORTALITY

by W. W. FEREDAY

Man is the most richly endowed creature in the universe so far as Scripture speaks. While the possession of soul and body allies him to the brute creation, his higher faculty—the spirit—assimilates him to the angels. Yet man's position is more wonderful than even that of the heavenly host, in that he is the divinely constituted head and centre of a system. For everything in this world is dependent upon, and revolves around, man.

Eight times in the New Testament the human body is said to be mortal; but not once is the word used of man's soul and spirit. Our Lord's words in Matt. x. 28 are decisive that the soul, in contrast with the body, is deathless. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Man having received his being by the inbreathing of God has a character of life essentially different from that possessed by the brutes. HE can say, "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life"; THEY are "natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed" (Job xxxiii. 4; II Pet. ii. 12).

Man's constitution and being are altogether unique. As bearing God's image, he is the intelligent link between God and the lower creatures, having been placed among and over them as God's representative; as bearing God's likeness he is a moral being, capable of entering into relations with God as those under him could not possibly do. This world has witnessed no greater catastrophe than the fall of man. In one moment this highly gifted creature became a moral wreck, everything subordinate to him was involved in ruin, and all God's delight in the works of His hands was destroyed. "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. vi. 6.).

We are face to face to-day with this tremendous fact: the whole human family in its millions of immortal beings in high revolt against its Creator and Lord. But such is the love of God that He has provided a way of salvation for all at the infinite cost of the blood of His own beloved Son. All who receive Him in faith are awarded a better portion than that which was forfeited by the fall. Eden is lost irretrievably; but heaven stands open for all believers.

In this way has our wonder-working God triumphed over all Satan's machinations and man's sin, gaining for Himself thereby an everlasting name. Amidst the blessedness of the Father's house the redeemed of earth will for ever ascribe the glory of their salvation to God and the Lamb. Not a single child of Adam need be outside of this; the heart of God yearns over all alike, and He has taken infinite pains in order to make His goodness and mercy known. How awful that any being possessed of immortality should wantonly involve himself in an eternity of woe for the sake of a few years of self-indulgence and sin in this blighted scene !

The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ

by
the late
William
Hoste, B.A.

THE DEITY
OF CHRIST

The Deity of Christ is a truth of such transcendent importance, that even were it not clearly revealed, it would be a necessity of Christian thought, for on it depends His claims to be trusted, obeyed, and worshipped, and the value of His atoning and intercessorial work. It is, however, we believe, clearly taught in Scripture and accords perfectly with the heart conviction of every true Christian that none but a Divine Person could meet the claims of God, bear his sins and be a propitiation for the whole world. The humanity of Christ guarantees the validity of His redemption, His Deity its value. How else could He be the Daysman, so ardently desired by Job, able to lay His hand on God and man and understand both ?

The special purpose of the fourth Gospel was "that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the SON of GOD, and that believing we might have life through His name"

(ch. 20.31). This Gospel opens with the great affirmation of the Eternal Deity and distinct Personality of the WORD, "In the beginning was the Word"—Eternal existence; "and the Word was *with (pros)* God"—distinct relation; "and the Word was God"—Essential Deity; "the same was in the beginning with (*pros*) God"—eternal relation; and that it was He and no other, who entered manhood. "THE WORD became flesh." It closes with a curious statement, which could only be a wild hyperbole, even if applied to the oldest, greatest and most perfect of *men*, to anyone, in fact, but "the Ancient of Days," that, if all the deeds of Jesus "should be written every one . . . I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Between these two witnesses there lies a whole range of testimony, explicit and implicit to this great doctrine, and the same is true in varying degree of all Scripture.

The first attacks on the Person of Christ were not on His Deity, *that* was taken for granted, but on His *true humanity*, which was supposed to detract from it. But later in the fourth century the Arian controversy arose, which with great subtlety went to the farthest limit in ascribing glory to Christ, short of proper Deity. Between this and the crude denials of the Socini in the 17th century on which modern "Unitarianism" is framed which denied to Him any pre-existence, or any but a purely human parentage there is a great doctrinal difference, though either would destroy Christianity. It was reserved to the unbelief of our day to deny the Divine Sonship of Christ, by a mere *ipse dixit*, "Certainly He was Son of God but so are we"!

If, as we have seen in a previous section, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity alone harmonizes with Scripture, then the Deity of Christ is in complete accord, for who else but He and Holy Spirit can be found in Revelation to fill the places of Second and Third Persons of the Sacred Three?

In an absolute sense the Person of Christ is only known to the Father; but it is the subject of revelation and it must be so in an intimate sense with each one as in the case of Paul, "When it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son *in me*;" then we see the Deity of Christ as a truth, not only supported by proof texts, though such are not wanting, but as woven into the very texture of the Scripture. Of many

lines of proof, we will utilize the following, as it is evident that a subject that countless volumes have left unexhausted cannot be compressed into the limits of an article.

1. THE APPLICATION TO CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT OF O.T. PASSAGES CONFESSEDLY REFERRING TO GOD.

Thus in Isaiah 7.14, here the sign, greater than heaven or earth could afford, is foretold, the name to be given to the child is Emmanuel, "God with us," and this is applied to the birth of the Lord Jesus in Matt. 1.22, 23. Later in Isa. 9.6 one of the names of this same child is to be, "The Mighty God." In chap. 40.3 words which describe the coming of Jehovah are applied in Mark 1.2 to the coming of Jesus Christ. See also verse 10, of Isa 40, where the coming One is spoken of as "The Lord God."

In Jeremiah 23.5 the Branch of David is named Jehovah-Tsidkenu, "the Lord our Righteousness" (see 1 Cor. 1.30). The words of Ps. 45.6, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" are addressed to Christ in Heb. 1.8. The words as to the unchangeableness of Jehovah in Ps. 102.26, are applied to Christ in Heb. 1.10, 11, and the Pierced One of Zech. 12.9 is Jehovah, "which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth."

2. DIVINE ATTRIBUTES ARE ASCRIBED TO HIM.*

(a) Take for instance *Pre-existence*. John the Baptist recognized that He, who was his junior by birth, was yet before Him, and phrases which abound specially in the Gospel of John, as to Christ having been "sent," having "come down from heaven into the world," e.g., "I proceeded forth and came from God, neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8.42), prove His pre-existence and, therefore, that He was more than mere man. Nor is this all. The Lord affirms in speaking of the father of the chosen race "Before Abraham was, (not merely *I was*, but *I AM*," thus assuming the covenant name, and identifying Himself with the Angel of Jehovah. There can be no reasonable doubt that the Theophanies of the Old Testament were all of the Second Person of the Godhead, as John 1.18

*See Dogmatic Theology Shedd), Vol. I, p. 314, etc.

shews to have been the case. The Messenger,† or Angel, of the Covenant, is identified with Christ, the coming One, in Malachi 3.4.

But our Lord goes back further still. In His sacerdotal prayer He asks to be glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was." This He had in remembrance and could ask for nothing more excellent. In Colossians, the Spirit seems to point further back still, "He is before all things" (ch. 1.17), being Himself the Creator of all things, visible and invisible. How could such an One be less than God?

Had the elders of Israel, when consulted by Herod as to the birthplace of the Messiah, read to the end of Micah 5.2, which they very properly quoted as the true answer to his question, they would have seen that the babe to be born in Bethlehem, had had "goings forth from of old, from everlasting," which harmonizes with one of the names to be given to the child, "the Everlasting Father" (lit. 'the Father of Eternity,' Isa. 9.6). With this we may compare Prov. 8.22, 23, clearly a personal utterance, "I was set up from everlasting, before His works of old."

(b) *Omnipresence.*

Even on earth the Lord spoke of Himself as "the Son of man which is in heaven;" and earlier in the same Gospel we read of "the only-begotten Son which is in (lit. 'the being in') the bosom of the Father" (ch. 1.18). Compare also the well-known words of Matt. 18.20 and 28.20. There is no limit assigned to the number either of the assemblies gathered or of the countries evangelized. He would be with them everywhere and all the days.

(c) *Omnipotence.*

Notice His claim in John 5.21, "Even so the Son quickeneth whom He would;" and Rev. 1.18, "I am the Almighty;" and of the Son it is written, "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power" (i.e., not the Father's power, as Alford points out *in loco*, but His own power) as in Col. 1.17, "By Him all things consist."

(d) *Omniscience.*

"He knew all men . . . and what was in man" (John

†The word "Messenger" in Malachi 3:1, is that elsewhere translated "Angel."

2.24, 25). He accepts without demur such testimonies as, "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things" (John 16.30) or "Lord thou knowest all things" (ch. 21.17); and He claims in Rev. 2.23 the divine prerogative of searching the hearts of men (see Jer. 17.10).

Mark 13.32 is quoted as proving the contrary, and it is wonderful how men who do not hesitate, when it suits them, to charge the writers of the Bible with mistakes, or indeed to undermine whole books of the Scriptures to suit the exigencies of the Neo-Criticism, will cling like drowning men to a text, when, as is indeed rare, they can find one which they think can be turned against the usual beliefs of Christians!

Here probably an official ignorance is meant and Augustine so explains—"Christ as the Mediator was not authorized to give the information." With this compare I Cor. 2.21. Such things as "the times and seasons" for the setting up of the kingdom, "*the Father hath put in His own power*" (Acts 1.7). Each Divine Person has His special part in the Divine counsels, planning, fulfilling, revealing. Would not the Holy Spirit know "the day or the hour"—He who searches even the deep things of God so that His exclusion too can only be explained in the same way as above?

In conclusion, the Lord declares that He knows the Father and is the Only One who does (Matt. 11.27). This, the greatest of all knowledge must include all else.

(e) *Unchangeableness.*

When the works of Creation shall pass away, the Son shall remain, His years shall not fail (Heb. 1.11, 12). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever" (ch. 13.8).

(f) *Divine Fulness dwells in Him.*

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2.9); and the same was true of Him in the days of His flesh, of His "self-emptiness" (*kenosis*), as men are pleased to call them (cf. Col. 1.19).

(g) *Self-existence.*

This is specially attributed to the Son in John 5.26, as given Him by the Father. This no more suggests inequality between the Divine Persons, or priority of existence to the Father, than does the Eternal Sonship.

3. DIVINE WORKS ARE ASCRIBED TO THE SON.

(a) *Creation.* By Him were all things created in heaven and on earth (Col. 1.16; John 1.3), and He is the object of creation, “without Him was not anything made that was made” (also v. 3). The universe was made in order to provide an inheritance for the Son and Heir.

(b) *Preservation of all things.* “By Him all things consist,” or literally “in Him,” as man is said to live, move and have his being *in* God (Acts 17.28).

(c) *Performance of miracles.* Not only did He accomplish this by the Father’s power, but by His own. “The Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5.21. See also v. 19 and ch. 2.19). And when men expressed wonder at His mighty works, he did not, as Peter later (Acts 3.12) disclaim any honour, but accepted it as His due.

4. HE IS CALLED “THE SON OF GOD.”

(a) It is contrary to the general teaching of Scripture to connect this with the fact of the incarnation. The Fatherhood of God cannot be said to depend on this; it is never specifically connected with it, nor is the Spirit, by whom it was operated, ever called “the Father.”

(b) The facts of the incarnation or miraculous birth were clearly outside the ken of those who used the term “Son of God.” When, for instance, Nathaniel exclaimed “Thou art the Son of God,” he was only convinced by the omniscience displayed. So with those in the boat (Matt. 14.22). They knew nothing of the Virgin-birth, but they had seen Him do what God alone could do, “tread upon the waves of the sea” (Job 9.8; Ps. 77.19), and still the tempest. They knew no one but the Creator could do this and they worshipped Him as Son of God. The confession of Peter is on the same lines. We have no reason to suppose he had ever heard of the Virgin-birth, though at least such information might conceivably have been communicated to him by “flesh and blood,” whereas the subject of his confession was not.

The expression “Son of God” refers to the Lord as the Eternal Son of the Father and this was understood to be His claim, when He linked Himself with the Father, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work,” “making Himself

equal with God" (John 5.17, 18). Had their inference been mistaken, doubtless the Lord would have corrected it. On the contrary He accepts it fully, and in v. 37 appeals to the testimony of the Father at His baptism, which must transcend all other, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," to be supplemented later on the holy mount by that voice from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him!" The first voice was the expression of the Father's complete satisfaction in Christ, the second of men's responsibility to give heed to Him.

It was not considered blasphemy for a man to claim Messiahship, but to claim to be the Son of God was considered so, and it was for this our Lord was, at the instance of the High Priest, condemned by the unanimous voice of the Sanhedrin to be "guilty of death" (Matt. 26.63-66). But this claim was fully vindicated by the resurrection from the dead. Then "He was declared to be the Son of God with power" (Rom. 1.4).

5. THE TESTIMONY OF HUMAN WITNESSES WHO KNEW HIM.

Listen to that of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" of Nathaniel, "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the king of Israel;" of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God;" of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." Did He, as any humble, modest man would, disclaim in horror such statements, which, if not true, were the grossest of blasphemies? On the contrary He accepted them and many such like, as His undoubted right.

Stephen's martyrdom and Paul's conversion afford startling proof of the same great truth. Who but the Son of God could be standing at the right hand of God? The Apostle learnt to know Him as such. "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me," and bore* witness to Him as "Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever."

* As for I Tim. 3.16, the reading **Theos** 'God,' is disputed by many though it has its able and zealous upholders (see Burgon's **Revision Revised**, pp. 98-106, etc.). The alternative reading **Hos** 'The One who,' adopted by R.V. has even less authority than **Ho** 'that which.' The A.V. reading ought to have been retained, as it has a mass of authority behind it and is certainly not "plain and clear error" and such the Revisers were alone authorized to alter.

Our Lord accepted worship due to God alone from disciples (Matt. 14.33; 28.9-17; Luke 24.52; John 9.38).

6. HIS OWN CLAIMS.

Some affirm that whatever His disciples may have claimed for Him, He never made any such claims for Himself. But His confession of His Divine Sonship before the High Priest was only the culmination of repeated and explicit claims to be not only more than man, but nothing less than God (e.g., John 5.17-27). In such words as, "I and my Father are One;" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" did He not claim equality with the Father? Who but a Divine Person could claim to be for the moral world what the sun and "the staff of life" are for the material—"the Light of the World," "the Bread of Life"?

Who else could claim to be the Door of salvation; the only Way of access to the Father; the Fountain to every thirsty soul; the Rest given to every weary heart; and then in Bethany's graveyard the "Resurrection and the Life" of the last day, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, "the First and the Last;" the Living One for evermore, the Keeper of the keys of Hades and of death?

Who but the Son of God could claim to be the Universal Judge, the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of the human race, the coming Bridegroom of His church and the Universal King?

And finally, did he not make some claim to Deity, in affirming that He was "greater than the Temple of Jehovah (Matt. 12.6); "Lord even of the Sabbath day" (v. 8); and in adding "a new commandment" to the Ten, (John 13: 34) when Jehovah had forbidden any addition (Duet. 4.2; 12.32)? It was nothing short of a claim to be Jehovah Himself.

To those who, while rejecting the Son of God, profess to worship the Father, as the one and only true God, His own word that will judge them in the last day, sounds loud and clear, "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5.23).

(To be continued)

“ZEPHANIAH”

by E. R. BOWER, Malvern Link, Worcs.

CHAPTER 1.4-6. The ‘I wills’ of judgment. (2) Upon the apostacy. General.

The outstretched hand that was mighty to save (Numbers 11.23; Isaiah 50.2) was now upon Judah and Jerusalem in judgment. The lesson of their sister-nation Israel had gone unheeded.

See how the people of Jerusalem lived—God’s people living in the place where the Lord had placed His Name. See how God groups them—

- (i) The idols of Baal, and their worship would be exterminated once for all.
- (ii) The priests of Baal and the idolatrous priests (Chemarims. See 2 Kings 23.5; Hosea 10.5).
- (iii) The acquiescent priests of the Lord.
- (iv) The blatant house-top worshippers of strange gods.
- (v) The secret worshippers who ‘followed the Lord’ but worshipped Moloch—‘sitters on the fence’.
- (vi) Backsliders; apostate.
- (vii) The indifferent non-seekers.

Society has changed little. These classifications remain today. ‘Baal’—master, or lord. “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God . . .” (1 Corinthians 8.5-6).

Religious Judah, but thoroughly apostate. How can revival come? And if it comes, will it last?

CHAPTER 1.7-13. The ‘I wills’ of judgment. (3) Upon the apostacy—Jerusalem.

“Hush at the Presence of the Lord Jehovah”—literally, “Hold thy peace!” (See also Habakkuk 2.20; and Zechariah 2.13). Let everyone keep silence in the Presence of the King; as the court before the judge—SILENCE! As the guests before the king—SILENCE! See Revelation 8.1.

“The day of the Lord is near, and hasteth greatly.” But was Jerusalem worried overmuch?

“The coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5.8). But are believers worried overmuch?

Babel has replaced Eden’s cool of the day. Why hold our peace? We have a ‘right’ to speak. We can please ourselves. Thus today’s world is the corollary of the days of Israel’s judges for, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21.25). Why be quiet? Because “the day of the Lord is at hand.” The King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible has issued the decree. Judah and Jerusalem go the way of Israel and Samaria.

There is, perhaps, in v. 7, a basis for our Lord’s parable of the King who made a marriage for his son (Matthew 22. 1-14) or of the man who made a great supper (Luke 14. 16-24. Cf. Revelation 19.7-9; 19.17-18. Whosoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (Matthew 24.28).

Upon whom will the judgments fall? See again how they are grouped. The nation; the royal house; the wearers of ‘strange apparel’—those who rejected their national dress with its ‘riband of blue’—that constant reminder of Numbers 15.38-39 and the exhortation to “look upon it, and remember the commandments of the Lord, and do them”; the oppressors; the world of commerce.

And where will the judgements fall? At the place where God has placed His Name. “The time is come” says Peter, “that judgment must begin at the house of God. .” (1 Peter 4.17).

Coupled with the decline in true worship and the decline in standards of behaviour, there was a mental stagnation brought about by prosperity and a false sense of security—‘It cannot happen to me (or, us)’ attitude, and in the language of this twentieth century, “God was dead” inasmuch as He had no influence for good or for ill. What is good is evil; what is evil is good.

As already quoted, “there be gods many, and lords many” and in our own day this is very evident, although they may not be easily recognised as such, or even acknowledged as

such. These gods have their own priests and adherents. It may not be easily recognised, either, that there are many who acknowledge the name 'Christian' and who worship as such, yet their first love lies elsewhere—a form of godliness which denies its power (2 Timothy 3.5). For many their 'duty' to God lies in a one hour a week attendance (or even less) at the Table of One Who is Lord.

Speaking by the Word of the Lord, Zephaniah evokes the centuries old curse, "Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein; thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shall not gather the grapes thereof." (Deuteronomy 28.30) and Judah would realize (even as every believer must) that "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness . . . but the day of the Lord will come . . ." (2 Peter 3.10).

Zephaniah wrote to a people about to be dispersed. Peter wrote to a dispersed people.

CHAPTER 1. 14-18. The day of the Lord.

The nearness of the day of the Lord was a reason for the enjoined silence of v. 7; in v. 14 the day of the Lord is not only near, but it is 'hastening'. In v.7 silence was commanded; in v.14 it is, "Hark to the day!" (Rather than, 'the voice of the day'). It is a day of panic and distress. One commentator tells us that the first mention of the Day (Isaiah 2.11,12) reveals its objective—the abasement of man and the exaltation of God, for, "the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord shall be exalted in that day."

It is THE day of the Lord; a day far beyond the then present distress of Judah; a day when there will be distress of nations, with perplexity (Luke 21.25); the whole world will be involved. "Hark to the day!" Listen to "the sea and the waves roaring;" Listen to what the voice of the day is saying. It will be a day when strong men shall weep; a day of trouble and distress, wasteness, desolation, darkness and gloom; a day of war; a day when mankind will be as blind men (Deuteronomy 28.28-29).

Why? Because they have sinned against the Lord." (v.17).

CHAPTER 2.1-3; A call to repentance.

This call comes to the Jew first, and this is as true of the Gospel message as Zephaniah's message in the days of

Josiah. (Romans 1.16). The Lord's anger would shortly declare itself upon the nation "not desired" and "not desirous," even as history attests, but there was still time for them to 'pull themselves together' before the fiat went out. It was 'now, or never' time to seek the Lord; firstly for the nation, but also for the meek and righteous, that when that day came they might be sheltered from its horrors. Dare we remind ourselves of the oft repeated "Repent" which our Lord brought to the churches of the Revelation? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door . . ." (Revelation 3.19-20).

CHAPTER 2.4-15. The nations warned.

The nations surrounding Israel would not be exempted from the judgments of the day of the Lord—Philistia in the west; Ammon and Moab in the east; Ethiopia in the south; Assyria in the north, and one wonders whether, in the day of the Lord yet future, but surely hastening, the nations then occupying these territories will fall into the judgments here pronounced. We have only to think of the attitude of the United Arab nations to Israel, from the Gaza strip southward to Egypt; westward to Jordan; Iraq and Iran; northward to Syria and the U.S.S.R. In this connection it is believed that v. 7 is of importance, "And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah . . . for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity."

Luke, in his Gospel, has at least three references to this visitation—in 1.16 the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, speaking to Zacharias of the coming ministry of John the Baptist says, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God," and at the birth of John, Zacharias, speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people . . . the Dayspring from on high hath visited us." (vv. 68-69). "Dayspring"—sunrising, or branch (margin). Cf. Malachi 4.2 The visitation of God in mercy and not in judgment was, and is, the hope of Israel; a hope expressed by those who glorified God at the raising of the widow's son, "God hath visited His people." (Luke 7.11-17).

How filled with unutterable pathos are the words of our weeping Lord as He beheld Jerusalem, ". . . thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19.41-44).

Reference has been made to the letters to Dispersed Israel, but who were, nevertheless, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1.1-2). The whole theme of this letter is that O.T. prophecy was near fulfilment and 1 Peter 2.12; makes this evident, "Having your conversation (way, or manner of life) honest among the Gentiles . . . which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation". Alas. Peter's hopes were not at that time fulfilled. Israel still waits.

Thus, at the judgment of the nations, comes hope for an already judged Israel.

V.19 also refers to the remnant of "My people". Moab and Ammon (now Jordan) proud and boastful against "the people of the Lord of hosts" will become a desolation, and a possession of Israel. Ethiopia—the land of Cush, or Egypt will know the sword of the Lord. Is President Sadat aware of this? Assyria (Iraq) will be, like Moab and Ammon, a desolation. What good then, their oil wealth?

CHAPTER 3.1-7. The sins of Jerusalem.

The sins of Jerusalem, the city of peace and the place of the Name, are now specified, and we must say that "the Name" was, and is, a precious Name to every believing Jew, and it may be relevant to ask ourselves—we who gather to "the Name"—if we are guilty of any of the sins of Jerusalem? Rebellious (AV. 'filthy'); unclean; oppressive. These are the 'positive' sins. The closing book of the O.T., Malachi, shows these sins as under a microscope, and a parallel with today's conditions are not far to seek, either in individual Christian witness or collectively within the Churches.

The privileged city obeyed not, received not, trusted not, and drew not near. These are 'negative' sins and are all Godward. His will heard, but disregarded; instruction received, but unheeded; a Lord in Name, but not in deed; God held at a distance. In other words, they had a Name in the which they could worship; a Name to live up to; but that Name was just—a name. We, ourselves, may gather "in the Name of Jesus"; we may call ourselves Christians; we profess to be 'practicing Christians'; but we are just—'christian—as well be 'heathen'. See Malachi 1.6,11;

2.2,5; 3.16; 4.2; "For they hold a form of piety (and) they deny the power of it." (1 Timothy 3.5). Conduct is not commensurate with profession.

Zephaniah has spoken of Jerusalem in the aggregate, but 'she' is made up of individuals—even as the Church is made up of its individual members.

Corruption was rife, both in the civil and religious leadership; the law which had been given by the 'dispensation of angels' (Acts 7.52) had been violated—a position which (after the captivities) gave place to 'traditions'. "Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition . . ." (Mark 7.7-13).

Peter once spoke of those who "wrested the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3.16)—that is those who distorted or perverted the Word of God. Have times changed so much?

Upon the face of it, v.15 is a strange one. "The just Lord is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity . . ." Despite all that was there to condemn, **GOD WAS STILL THERE!** (See vv. 11,12,15,17). And more, He was still on the Throne. "Amidst" the filthiness of this city, "He faileth not." And yet! "The unjust knoweth no shame." God was among them in all His intrinsic holiness; they might fail, but He remained the same. Does this lack of shame in the Divine Presence remind us of the Apostle John's exhortation (1 John 2.28), "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming"?

With all the benefits of historical hind-sight relative to God's dealings with them and with the nations about them, they refused to learn the lessons contained in what was "written aforetime". Punishment only made them thick-skinned! The chronicler, writing with deepest feeling, was to record, "And the God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending: because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place . . ." (2 Chronicles 36.14-16). God rising early; anxious for His people and for His house; they rising early to speed their evil ways. "I go a-fishing" said Peter. "Come and dine" said our Lord. He was up before them!

What is true of Israel, is also true of the nations.

(To be continued)

Notes on Revelation

by

JAMES FLANIGAN

NORTHERN IRELAND



EARLY VISIONS

Many of the truths of the Revelation are conveyed in an interesting "triplet" fashion. The divine number "3" is enshrined everywhere. This is especially so in chapter 1, where so much is structured around that number. We have, for instance—

(i) *The 3-fold Ministry of John. v. 2.*

Is this a pattern for all true ministry at any time? Such is based upon the Word of God; it bears witness to the Lord Jesus; it is the measure of a man's personal experience.

(ii) *The 3-fold Beatitude. v. 3.*

They that read, they that hear, they that obey, are blessed. It is, of course, the word for public reading to a congregation. In the days when literature and literacy were not so abundant as now, that was a blessed privilege indeed, to be the public Reader. It is still a privilege, and those who accept it are obliged to read distinctly, carefully, and reverently, remembering that true, proper reading, can be exposition in itself. The "hearing" and the "keeping" are linked together. It is assumed that those who hear will desire to obey—it is the way to blessing.

(iii) *The 3-fold Salutation. vv. 4-5.*

From three Divine Persons the greeting of grace and peace is conveyed. It is the heavenly "Shalom." From the Father in all His Majesty, from the Son in all His Beauty and Glory, and from the Spirit in all His Plenitude of Power, the salutation comes.

(iv) *The 3-fold Appellation. v. 4.*

"Him which is, which was, which is to come". Mr. Newberry remarks that this is the nearest definition of the great Name "Jehovah", combining the three periods of existence

in one divine Title. It is a paraphrase of the unspeakable, unpronounceable Name, by which He makes Himself known, Who has neither Past or Future, but lives as the "I Am" in an eternal Present.

(v) *The 3-fold Presentation of the Lord Jesus.* v. 5.

The Son is the Faithful Witness of the past. He Who witnessed a good confession before Pilate, (and the world), is now the First-begotten of the dead in resurrection glory, and in a day yet to come He will be manifested and vindicated as Prince of the Rulers of the Earth.

(vi) *The 3-fold Ministry of the Lord Jesus.* vv. 5-6.

By Him, we have been loved, loosed, and lifted. Loved, in spite of our sins. Loosed, by His Death, from our sins. Lifted, out of our sins to a Royal Priesthood with all its privileges. And of course, as is well known, the love of Christ is a continuing thing—the word is "loveth" us. His love is ever present.

(vii) *The 3-fold View of His Return.* v. 7.

When He comes with Clouds, whether clouds of saints or vapour clouds, every eye shall see Him. What a vision for those alive at that moment. They also which pierced Him, not Jews only, nor Romans only, for Golgotha was the crime of the Gentile and the Guilt of the Jew. All kindreds of the earth shall wail—the word is "tribes" of the earth. There will be a universal beating of the breast when He appears.

(viii) *The 3-fold Fellowship of Saints.* v. 9.

There is a brotherhood, a companionship. What a comforting thought for the lonely John. A fellowship in present suffering, in future glory, and in patience while we wait. Through faith and patience we must enter the kingdom, and the companionship of kindred hearts helps us as we wait. May the Lord enable us to foster that mutual comfort and help so much needed by exiles in a hostile world.

(ix) *The 3-fold Majesty of the Son.* v. 18.

He lives; He became dead; He is alive forevermore. Once He died—to live again. Now He lives—never to die. The Keys (a symbol of authority, Matt. 16. 19. Rev. 3.7. 9.1. 20.1) hang at His Girdle.

*"Worlds and worlds are hanging on His Hands,
Life and Death are waiting His commands—"*

He is superior to Death and Hades; He is the First and the Last.

(x) *The 3-fold Content of the Book. v.19.*

Things which John has seen; things which are; things which are to be after these things; such is the key for the opening of the Revelation. We shall use the key in a usual way, i.e. to open ch. 1 first of all, then chs. 2 and 3, and then, after these things, ch. 4 to the end. This will open to us an acceptable 3-fold division of the Prophecy.

Note also the three "Amens". There is an ascription of praise and glory to the Lord Jesus, v. 6, and, — Amen! There is an announcement of His indisputable authority and power, v. 18, and, — Amen! There is an anticipation of His return in glory, v. 7, and, — Amen! So be it. The "Amen" becomes His very title, ch. 3.14, since He is the fulfilment and confirmation of all God's purposes and promises.

Characteristically and fittingly, the first vision in the Apocalypse is a vision of the Lord Jesus. This also may be studied in a 3-fold way.

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|------------------|
| (a) His Garments. | His Girdle. | His Sword. |
| (b) His Hair. | His Eyes. | His Voice. |
| (c) His Feet. | His Hands. | His Countenance. |

—what a revelation of glory for an aged Apostle who remembered vividly the Garments stolen, the Head thorn-crowned, the Hands and Feet pierced and bleeding. How thrilling it must have been for John, who had witnessed the suffering, now to see the glory. Men may circumscribe John physically, in a Patmos only 10 miles by 6 miles, but he is now to be transported away from it all, and, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, where better to begin than with a sight of the Lord Himself. In a state of spiritual ecstasy, liberated from the barrenness of Patmos, released from the visible world of the senses, John is lifted to the glory. What compensation for an aged saint being denied the usual privileges of the first day of the week.

The symbolism of the first vision is full of majesty and beauty, and we are again helped to an understanding of it by reference to other scriptures. The imagery of course, is Eastern, and Oriental. Perhaps our western minds need to be adjusted as we ponder. The Son of Man is in the midst of the "lampstands". Not the self-consuming "candlelight" as in our A.V. but the light of golden lamps whose light-

bearing is nourished and maintained by oil. In a judicial character the Lord walks (ch. 2.1) in the midst. He is the Lord of the Lamps, the Master of Assemblies.

The long trailing robe is a token of dignity. It belonged to those in high office among men. Here is manhood, in true dignity, in the Lord of the Churches.

The Girdle is of gold, and is around His breasts, not His Loins. The girdled loins were indicative of active service, and our Lord was no stranger to girded loins. But the girdle around the breast was the manner of the Sovereign, the Potentate, for whom others girded their loins and served. Let us see, in the girdled breasts, not the restraining of affection, as suggested by some, but rather, the evidence of Sovereignty whom others serve. John had once seen the same Lord Jesus robed in purple. He had seen Him too, girded with a towel. Then it was humility, but now the robe and the girdle are the symbols of dignity and sovereignty.

His Head and His Hairs are white,—like wool and like snow. Did John remember the Mount of Transfiguration? Did he recall the Ancient of Days whom Daniel saw (Dan. 7.9)? How often, with us, the white head tells only a story of age and decay; we must remember too, that it betokens wisdom, and experience, and knowledge. John had seen that Head bleeding, wreathed with thorns.

His Eyes and His Feet are both associated with Fire, and fire is ever associated with judgment. Eyes like a flame of fire, discerning intelligently and infallibly, with Feet like burnished brass—He will be active when judgment is necessary. Men may sometimes move in judgment when they have not the ability to properly discern. Men may sometimes discern correctly, and not have the moral strength to move in judgment. The Corinthians were guilty on both counts, judging when they had no right to judge, and failing to judge when judgment was needed. But in the Lord the balance is perfect. His Eyes discern infallibly. His Feet move actively in necessary judgment.

His Voice is majestic as the sound of many waters. As the myriad sounds and tones of the falling waters of a mighty cataract blend harmoniously together in one symphony—so the Voice of the Lord. All that He speaks, whatever the tone of His address, or the manner of His approach, all sounds out His glory and His authority. How clearly

this is seen in the variety and diversity of the messages to the churches.

In His right Hand He holds the seven stars. The stars are the angels. The double symbol indicates the responsible light-bearing element in the assembly. These He desires to hold authoritatively and protectively in His right Hand. These He will deem accountable for the condition of the assembly, and through these the assembly will be addressed in every case.

From His Mouth proceeded a sharp sword. The two-edged sword was a then familiar sight. It was the insignia of high office—the Roman Proconsul wore it. It is a familiar symbol to us, who, from Eph. 6.17, Heb. 4.12, Rev. 19.15,21, know it to be the Word of God, penetrating, dividing, separating, searching, laying bare. It will be drawn especially against Pergamos, ch. 2.12, mixed with the world, her separation gone. Here are the two edges of impartiality, and the Lord jealous for the purity of the testimony and the affections of His people.

His whole Countenance is as the Sun at noon-day. It is glory indescribable and unbearable. It is the Mount of Transfiguration again. John had slept then; now he falls prostrate, as dead in the presence of the glory. But the divine touch enables him, as it had five times enabled Daniel, Dan. 8.16, 9.21, 10.10, 10.16, 10.18. He hears the first of a series of prohibitions—"Fear not", and he rises, by grace to give to us the messages to the seven selected assemblies. These letters follow in chapters 2 and 3.

TAKE . . . THE PROPHETS . . . FOR AN EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING AFFLICTION, AND OF PATIENCE, BEHOLD, WE COUNT THEM HAPPY WHICH ENDURE. **James 5. 10,11**

We may be sorrowful, yet not unhappy. Unhappiness is caused by self-will that frets against the Lord's way of dealing with us. But we may sorrow without sinning, and by such sadness the heart is made better (Ecclesiastes 7:3). Grace given in time of such sorrow does not steel the heart, but softens it. We may feel, but we must not rebel.

And we to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure.
The spirits departed to heaven.

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (1)

'SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS'

by **JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen**

FANNY J. CROSBY (1820—1915)

This simple hymn 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' with which most of us have been familiar since our childhood and love so well, was written by a blind lady. Her name was Fanny Crosby. Fanny was born in Southeast, New York, in 1820. Her parents greatly rejoiced at her birth, but soon their joy turned to sorrow, for their baby's eyes began to inflame; the physician was called but a mistake was made in prescribing treatment and as the result Fanny was hopelessly blind for the rest of her life. Fanny however was an optimist. She never expressed one word of blame for the physician, but in later years she said, "It may have been a blunder on the physician's part, but it was no mistake of God's. I verily believe that it was God's intention that I should live my days in physical darkness, so as to be better prepared to sing His praise."

Fanny wrote in all more than 3,000 hymns and poems. Many of them are well known. They are very varied in their content, but all are characterized by a vivid simplicity. The better known include the following:—

- (a) 'To God be the glory, great things He has done.'
- (b) 'I am Thine, O Lord.'
- (c) 'Thou my everlasting portion.'
- (d) 'Jesus, keep me near the cross.'
- (e) 'Pass me not, O gentle Saviour.'
- (f) 'Rescue the perishing, care for the dying.'
- (g) 'All the way, my Saviour leads me.'
- (h) 'I shall know Him.'
- (i) 'Some day, the silver chord will break.'

Out of all the hymns which she wrote, 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' was perhaps her own personal favourite. She wrote it at the age of 48 and the circumstances of its writing are of interest. Dr. W. H. Doane came one day into an office in New York to find Fanny in conversation with a friend. "Fanny," he said, "I have just written a tune and I want you to write a hymn for it." "Let me hear it," she

replied. After he had played it over on a small organ she exclaimed, "Why! that tune says 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' I will see what I can do with it." She at once retired to an adjoining room and in half an hour returned with the completed hymn,

'Safe in the Arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.

There are in all three verses but the last two are particularly beautiful,

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears.

Jesus, my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience
Wait till the night is o'er;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore'.

To realize that Divine safety and security as she did—one who had to feel her way through physical darkness and amid danger, must have been a wonderful comfort. But how did this realization and assurance come to Fanny? It was not until she was 30 years of age. Though by the age of 10, she had memorized the Holy Scriptures and was able to repeat by heart the first five books of the Old Testament and the first four books of the New Testament, she had not that personal experience of the Lord that brings peace and joy. Yet she longed for it; and it was one evening at the close of a service as Dr. Isaac Watts great hymn was being sung,

'Alas and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die.
Would He devote that sacred head,
For such a worm as I?'

When they had reached the third line of the last verse, 'Here Lord, I give myself away; 'Tis all that I can do,' she yielded herself completely to the Saviour for salvation; and that simple faith and assurance of salvation in Christ remained precious to Fanny through life.

I hold as a treasure a photograph of Fanny's tombstone in Bridgeport, Connecticut, U.S.A. She died there in Bridgeport on the 12th February, 1915 at the age of 95. On the bottom of her tombstone I can read some lines of another of her lovely hymns—words which express so clearly her assurance of salvation in Christ,

'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
Oh, what a foretaste of glory Divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of the Spirit, washed in His blood.'

COMMITTEE'S REPORT

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. 8 : 10.

His joy will be thy solace
His smile thy beacon light;
His strength will make thy weakness
Unconquerable might.

Our feelings are mixed as we review the events of the past year. Many of our readers experienced a reduction in their income through no fault of their own, but as the result of widespread unemployment. They have our sympathy and need our prayers. It is good to remember our God changeth not, and ever remains Jehovah Jireh, (Gen. 22:14) the One Who sees and provides for His own. Trials that overtake His saints can increase their trust in Him, and lead to His blessing and multiply their joy and strength in Him.

During 1980 we were greatly encouraged by the increase in the number of new readers, and the continued growth in the circulation of this magazine. For this we thank our faithful God. We are grateful to those who have brought the magazine to the notice of others, and trust this service will continue.

Our sincere thanks are offered to the many who have helped in distribution and in other ways. We greatly appreciate the work of our Hon Editor in discharging so faithfully his special responsibility, remembering the time devoted by him to the ministry of God's Word to the saints in Britain and Overseas.

We heartily thank those who contributed papers for publication. Their painstaking labour of love will assuredly have its reward at the coming of the Lord. (Rev. 22: 12).

The help of our brother Glenville is very valuable to the saints in Gt. Britain, and it is highly appreciated by us.

The continued practical fellowship of individual saints, as well as the many assemblies of the Lord's people, moves our hearts in sincere thanks to our God for their faithfulness. In His worthy Name we offer our thanks to all these.

NOW A FEW NOTES FOR NEW READERS. The magazine is sent post free. Please give name and address carefully in **BLOCK LETTERS**, and state number of copies required. Advise us promptly of change of address. Quantity required can be amended at any time of the year. Where possible, obtain copies from the assembly parcel. This saves labour and postage.

Since the magazine is supported by the free-will offerings of the Lord's people, endeavour to **AVOID WASTE AT ALL TIMES**.

Kindly continue to remember us in your prayers.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor: A. M. S. Gooding.

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor: 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee :

Honorary Joint Treasurers :

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Hon. Secretary: John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

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

John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

*Introduce the Magazine
to your Assembly*

—LOTS OF EXCELLENT ARTICLES ON HAND!

CONTENTS

LOVE by W. W. Fereday

VEILED IN FLESH by F. Nickels

THE WAY OF THE WILDERNESS

by C. Jarrett

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. Hewitt

NOTES ON REVELATION

by Jim Flanigan

ZEPHANIAH by E. R. Bower

IS DIVORCE PERMISSIBLE TODAY?

by R. McPike

KINGS AND PRIESTS

by H. H. Shackcloth

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

by Wm. Hoste

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by J. Strahan

Tune . . .

8.6.8.6.

HOW SWEET THE NAME OF JESUS SOUNDS

Blest Name, all other names above,
The Name that speaks repose,
It is an ocean tide of love
Whose fulness no man knows.

Did ever name such comfort bring
To hearts bowed down with care?
What other name can mortals sing
Or plead with God in prayer?

O precious Name that whispers peace
Into the troubled breast,
That makes the surging billows cease
And bids the storm to rest.

Jesus, on Thee our hopes depend
Of everlasting bliss,
When life's departing day shall end
Thy Name our refuge is.

O wondrous Name of Love Divine,
The Name that sets us free,
The joys of earth we here resign
To gather unto Thee.

—*J. M. Jones, Queensland.*

LOVE

by **W. W. Fereday**

God is not light only; He is also love. Light and love are not mere attributes of the Deity, as righteousness and holiness; they are the very nature of God. Light condemns sin, and demands judgment upon it; love seeks the salvation of the sinner, and has provided an all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. Hence the magnificent Gospel message: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). These words came from the lips of none other than the Only-Begotten Son Himself. The cross declares God's love in all its fulness of meaning. What it cost Him to put the Son of His love in the sinner's place none of us will ever comprehend. If the cross of Calvary fails to convince men of God's fervent desire for their blessing, nothing else, whether deeds or words, could ever prove convincing.

Scripture describes man as a naturally loveless creature. Amiable qualities he may indeed possess, but love is lacking. "Hateful and hating one another" is God's description of the revolted human family (Titus iii. 3). The whole law is summarised in the commandments to love God with all the heart, and one's neighbour as one's self. But where is the natural man who does either? Christ is the true test of man's condition in this as in everything else. He was once here tabernacling amongst us as God manifested in flesh. Was He loved as such? Having become man He thereby became man's neighbour; was He loved in that character either? Both as God and man He was hated and rejected, even unto death; what can be said for man in view of such an appalling fact?

It would be as reasonable to look for grapes on a bramble-bush as to look for love to God in the heart of the natural man. The heart must welcome to itself God's great love ere it can move aright towards God. The response soon follows the reception of the love of God. "We have known and believed the love that God hath toward us" says the happy Apostle. He adds almost immediately: "We love Him because He first loved us". (I John iv. 16-19). Love to God and Christ, love to the brotherhood, love to all men,

flows naturally from the heart that has been filled and warmed with the infinite love of God. What is impossible to the unregenerate man is the most natural thing conceivable to all who are born of the Holy Spirit. They are partakers, through grace, of the Divine nature.

VEILED IN FLESH

by F. NICKELS, Cardiff

It has been said that the common badgers' skins which were used to cover up the holy things belonging to the Tabernacle in the wilderness when it was in transit could take our minds to our Lord's humanity which was also a covering for One who was "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. 1, 3). God's earthly people only saw the animal skins, but they all knew that underneath were the things that belonged to the presence of God. In the days of our Lord's humanity it was different. Only a minority recognized that the man, Jesus of Nazareth, was a divine visitor, and acknowledged Him as such. Martha said: "Lord I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John 11, 27). Thomas said: "My Lord, and my God!" (John 20, 28), and Peter: "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6, 69). The popular opinion of Him was much lower than this. It was generally thought that Jesus of Nazareth was a man who was given power by God to perform remarkable miracles (John 3, 2). The crowds who thronged Him could not make up their minds. Some accepted His claims, but others would not, so that there was a division because of Him (John 7.43). There was no halo around His head as artists like to depict Him, nor did He—as the saying goes—walk six inches above the ground that He might be distinguished from others. An old Puritan, thinking on these lines could write: "The mere outward form of our Saviour more confounded, than converted, His beholders."

The fact that the Son of God veiled the surpassing Glory which He had before the world was (John 17.5), amazes us, but we should also marvel that He should choose to come into our world as a little babe, just like ourselves. He could have by-passed childhood and youth, and come upon our time-scene as a full-grown man, just like Adam.

Of course this form of Christ's coming had been marked out by God, Who gave His earthly people, through the O.T. prophets, special revelations as to how His Son should make His first advent. "Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given" (Isa. 6.9), and "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7.14). And so in fulfilment of prophecy, our Lord came into this world just in the same manner as we do, yet with a marked difference. His life was not just beginning, as ours begin at our birth. The babe that Mary held in her arms was the self-existing Eternal God Who was from the beginning (John 1.1), who was stooping to take on human flesh, apart from sin.

We are given much detail of Christ's birth, but little of His childhood and youth, except for an isolated incident recorded in Luke when He was twelve years of age. After years of obscurity, our Lord comes on the pages of Scripture as a man of thirty years of age, who before His public ministry submitted Himself to John's baptism. At this time God the Father opened heaven and expressed His delight in the way His Son had lived during those thirty 'silent' years, saying: "This is My well-beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3.17). This approval from heaven came to the man Christ Jesus, before He had done any of His gracious works of healing or had performed any of His mighty miracles. His first miracle was the turning of water into wine at the wedding feast (John 2.11). This point is made because from it we can see that it is not necessary to preach in public, or in other ways to be active in God's service, in order to please God. We can please God without being prominent. This Paul underlines when he writes: "That we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (1 Tim. 2.2).

It seems that during the years of quiet family life as a village carpenter, our Lord was accepted as just one of the village community. But the fulness of the Godhead which resided in our Lord was not always to be veiled. Shafts of His glory were seen when He wonderfully opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers, and even raised the dead. These were but rays of His majesty that came through occasional openings in the veil, but God drew the veil much further

back on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17). There Peter, James and John saw their leader's face shine like the sun, and His ordinary home-spun garments became white and glistening with a heavenly whiteness. The apostles were dazzled and speechless, and it is not surprising that when they found their tongues, they said the wrong thing. Only these favoured three were allowed to see the glory that was inherent in the Man that people knew as Jesus of Nazareth. It was something that Peter never forgot (2 Pet. 1.17, 18).

When we consider the great power and majesty that was in the man Christ Jesus, we must not allow ourselves to think that His humanity was not real humanity. Scripture would anticipate this tendency by assuring us that "in all points He was tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4.15), and to read the Gospels is to see that it is so. We see Him tired and thirsty sitting on a well-side asking a woman for a drink. At the end of a tiring day He laid down in a boat to sleep. He was guest at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and He liked to go to supper at a home in Bethany. All these everyday experiences would make Him appear like any other man of His time, but those who had the privilege of being close to Him knew He was Someone unique. Perhaps we could see a faint picture of His uniqueness in the O.T. character Samson, who the Philistines knew from bitter experience, to be an exceedingly strong man physically, yet in his appearance he did not show it. Samson must have looked no different from any other man, for Delilah was told to find out where his great strength lay (Jud. 16.5,6). If he had been a giant with tree-trunk muscles, it would have been obvious where his strength lay. His enemies would not know that it came from his being Spirit empowered, and they would never have found his secret if he had not revealed it to the woman. But our Lord made no secret as to where His strength lay. He ever acknowledged His dependence on the Father (John 8, 28).

The Word of God speaks of the Incarnation as the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3.16), and in one simple, yet sublime sentence—"Who though He was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty, might be rich" (2 Cor. 8.9)—gives us to understand why He came and what His coming can mean to us.

THE WAY OF THE WILDERNESS

by CHARLES JARRETT, Malvern

Exodus 13. 17-22.

God's people Israel, already knew deliverance from judgment as they had appropriated the blood and were now to know deliverance by power, from Egypt's bondage. Ten times, including Ex. 4.23, God had demanded "Let my people go" and Pharaoh's stubborn will was now broken. There was never any doubt as to the final result. Seven times in Ex. 6. vv. 6-8, God had said, "I will," and His promises cannot fail. They are just as certain for His people now. The Lord gives unto His sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man seize them out of His hand, John 10.28.

There is fulfilment then to God's purposes. "It came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go that . . . God led the people about." He directed their path and we see that He did not lead by the shortest way. A Bible atlas shows that the way to the land of the Philistines followed the coast of the Great Sea and was much nearer than the way that they were taken, through the Red Sea and the Wilderness of Sin. God was caring for His people and they went forth like sheep, guided in the wilderness like a flock. He led them on safely, so that they feared not, Ps. 78.52-53.

The short way would have brought the people into war with the Philistines, a test for which their faith was not equal. So, "God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt." Before Israel were tested by warfare, God showed them His power over the flower of Egypt's army, Ex. 14.7, and Jehovah was acknowledged as their strength and song and salvation, Ex. 15.2. God's purpose at that time, to deliver from Egypt's doom and dominion, is repeated in His dealings in this period of the Spirit's presence, Gal. 1.4. To return to Egypt was not the way of salvation for Israel, nor is it for us. It was the very thing that the people proposed later, Numb. 14.4, when they heard the report of ten of the spies and for their unbelief they fell in the wilderness. The way of the wilderness was a long way, because of unbelief, but it was the right way, Ps. 107.7. In that way, the people learned, through the hunger they were allowed to experience, the

unfailing supply of manna. Their clothes did not wear out; their feet did not swell in forty years, Deut. 8. 2-4. They learned their need of God and while they proved Him, God proved them. God still allows wilderness experience with its trials of faith as Peter shows in his first epistle. At no age in life or stage in spiritual development, are we self-sufficient. The near way will not provide the opportunities for our testing, by which faith will grow, yet be assured, there are wise ends in view and God is faithful who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, 1 Cor. 10.13.

We read, "but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness," Ex. 13.18, and "the Lord went before them by day . . . to lead them the way," v. 21. If, fellow-believer, yours is wilderness experience and you are very conscious of it, remember that the One who has chosen your path is with you in it, to lead by day and night, when the way is light and when it is dark. When the Lord Jesus said, "I will come to you," John 14.18, He was referring to His abiding Spirit, and He will not take away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, v. 22.

Our passage contains a touching reference to the faith and passionate hopes of the patriarch Joseph. Moses honoured the oath taken by the children of Israel when Joseph was about to die and he took the bones of Joseph with him, v. 19. See also Gen. 50.24-26. The Patriarch spent most of his life in Egypt. It was the scene of his earthly glory, Gen. 45.13, but his heart was set on the land that God swore to his fathers. "God will surely visit you and bring you out." It was by faith that Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones, Heb. 11.22. He believed that God would fulfil His promise to Abraham (although it still awaits fulfilment) and it seems he believed that God would raise him from the dead, as Abraham must also be raised, to come into the good of God's promise, Gen. 13.14-17, and 17.8. Joseph experienced the greatest possible success in Egypt for he was made ruler over all the land, Gen. 41.43. How was it that his heart and affections were not taken up with Egypt? The answer lies in what God had said to Abram as recorded in Gen. 15. 13-14. His seed would be a sojourner (margin) in a land that is not theirs and after four hundred years of affliction, God would bring them out. Those events began

with Jacob, Gen. 46. 3-4, but throughout Joseph's life, he knew that the promises of future blessing were connected with the land that God would give, as He had declared to Abram, Gen. 15. 18-21, to Isaac, Gen. 26.3 and to Jacob, Gen. 28.13. For all his glory in Egypt, he knew that the nation would suffer the judgment of God, Gen. 15.14. So Joseph carried his responsibilities in the fear of God. He attributed his wisdom to God, Gen. 40.8 and 41.16. He recognised the purpose of God in his affliction, Gen. 45.5-8, and he looked for the fulfilment of the promise of God, Gen. 50.25.

Let us live in the world as those who will be taken out of it. Since we are chosen out of it, John 15.19, its pleasures and sins should not engage our hearts. Joseph said, "God will surely visit you," and we have the Lord's last promise, "Surely I come quickly," Rev. 22.20. If our hearts are taken up with Him, we can at all times say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(11) THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

At the Incarnation our Lord took up humanity into His Deity. Deity is unchangeable. As the Image of the invisible God, the Son was always the visible representation of the invisible God to all creation. "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5.2). So from everlasting, He has been the Begotten from the Father, and never in all eternity was unbegotten, (John 1.18). Yet manhood in Him is equally real with His Deity (1 Tim. 3.16; 1 John 5.20; John 1.14).

PAST MANIFESTATION

The Lord Jesus claimed for Himself powers and attributes belonging only to God (John 8.58). He "came forth from the Father (John 16.28). He came into the world as the Everlasting Father, the Ancient of Days. (Isa 9.6; 1 Tim. 1.17). The promised "Seed of the Woman (Gen. 3.15);

“the Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4.2). The pre-incarnate manifestations, the theophanies were designed to prepare the world for His coming in human flesh.

“The angel of the Lord,” “the angel of the Covenant” (Gen. 22.15; 31.11,13; Mal. 3.1). Inferred in Gen. 3.15; Study the manifestations to Hagar (Gen. 16.7-14); to Abraham (Gen. 18.1-3; 22.11-13); to Isaac (Gen. 26.24,25); to Jacob (Gen. 28; 32.24-32; Hosea 12.4,5); to Moses (Exod. 3.2,6,14; 23.20,21; Acts 7.38); to Joshua (5.13-15); to Isaiah (Isa. 6.1; John 12.39-41); also Ezekiel and Zechariah.

Psalms 16, 22, both portray our Lord and Isaiah 7.14; 9.6 tell of His coming birth; Leviticus 2 proclaims His perfections.

PROOFS OF HIS MANHOOD

The Son of God took to Himself a human nature and gave it subsistence in the divine Nature. The assumption of the human nature involved no change as to the Person of the Eternal Son, it added nothing to it, He who always possessed Deity took also onto Himself humanity and became the God-Man. He has become man forever.

The title Son of Man is used only by our Lord, never by His disciples. It always relates Him to the earth and establishes His absolute identification with mankind (Psa. 8.4; with Heb. 2.6). Our Lord used this designation over eighty times. The title speaks volumes to our heart concerning the sovereignty, sympathy and sufficiency vested in our strong Kinsman-Redeemer (Heb. 2.14,15).

He becomes complete and perfect man, possessing body, soul and spirit (Heb. 5.5; Matt. 26.38; Luke 23.46). His growth was normal, developing in physique and in wisdom (Luke 2.52). He knew tiredness (John 4.6); and thirst (John 4.7; 19.28).

In His experiences all that was proper to true humanity befell Him, capable of surprise (Matt. 8.10); and tears (John 11.35; Heb. 5.7); affections (Mark 3.5; Luke 10.21; John 11.5). He endured bodily suffering (1 Pet. 3.18; 4.1). Like every other man, He hungered (Mark 11.12); He slept (Matt. 8.24); He craved human sympathy (Matt. 26.36,40). When addressing Thomas He appealed to the reality of His human body as basis of belief (John 20.27; Luke 24.39).

His human ancestry is mentioned, born of the virgin Mary

(Luke 1.31); and of the seed of David according to the flesh (Acts 13.23; Rom. 1.3; 2 Tim. 2.8). To some He was the Carpenter, the Son of Mary (Mark 6.3); the Son of David (Mark 10.47); That Man, the Man (Acts 17.31; 1 Tim. 2.5). To Mary, the Gardener (John 20.15); but to Thomas "My Lord and My God (John 20.28).

The Lord Jesus was racially the Son of Abraham. Morally the Son of Mary; vocationally the Son of Joseph; regally the Son of David; administratively the Son of the Most High; terrestrially the Son of Man; but eternally and celestially the Son of God.

MORAL PERFECTIONS

The moral glories of Christ are the displayed excellencies of His character and conduct. The character of our Lord was perfectly symmetrical, without excess or deficiency. Our Lord had no strong points in His character because there were no weak points. He was without flaw because He was without sin. Every virtue was beautifully blended in Him. Mercy and justice were blended in all His actions and judgements. The perfection of His speech, "never man spake like this Man" (John 7.46; Psa. 45.2; Luke 4.22,36). He never had to recall a word, retrace a step, or regret a deed. He won the hearts of men by kindly sympathy and humanity. In Him the unique combination of majesty and humility (John 13.3-5; Phil. 2.5-8; John 10.38,39).

Perfect in service illustrated in the devotion of the Hebrew bondman (Ex. 21.1-6; Psa. 40.6). "Mine ears hast thou opened (pierced) (Heb. 10.7; Mark 10.45). His service was marked by tenderness (Mark 1.30,31); by prayer (Mark 1.35); by humility (Mark 1.37,38); and always motivated by love (Mk. 1.41; Luke 22.27). Perfect in suffering (Mk. 14.36). His whole life was one of undeviating obedience to the Father. He ever acted as One Who in virtue of His Manhood was dependent on, and in subjection to, the will of His Father (Heb. 5.8; Phil. 2.9). Perfection seen in Gethsemane and at Calvary seen in His cries from the cross.

"All human beauties, all Divine
In my Beloved meet and shine
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One
That eyes have seen or angels known."

—R. McClurkin.

In Him no fault is found (John 18.38); In Him no sin (John 14.30; 1 John 3.5).

Yes "He is altogether lovely." In Him is every element of moral and spiritual beauty. Read of His perfection in the Song of Songs. 5.10-16.

Notes on Revelation

by



JIM FLANIGAN
NORTHERN IRELAND

***** "THE GOLDEN LAMPS" *****

As is well known, chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation are composed entirely of seven letters written to the seven assemblies named in ch. 1. The young believer should early learn the names of the cities, in order as the churches are addressed, and then learn to attach the meanings of the names, since these have a symbolic significance.

There are four interesting and profitable ways of approaching a study of these letters, viz.—

1. HISTORICALLY.
2. PROPHETICALLY.
3. PRACTICALLY.
4. PERSONALLY.

1. HISTORICALLY.

These were letters written to seven actual, existing, literal assemblies functioning at that time. They were located in a geographic circuit in Asia Minor, which we now know as Turkey. Outside of the Revelation we have mention of only two of these assemblies, Ephesus, and Laodicea (Col. 4.15-16). The city of Thyatira is referred to in Acts 16, but not in relation to the assembly, which was not yet in existence at that time. Only of Ephesus have we any real knowledge apart from the Revelation. We have the record of the beginnings of the work there in Acts 19, and of course we have Paul's epistle to the assembly, written some ten years later. It is a sad reflection, that conditions so well

known to us to-day, were actually prevalent in such early days of assembly testimony.

There appears to be what has often been called, a "Panorama" of the history of Christian profession. This we must consider in more detail as we peruse the letters, but here we offer five reasons to justify such a prophetic approach.

(i) *The significance of the number "7".* Why seven churches? Why seven only? There were others in this area. Why this particular seven? Is there not a prophetic significance in the divine selection of seven particular assemblies?

(ii) *These letters are an integral part of a book of prophecy.* The whole book is a prophecy, and the letters form part of that whole. It is not that the book begins in ch. 4 and a copy is sent to seven churches; the book begins in ch. 1 and the letters are contained in the body of prophecy. There must be a hidden prophetic meaning.

(iii) *The word "mystery" is attached to the letters.* This surely implies a deeper meaning.

(iv) *The analysis of ch. 1.19.* The "things which are" must be the things of chapters 2 and 3. In ch. 4.1 John is caught up to see the things which must be after "these things." The logical interpretation is that "these things" are conditions in the days of present testimony, as envisaged in the letters.

(v) *There is, in the letters, a most interesting series of allusions to Old Testament events.* These are noted in chronological order. From the Paradise, the Tree of Life, and the Fall, in Ephesus, reminding us of Eden; through the persecution and tribulation of Smyrna, suggestive of Israel in Egypt; to the reference to Balaam and to the Manna of the wilderness, in Pergamos. Then follows Jezebel, and reference to Monarchy in Thyatira. In Sardis there is an echo of Zechariah ch. 3, as we read of defilement, and white raiment, and in Philadelphia we have the City, the Temple, and a new Jerusalem, reminiscent of Nehemiah. But the age of testimony ends in blindness, in Laodicea, as did the days of the remnant. Those who came back from Babylon degenerated to the blind Phariseeism of our Lord's day. If the maxim is true, that history repeats itself, then here, in present day testimony, Old Testament history is being duplicated.

3. PRACTICALLY.

Any condition, of any assembly, in any place, at any time, may be found here. If the problem is here, so too, is the remedy. In a practical way, each of us may see his assembly depicted here, somewhere in the letters, and find also, the answer to every distressing condition. Always that answer appears to be a fresh appreciation of the Lord and His Word. The problem in each case may indeed be different; the environment and circumstances may be varied; but always there is that same appeal to a renewed recognition of some aspect of His Person. This is the unvarying answer to our varying need.

4. PERSONALLY.

“Every thoughtful believer will find himself mirrored here”—so it has been aptly remarked. So, I read the letters, interpret the condition to which each of them is directed, and ask myself the question—“Am I an ‘Ephesian’ believer, gone cold in heart?” or, “Am I a ‘Pergamum’ type, marked by a certain worldliness, my separation gone?” “Am I suffering, like Smyrna; or weak, like Philadelphia?” Whatever my state, there is an answer, and a remedy—Himself! In grace the Lord adapts His approach to suit the condition, but always the antidote for our failure is a renewed attachment to Him.

Apart from the specific messages and directions to each church, there are several great basic, fundamental lessons to be learnt here relative to assembly testimony.

(i) The Centrality, Supremacy, and Sovereignty of Christ. He walks in the midst. He is Lord. He alone has authority. He alone removes a lamp or threatens judgment. Twenty-four times in seven letters, our Lord says, “I will.” He alone has this right.

(ii) The Responsibility, Autonomy, and Unity of the lamps. Their privilege is to shine for Him, and upon Him. They are individually responsible and accountable to Him, not to each other. But their joy, nevertheless, is to shine together, unitedly, in a common testimony to Him. Each in its own district, each on its own base, but together diffusing their light for His glory. There is no amalgamation. There is no federation. There is no union. But there ought to be the sweetest fellowship and harmony, and an interest and

care for each other as together we bear witness to Him.

(iii) The continuity of assembly testimony. Right until the close of the period, the address is to the assembly. There may indeed be an appeal to the individual in the assembly, but still, the Spirit speaks to the churches (ch. 3.22). By all means let each individual believer see to his personal state and condition, but collective testimony has ever been the mind of God for His people, and we must foster and maintain 'House of God' character, so that He may dwell among us. A man's house is where a man resides, and rules, and rests. The assembly must be that for God. From the initial, apostolic, "Ephesian" days, through the centuries to the "Laodicean" end times, local assembly testimony continues. The word "church" or "ekklesia" is never used of the mass of believers on earth at any given time. It is used of the Church which is His Body, and it is used of the local company—a gathering of saints called out and called together to be His testimony, His assembly, in a district. The term "church of God" is probably used exclusively in the New Testament of that local testimony. It is surely orderly for every believer to join himself to the assembly in his locality, and to feel his responsibility there; not passing other assemblies just to find a company more to his liking. How many problems might be solved; how many polarisations would be avoided, if each of us felt his responsibility to the assembly nearest to his home.

It is interesting to note the consistent symmetry in the structure of the seven letters. The basic pattern is the same in every letter.

(i) Each is prefaced by the command to John to write. Always the command is in the same form. If, in our Authorised version, there is a variation in the case of the Laodiceans, this is an A.V. rendering only, with little or no support in early manuscripts.

(ii) There is then a particular approach by the Lord, in a manner suited to the condition of the assembly. Under some part of the description given in ch. 1 the Lord addresses each church. In wisdom and in grace, He adapts to the needs of His people.

(iii) To each and every assembly He says, "I know," and based on His Divine (and therefore accurate) knowledge of the conditions, He conveys His message, sometimes com-

mending, sometimes condemning, sometimes comforting, sometimes reproving.

(iv) There follows a promise to the overcomer. These promises again vary, but are consistent with the conditions and difficulties which the faithful have had to meet in testimony.

(v) Each letter concludes with an appeal which is worded so as to give a wider application to the message—"He that hath an ear, let him hear . . ." That is, to all with spiritual perception the appeal is made. The Spirit is speaking to the churches. Initially, the letter may be addressed to one particular church, but the contents are, eventually, for all the churches, to be appreciated by every individual believer with a will to hear.

As is well known, the promise to the overcomer precedes the summons to hear, in the first three letters, but in the last four this order is reversed.

In two of the letters, Smyrna and Philadelphia, there is no reproof. This is not necessarily because there was nothing to reprove, but because the Lord, in grace, recognises the suffering of Smyrna, and the weakness of Philadelphia. In the circumstances, He will comfort and encourage, rather than condemn.

In the Laodicean letter, and perhaps, it may be argued, in the letter to Sardis also, there is no commendation. The sovereign Lord has His reasons for withholding praise from assemblies which ought to have known better, and whose condition was indefensible. In the other three epistles, to Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira, praise and reproof are mingled.

Before proceeding to the actual text of the letters, we append the suggested meanings of the names, with the hope that young believers will early learn to attach the meaning to each assembly.

- (i) EPHESUS Desirable.
- (ii) SMYRNA S-myrh-NA. The sweet-bitterness of myrrh.
- (iii) PERGAMOS Marriage. Mixture.
- (iv) THYATIRA Continual Burning.
- (v) SARDIS A Remnant escaping.

(vi) PHILADELPHIA . Brotherly Love.

(vii) LAODICEA The Rights of the People.

There will be opportunity to enlarge upon, and involve, these suggested meanings in our study of the letters.

(to be continued).

“ZEPHANIAH”

by E. R. BOWER, Malvern Link, Worcs.

CHAPTER 3.8-10. The gathering of Israel and the nations

Israel is still waiting upon the Lord. From a Jewish prayer known as the Amidah, which is said standing, in silent devotion, we take the following extracts—“Sound the great Shofar proclaiming our freedom. Raise the banner to assemble our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed art Thou, O God, who will gather the dispersed of Thy people Israel.” “Return in mercy to Jerusalem, Thy city, and dwell therein as Thou hast promised. Rebuild it in our day as an enduring habitation, and speedily set up therein the throne of David.”

“Who is like unto Thee, Almighty King, who decreest death and life and bringest forth salvation.” (From “The Jewish Tradition” pp. 121-122).

And as Israel patiently waits, the world is fast becoming ripe for the gathering of the nations to receive from the hand of God, in indignation and anger, their just reward, but out of the purifying fires of God’s jealousy (see 1.18) will come a pure language embracing both Jew and Gentile; not only the dispersed of Israel, but (as some think) the dispersed of the nations. (Genesis 11.1-9) God’s very Name is Jealous (Exodus 20.5; 34.14; Psalm 69.9; John 2.17)—a Name which demands absolute loyalty. The fulfilment of Zechariah 14.16 and of the prophecy of Caiaphas (John 11. 51-52) is near.

In the bringing of the offering (v.10) will be fulfilled Malachi 1.11, “. . . in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a peace offering . . .” and it may be that Isaiah 66.20 is also seen here, “And they (the Gentiles)

shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord . . . as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the Lord." This service will be with one consent, that is, with one shoulder. In the 'pure language' is there an indication of the passing of Babel's curse?

CHAPTER 3.11-20. Israel restored. The rejoicing of God and His people.

Those who remember World War 1 may also remember the toast of the German nation—"Der Tag"—The Day. A day, which we all know did not materialize. As we read the prophets there is a phrase that occurs again and again; a phrase which burns in the heart of every believing Israelite. It is, "In that day," and it is the thought of that day which has kept alive the faith of Israel; though scattered, they are united in the faith which anticipates 'that day'. Through pogroms and the holocaust, Israel has suffered and often unspeakable agony. We have but to think of the horror of horrors recorded by recent history; of that which has been given the name of The Holocaust, and in which 75% of the Jewish population of Nazi Europe died. A Jewish historian asks, "Why are they (the Jews) so quiet? Why . . . die . . . without a single protest?" Does the answer lie within the pages of the prophets? Surely their suffering anticipates "that day". There is significance in the text upon an American memorial to the six million who died in The Holocaust. It reads, "Let there be light" and the dedication is to those who "gave their lives for the sanctification of the Holy Name." We recall that the literal meaning of 'holocaust' is "a burnt offering".

Why do we say all this? Simply as a point of emphasis within the signs of the times. The fig tree is putting forth its leaves. (Matthew 24.32).

When 'that day' comes it will be a day of rejoicing for gone will be their shame, their pride and their haughtiness. The answer given hitherto to the pleading of God their Father and the answer given to the call of their Messiah when He was among them, was an answer of pride, and their attitude supercilious. Pride in Abraham and in Moses; pride in a Temple; spiritual pride. The Apostle Paul summarized this in Romans 10 and 11 and we do well to note his warning to the Gentile believers.

Surely the words of Zephaniah must have brought comfort and courage to the victims of so many persecutions of the people of God.

“I also will leave in the midst of thee (where the Lord was already!) an afflicted and poor people and they shall trust (flee for refuge to) in the Name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in her mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” (See Leviticus 26.5-6).

The Tribulation Remnant will know that “the winter is past, . . . the time of singing is come . . . Come, my love, my fair one, and come away.” (Song of Solomon 2.10-13).

Israel will in ‘that day’ experience the truth of Matthew 18.20, “. . . where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” for this remnant will experience the Presence of the King of Israel in their midst, and they will rejoice and sing and the King Jehovah will sing with them (v.17). God’s perfect love will cast out fear. (1 John 4.18; Deuteronomy 7.21). How wonderful is this portrayal of the love of God! Saving, rejoicing, resting, singing, gathering. “He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest (or, be silent; or renew) in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.”

Before Zephaniah draws his writing to a close, the ancient promises of Deuteronomy 10.17 and 30.9; are brought to mind, “For the Lord your God is a God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible . . .” and, “For the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as He rejoiced over thy fathers.”

As we see this beautiful picture of the love of God for His people, we too should rejoice in the love of Him who loved the church and gave Himself for it; in the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (Ephesians 5.25; Galatians 2.20).

Zephaniah’s references to the Second Law—Deuteronomy—will have been noticed, and it has been pointed out by one writer that the prophets quote this book more than any two books of Moses put together, and it is of interest to note also that the phrase ‘this day’ is one of the key phrases of the book of Deuteronomy. The prophets looked to ‘that day’. Another writer (together with several others) holds

that Deuteronomy is a “prophetic reformulation of the law of Moses to meet the needs of a new age.”

The prophet Hosea wrote (3.4-5), “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king . . . afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.” Again, (13.10-11) “I will be thy King . . . I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath.”

Zechariah (14.16) said, “And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of the nations . . . shall . . . worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” and, (9.9), “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion . . . behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, . . .”

But!

“Behold your King!” “We have no king but Ceasar” “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” (John 19.14,15,19)

Zephaniah has, in a graphic way, drawn attention, not only to near judgments upon Judah and the surrounding nations, but he takes a leap into the distant day of the Lord, and the restoration of Israel when a King will indeed rule in righteousness—the King once despised and rejected, but then in the midst. Thus whilst the Christian believer may draw lessons from Israel’s apostacy, he can also take comfort in the hope of the glorious future which, if the signs are read aright, will shortly dawn. “When ye see these things, LOOK UP!”

IS DIVORCE PERMISSIBLE TODAY ?

by R. McPIKE, Annbank.

The subject of divorce among the people of God has aroused much controversy, many tears have been shed, and much unhappiness resulted from it. Need this be, had we kept close to the Word of God, and not concentrated on the isolated “Except” clause of Matt. 19.1-3.

What is intended to be taught by God in the Marriage relationship?

(A) As it was established in Eden before sin came into the world, the God uttered words binding that relationship was not affected by sin, therefore those words are binding

for all time. "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder." No enactments of men however high or honoured can reverse that statement. God cannot go back on His Word.

(B) To allow divorce on any ground is to refuse and rebel against the Divine command, and subsequent teaching of the marriage relationship involving Christ and the Church. (Eph. 5. 31,32) God's eternal purpose is that they should be together. No believer subject to the Scriptures would entertain any divorce between Christ and the Church, even though the Church be unfaithful to Him, and moreover, no true believer would dream of divorcing himself from Christ. On the ground of this oneness between Christ and the Church, we reject entirely any view that would attempt to separate or divide that ONENESS. Basically marriage is not so much a union, as it is a unity, "Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." One cannot be divided.

(C) To teach that Jesus Christ, the Son of God sanctioned divorce in Matt. 19 is to aver that He Who is God changed His mind concerning His initial commandment. "Are not the gifts and calling of God without repentance" (or change). Our Lord goes back to the primal word, "From the beginning it was not so." The "except" clause was not prescribed by the Son of God, but refers it to the Mosaic Law economy, brought in by Moses, who suffered a bill of divorcement by "reason of the hardness of men's hearts." God allowed it, but did not originate it in the O.T.—Moses—not God sanctioned it. Prescribed by Moses under Law, it is not something permitted in the Age of Grace, where the initial marriage relationship of Adam and Eve is seen to be a figure of the oneness between Christ and the Church, something not known or revealed during the Law Period. If divorce is allowed then the figure of Adam and Eve has no meaning, and our Lord has capitulated to the pressure of circumstances, which we cannot allow, and the Apostle Paul was deceived concerning God's purpose in marriage, as well as undermining the believer's eternal security and relationship to Christ.

If we accept the words of Christ, as sanctioning divorce in Matt. 19, in the new age of grace, then God's Son has countermanded God's original commandment concerning marriage. Since God is unchangeable in all other matters,

we expect Him to be in this also, else He ceases to be God, and Christ's claim to be God is open to question. This never can be. Christ stated simply the first and original principle of marriage.

KINGS AND PRIESTS (2)

by H. H. SHACKCLOTH, Burn Market, Norfolk.

In our first contribution under this title we endeavoured to trace the Divine purpose as to the believer's priesthood from its inception in the person and lineage of Aaron, and at the same time to take note of Israel's failure as a nation to fulfil it. The implication stemming from this is that the church has the obligation to recognise its supreme function of priestly worship if the fulfilment of the revealed will of God is to be established. This is not to imply that the church merely replaces Judaism; it would be more true to state that its exercises by contrast are seen to be far in advance at the spiritual level of anything the supplanted system could achieve. The first was a prophetic shadow; the last the realised substance!

The apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 3.6-18) contrasts the glory seen in the law of Moses and the law of the spirit of life in Christ, the birthright of the church. He admits that there was a glory belonging to the Law, but 'if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.' How embracive and how effecting it is, for, 'we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from (His) glory to (our) glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.'

The question then arises, 'What are the distinctive features of the priesthood of the New Testament church?'

Firstly, the New Testament refuses to acknowledge any difference in status between the various members of the local church at the level of priesthood. The two tier system widely accepted by most denominational bodies, consisting of an appointed ministry over a supporting laity has no scriptural authority; the temporary character of the apostolic leadership is outside the discussion, since it ceases with their passing; also the recognition of spiritual gifts within the

church is a separate matter, and has no bearing on universal priesthood, except to maintain that the gifts of the church were never intended to be invested in one individual.

Let us consider for a moment the apostle John's Vision of the glorified church as it is described in the 5th chapter of Revelation. We note that when this great company of the redeemed is first mentioned after the translation of the church at the Coming of the Lord, the ultimate purpose of God defined originally in Exodus 19.5,6, has been achieved to the degree that the entire church, from first to last, is seen to enjoy the privilege of priesthood with no human distinctions to diminish any persons position. Whatever function any one of the people of God may have served on earth; whether it be evangelist, pastor, teacher or one of those much under esteemed 'helps' when once they are seen in glory, all such distinctions disappear. Every one is part of that vast kingdom of priests; God's stated purpose being then finally fulfilled.

Dr. Handley Moule during the course of an address on the subject of 'service,' given to the students of Trinity College, Cambridge at the turn of the century, and based on the text 'His servants shall serve Him' Rev. 22.3,5, made a slight but significant digression in the following words, 'I wish to point only to the word 'servants,' not to the promise, 'they shall serve Him'; the verb in the latter place is a word fixing the sense specially to the service of adoration, but the noun in the former place is 'his bondsmen,' 'his servants by possession 'his slaves.' Such is the title of the glorified.'

Dr. Moule further amplified his remarks by saying—'His servants serve Him in His temple, and yet as Kings reign in His courts. All these things have an application (not fanciful but strictly scriptural) for the society and members of the true church on earth. All are revelations of a future which is yet in measure, a present too.'

'Christ is All' p. 203/4.

W. E. Vine's 'Expository Dictionary of the New Testament' quotes this verb 'serve' under both headings of 'serve' and 'worship' indicating that the worship and service of heaven can be regarded as an harmonious entity and incidentally confirming Dr. Moule's comments.

It is then in this attitude of adoration and worship that

the believer achieves his highest and noblest status (we use the masculine gender for convenience only!).

Consider then the *Present Position of the Worshipper*.

Our Lord defines this in His very concise directions as He outlines the broad principles of the mystical Kingdom, the future church by the statement 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst (Mt. 18.20). Bearing in mind that the phrase 'gather together' is translated from the basic word for 'synagogue,' our attention is drawn to the gathering rather than the meeting place. Evidently our Lord intended that the worship of the church was to be based upon the simple order of the local synagogue rather than that of the temple with its lavish ritual and vestments.

From the details which may be culled from Eidersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' we can see how wonderfully God overruled by bringing good out of the punitive judgement of the Babylonian captivity. It was out of the sheer necessity to improvise some means by which the captives could keep alive their faith, and instruct succeeding generations in the knowledge of the Law, that they met in whatever way their circumstances allowed, even if no other solution was possible except to meet in their primitive homes.

In the course of time synagogues were built, often as a gift to the local residents because of the prevailing Dearth; such an instance is implied in the building of the synagogue at Capernaum, its donor being the Roman Centurian whose servant the Saviour healed.

There would be worshippers met in this way, and formulated rules to suit the new situation, one of which stated that ten men of good repute could gather together and form a 'synagogue.'

Our Lord made it even easier for His people to gather as a local church in that it was not essential that as many as ten, but as few as two or three might claim His presence when they met together in His name.

A further enrichment which has come to us since the formation of the church, is our possession of the Complete Canon of Scripture. We can supplement the often concise statements concerning doctrine and practice in the New Testament by allusions to the detailed descriptions set forth

in the histories, and rituals of the old order.

It is sometimes urged that such an outmoded practice is tedious for present day believers. Bearing in mind that 'all scripture is profitable', and also that the resurrected Lord 'beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them the things concerning Himself.' (Luke 24.27).

The only conclusion one can arrive at, is that rightly used the Old Testament has a tremendous contribution to make to our worship. If our worship meetings tend to lag, and the scriptures seem inappropriate; considering our Lord's words, is it not due to the fact that we fail fully to relate them to Himself? The cause of our malaise, and its remedy lie entirely with ourselves.

In the Hebrew epistle the writer is seemingly pleading with the believer priest to enjoy to the full the position now conferred upon him as he writes, 'Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw nigh with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.' (Heb. 10.19-25).

This entire passage has allusions to the old rituals which no Hebrew believer could have misunderstood. Equally he would note with something akin to amazement the freedom in which every believer 'perfected for ever,' sanctified and having the new commandment operating in his heart and mind (ch. 10, 14-16) is pressed upon with holy boldness to enjoy the nearness of God, and to respond with spiritual worship. This applies to every believer present at the worship meeting. Those who are scripturally bound to observe silence are equally involved in worship with those who give vocal expression. This 'giving of thanks' should be representative of the feelings of the entire company that every one among them is so convinced that under the spirit's guidance the thanksgiving is expressing the thoughts and feelings of the gathering that a positive amen is spoken at such a 'gathering of thanks.' (I Cor. 15. 15-17).

Our position today corresponds very closely with the clear guidance the Lord gave the Samaritan woman at Sychar's Well, a both surprised and surprising hearer of

of one of the few definitive statements on the subject of spiritual worship found in the New Testament. 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor Jerusalem worship the Father . . . But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.' (John 4, 21,23).

**The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ**

by
the late
**William
Hoste, B.A.**

**THE OFFICES
OF CHRIST**

1. CHRIST AS PROPHET.

The Hebrew for prophet, nah-bē, is from a root 'to cause to bubble,' 'to pour forth words,' not of himself, but received from God. Christ, then, as Prophet is the Fountain of Truth, as implied in various of His titles—Wisdom (Proverbs 8); Counsellor (Isaiah 9.6); Witness (Isaiah 55.4); Apostle (Hebrews 3.1); The Word (John 1.1).

It was the Spirit of Christ, which testified in the O.T. prophets, and has continued to do so since Pentecost in His apostles and prophets and other servants; but His literal prophetic ministry was connected with His earthly life.

In Heb. 1.2 the Lord is contrasted in dignity with the prophets, but He was truly one Himself as He implied by such words as, "No prophet is accepted in His own country" (Matt. 13.5), and His works and words proved it (Lk. 7.16; Jn. 6.14; Jn. 7.40; Lk. 24.19).

The expression in John 6.14, "that Prophet that should come into the world," clearly refers back to the words of Moses, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto Him shall ye hearken" (Deut. 18.15). The Jewish Rabbis

deny any Messianic reference here, but on the curiously inadequate ground that the concluding verses of the chapter could not apply to the Messiah. The true explanation is that while these refer to any presumptuous prophet who might arise, as numbers subsequently did, the promise points to the Messiah. The Rabbinic interpretation explains the question to the Baptist, "Art thou that prophet?" when he had just denied he was the Christ (Jn. 1.20, 21). Moslem controversialists take advantage of the error of the Rabbis to shew that the Scriptures recognize Mahomet, and that he is the prophet predicted by Moses. This is negatived both by Peter and Stephen (Acts 3.22; 7.35), both of whom use Moses' words as foretelling the Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

The only argument the Pharisees seemed able to allege against our Lord's prophetic claim was that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," which was conclusive, neither in fact nor premise, for our Lord was of Bethlehem; and even had He been of Galilee, their argument was invalid unless they would deny the prophetic gift to Jonah of Gath-hepher.

The personal prophetic ministry of Christ is characterized by (1) its *Divine authority*, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God" (Jn. 3.34; Matt. 7.29); (2) its *spiritual vitality*, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (Jn. 6.63); (3) its *eternal certainty*, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mark 13.31); (4) its *judicial sanctions*, "the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12.48); (5) its *righteous basis* (Acts 10.36; Eph. 2.17; Col. 1.20).

2. CHRIST AS PRIEST.

The Lord is not only the Apostle, but "the High Priest of our confession." The sphere of His priesthood is heaven. He is Jesus the Son of God, "that is passed *into the heavens*" (Heb. 4.14). "If He were on earth, He would not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Heb. 8.4). Whereas He was of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7.14). There is a common priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2.5; Rev. 1.6), but that is heavenly. Every "priest" on earth, be he Roman, Anglican, Greek Orthodox or Pagan is, as such, a counterfeit.

The central act of the Day of Atonement was the presentation of the blood of the victims in the Holiest of all by the High Priest, not in his official robes, but in his linen garments. So Christ, as the Righteous One, passed into the heavens by means of His own blood. There is no blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat above, but the Victim Himself bearing the sacrificial marks, Who takes His place on the throne and constitutes it a throne of grace. This was the initial act in His priesthood, and all His subsequent intercession and advocacy are based on the blood of an accomplished atonement.

(a) He is *called* of God. Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest, but He was made a Priest by Him that said unto Him, "Thou art my Son" (Heb. 5.5); and He is *faithful* to Him that appointed Him.

(b) He is a *true* Man, being "taken from among men." "It behoved Him to be made in all things like unto His brethren that He might be a *merciful* and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. 2.17).

(c) He is a *tried* Man. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, being in all points tempted (i.e., in the sense of tested) like as we are (lit. 'according to the likeness' i.e., as far as it was possible for a sinless Person to be tested), yet apart from sin. He was never tempted to sin; there was nothing in Him to be enticed by it, but He passed through every test to the uttermost and was proved by each and all, fine gold (Heb. 4.15).

(d) He is of the *order of Melchizedek*. "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7.17)—that is, a royal priest. "He shall be a priest upon His throne" (Zech. 6.13). Though anti-typical of much in the Aaronic priesthood, He was of another order. Some have believed that the incident of Gen. 14 was a Theophany, and that Melchizedek was our Lord Himself, but this is, we may be sure, quite mistaken. The Spirit of God merely uses the suppression of all details as to the parentage and birth and descent of Melchizedek to compare him to the *Son of God* in his endless life and priesthood. The facts detailed do not apply to our Lord on His incarnation; and are incidentally a proof of His Eternal Sonship.

(e) He is *greater than Aaron*. The fact that Melchizedek blessed Abraham and received tithes from him signifies the

great superiority of his order, hence of Christ's, to the Levitical.

(f) *His Priesthood is Eternal.* Christ is not made priest after the power of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life—"Thou art a priest *for ever*," a fact emphasized by the oath with which He was made a priest; "The Lord *sware* and will not repent." "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7.21, 25).

(g) He is exactly *suited to our case.* "For such an High Priest became us" (Heb. 7.26). He intercedes for His people in their trials as they pass through the wilderness, and becomes their Advocate if they sin. As High Priest over the house of God, He leads the worship of His people. He exercises the ministry of comfort and refreshment to them also, as Melchizedek to Abraham. Perhaps this character of His priesthood will be manifested in a peculiar way towards Israel in a coming day, when He comes in glory. Then He will indeed minister "bread and wine" to the weary, though victorious remnant. In the meanwhile He bears His people's names as a constant memorial in His Father's presence.

3. CHRIST AS KING.

The reign of Christ, though in a spiritual sense true now, is in its literal sense future. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exod. 15.18). The first relation between God and Israel was a *Theocracy*. "He was King in Jeshurun" (Deut. 33.5). "I will be thy King" Hos. 13.10. In asking for a king Israel rejected Jehovah, that He should not reign over them (1 Sam. 8.7). A period of autocracy followed under Saul, the people's choice. He failed to carry out the will of God and the Kingdom was given to David, to whose seed it was promised for ever. This was the period of vice-realty, to be fulfilled in Christ. But for the sins of Solomon and his successors, the Kingdom was taken from Israel and given to the four great Gentile Powers, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. This formed an *interregnum*. But it was revealed to Daniel that a fifth Kingdom should be set up by the God of heaven, which should destroy and replace the other Kingdoms, but should itself stand for ever (Dan. 2).

During the domination of the fourth Gentile Empire the Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews—the direct descendant of a long line of kings and heir to the throne of David. What could that Kingdom be, announced by John the Baptist, the Lord Himself, the twelve and the seventy, but the fifth Kingdom—the Kingdom of Heaven then at hand? The “Sermon on the Mount” contains the laws governing its setting up, conditional on the repentance of Israel and based on the atonement of Christ, which must in any case be offered. In Matt. 8 and 9 are displayed the powers of the Kingdom and the credentials of the King, but as they are twice (see chs. 9 and 12) deliberately ascribed to Beelzebub by the leaders of the nation, from ch. 13 onwards the message is modified and the literal Kingdom is postponed,* instead, the parabolic form of address is adopted and the Kingdom presented in a new form—in mystery. In a sense this latter was no mystery, but that a Kingdom should exist in the absence of the rejected King was an undreamt of development. The seven parables of Matt. 13 present us this phase in various aspects—the “mysteries of the Kingdom.”

The Kingdom exists now, even in those who submit to the claims of the Lord—“righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” But when He returns in glory He will destroy His enemies, judge the nations and set up His Kingdom for a thousand years. At the end of this period, Satan will be freed for a short time to lead the last great rebellion of demons and men against the rightful King. But it will be suppressed by fire from heaven, and when the wicked dead have been judged, and the last enemy—death, destroyed, then the Son will deliver back the Kingdom to God, purged from every stain and “evil concurrent”—but none the less will continue to reign as the Viceroy of God the Father for ever and ever, for “of His Kingdom there shall be no end” (Rev. 11.15; Luke 1.33).

*Objection has been taken to this truth, as implying something derogatory to the sovereignty of God; but this in no way follows, as a comparison with Numbers 13 and 14 shews. Their entrance into the Land of promise was offered to Israel, but postponed by their unbelief. Instances of the same principle abound; e.g., God’s warning to Nineveh; His judgment on Nineveh; and on His people Israel (Jonah 1.3; 3.10; Joel 2.17, 18). The final accomplishment of God’s purposes is assured, but He makes the ‘when’ depend in measure on the obedience or rebellion of man.

ROCK OF AGES

AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY (1740—1778)

by JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen

'Rock of Ages' is a great hymn and has found its way into millions of hearts. Dr. John Julian says, "No other English hymn can be named that has laid so firm and broad a grasp upon the English speaking world as 'Rock of Ages.' This hymn has also been translated into many other languages. Dr. Pomeroy once found himself in an Armenian church in Constantinople. The worshippers there were singing but he could not understand their language. Nevertheless he discerned the effect; their hearts were stirred and tears were streaming down many of their faces. When he enquired as to the meaning of the words which they sang, he learned that it was the Arabic translation of 'Rock of Ages.'

This hymn was written over 200 years ago by a young man in his early twenties. His name was Augustus Montague Toplady. The circumstances of the writing of this hymn are of interest. Toplady, at that time curate-in-charge of the parish of Blagdon in the south of England, was one day overtaken by a severe thunder-storm in Burrington Combe, a rocky glen which runs up into the Mendip Hills. There was no habitation near at hand, so he took refuge between two massive pillars of rock. There the precipitous limestone crag towering about 100 feet high, is split right down its centre by a deep fissure. It was in this fissure or cleft that Toplady found refuge and shelter from the fury of the storm. Picking up a playing card which was lying at his feet, he wrote on its underside the words of this world famous hymn,

'Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.'

What was it though that provoked the writing of these words? It was the personal experience of the writer—not only that natural experience of sheltering from the raging thunder-storm in the cleft of the rock, but much more so, his deeper spiritual experience of salvation and safety in the Lord Jesus who is the true 'Rock of Ages.' This latter experience had become his when he was a lad of 16. It happened in Co. Wexford in the south of Ireland. While there travelling with his mother one evening and passing a barn, they heard singing. They stopped and ventured to enter. When the singing was over a simple servant of God named James Morris ministered fervently from that lovely Scripture text. 'Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ' (Eph. 2.13). It was that night and under those words that young Augustus Montague Toplady was brought nigh to God and found refuge and safety in the Lord Jesus, the 'Rock of Ages.' "Strange that I," he himself

said later, "who had so long sat under the means of grace in England, should be brought nigh by the blood of Christ in an obscure part of Ireland, amidst a handful of God's people met together in a barn, and under the ministry of one who could hardly spell his own name. I shall remember that day to all eternity."

When the words of this hymn first appeared in print about 12 years after their writing, they were entitled 'A living and dying prayer for the holiest believer in the world.' So they have been, and so they still are—the deep heart breathing of the soul. Prince Albert, the Prince Consort, asked for them and quoted them in his dying moments, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee." "For," he added, "if in this hour, I had only my worldly honours and dignities to depend on, I should be poor indeed!" Nor are these words only for the noble and the rich. They meet the need of every storm-tossed soul, directing each away from personal toil, personal attainment, personal zeal or even tears of contrition to Christ alone for salvation,

'Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands ;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone :
Thou must save, and Thou alone.
Nothing in my hand I bring ;
Simply to Thy cross I cling!
Naked, come to Thee for dress ;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;
Foul, I to the fountain fly ;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor : 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee :

Joint Treasurers :

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Secretary : John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

Friends, excepting those residing in Great Britain, should please forward gifts to : John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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



GRACE TRUTH

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

*Introduce the Magazine
to your Friends*

—LOTS OF EXCELLENT ARTICLES ON HAND!

CONTENTS

PEACE, PERFECT PEACE

by Cliff Jones

PENTECOST — ACTS 2

by E. J. Strange

NOTES ON REVELATION

by J. Flanigan

RESURRECTION

by W. W. Fereday

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. Hewitt

SABBATH, LORD'S DAY & BELIEVER

by E. Ogden

THE ATONING DEATH

by Wm. Hoste

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

by E. Parmenter

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by J. Strahan

EXCELSIOR

SONG OF SOLOMON Ch. 1, v. 9.

I scan this scene, explore its vast resource,
Its glistening gems, rich polished stones of earth;
I search the vein of gold along its course,
The strata of the rock that gave it birth.
But what are glistening jewels worth to me,
Or sacks of yellow dust compared to Thee?

I trace the sunset in the western sky,
Its golden rays a sonnet of the air,
A landscape hushed, rare beauty to the eye,
Sweet solace to the spirit, grand and fair.
But what are golden sunsets unto me,
When I can feast my longing eyes on Thee?

Entranced I listen to the notes of men,
Cantatas, LARGOES, jigs and lively airs,
While harmonies beyond my wit to pen,
Dispel from heavy hearts the anxious cares.
But what are melodies compared with Thee,
Whose Voice my music evermore shall Be?

The vaunted orator with eloquence,
Great swelling words, in elocution's might,
Upon a fertile mind one consequence,
To fill and flood the spirit with delight.
But what is lauded eloquence to me,
For never man did speak with force like Thee?

Cherished to me life's faithful friends acquired,
Companions on the homeward desert road;
Hearts knit together, by true love inspired,
Easing the burden of some tiresome load,
But what fair friend could be compared to Thee?
Thou Blessed Lord, Companion true to me.

No phantom of the fancy can distract,
Fine gold of Ophir, dim and tarnished be,
The glistening jewel ceases to attract,
As every object must, compared with Thee.
Lord, Thou art All in All among the Fair,
No Greater, Grander than Thee anywhere.

—JOHN CAMPBELL, Larkhall.

PEACE, PERFECT PEACE

by CLIFF JONES, Cardiff.

We live in the last days, in perilous times when men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," Luke 21.26. There are wars and rumours of wars, famine, earthquakes and pestilence. At a national level we are living in a land which has turned its back on God: a land which is not exalted by righteousness (Prov. 14.34). Our nation is suffering from the effects of turning away from God, from His laws, commands and precepts. There is increasing violence, stress, dissatisfaction and evil in our land, with worse to come if there is no national repentance and turning to God.

Changes are being brought into our assemblies. Where these changes are the result of men's wisdom and not God's will as revealed in His Word then the inevitable, long-term result will be unrest, with untaught, unstable believers being ". . . carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness . . ." (Eph. 4.14).

Individual believers have much which could threaten to disturb their peace. Uncertainty in the international situation, uncertainty regarding future employment prospects, the serious effects of inflation—especially on those living on fixed incomes, could cause believers to fret and worry.

What does God say to us in the circumstances in which we find ourselves? The eternal God does not change, (James 1.17). His promises do not change. He gives to the believer the same promises He has always given, and, when trusting and resting on these promises ". . . the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4.7).

Those of us who are saved by grace know that we will be kept, at all times, by the power of God. His power, like His love, wisdom, holiness and all His other attributes, is infinite and with Him nothing is impossible (Luke 1.37, 18.27).

There are so many promises. Consider 1 Sam. 2.9, "He will keep the feet of his saints." We can read so often of the keeping power of God as in Gen. 28.15, "Behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest . . ."

Those who rest entirely on God can truly say "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4.8), and "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29.11).

The peace of the believer can be disturbed by unconfessed sin in the life but "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins . . ." (1 John 1.9). He is "faithful" because He is God and cannot lie, (Tit. 1.2, Heb. 6.18, Num. 23.19). He is "just" because the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has been shed for the remission of sins, (Matt. 26.28).

The believer can know a peace that the world cannot know "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8.6).

We live in times when people are subjected to many pressures and lives are lived under continuous stress. In all circumstances God's promises remain. He promises His people strength and peace (Ps. 29.11) indeed great peace is promised to those who love God's law (Ps. 119.165).

There are great and precious promises in the Word of God which He would have us dwell on, rely on and trust. What a blessing it is to know something of the power of God, to appreciate something of His holiness and the love manifested in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing these things and having the Holy Spirit to guide us and teach us we should learn to rest on, indeed to enjoy, such promises as "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26.3), and "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14.27).

PENTECOST — ACTS 2

by the late E. J. STRANGE

God never patches—He makes all things new. New wine, our Lord had said, is not put into old bottles. The death and resurrection of our Lord marked a new beginning, the start of a new age in the dealings of the living God with man. The day of Pentecost may be regarded as the inauguration of this day of grace, when the Spirit of God was given, consequent upon the ascension of the Risen Lord.

The actual events of Pentecost are briefly but dramatically described by Luke. Amidst the teeming multitudes who had come from all parts of the Roman Empire to celebrate the feast there were the comparatively small number of the disciples of the Lord Jesus. They were indeed, a 'little flock,' but were destined with others to turn the world upside down. They were together in one place. Where this was we do not know; some scholars say it must have been the temple, but others emphatically declare it could not have been! We do, however, know what united them and indeed, should always unite believers, and that is a common love and loyalty to the Risen Lord. Here, however, they had met together specifically in obedience to the Lord to wait in Jerusalem, and in a few days they would be clothed with a new power in the coming of the 'Promise of the Father.' The Spirit of God would come as never before in His living, creative power that He might through Christ's Body bear witness to the absent exalted Saviour, making good to the disciples all that the Lord had done and was still doing for them. The symbols that He had come were the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and tongues of flame.

A new power was given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus. It was not for them to institute a new system of theology; it was not theirs to propagate new ideas. The Spirit of God, who came with the accompanying symbols of wind and fire, was given as our Lord had said before His death, that He might bear witness to Christ. The disciples task was, therefore, a proclamation in the energy of the life-giving Spirit of Jesus who had been crucified but whom God had raised and exalted, making Him both Lord and Christ. The response to this proclamation must be one of repentance and faith with the accompanying symbolic action of baptism. The evidence of the reality of these things would be seen in the life and worship of those who thus responded. Today, nearly two thousand years later, believers must never lose this centrality of the Christian proclamation. Should they do so, they will be out of balance and spiritual vision will become blurred. There is only one centre—it is the exalted Lord.

When the events of Acts 2 took place, Pentecost had for some Jews acquired added significance. Originally one of three religious festivals associated with harvest, it was also

the celebration of the giving of the law from Mount Sinai when God entered into a covenant-relationship with Israel whom He had redeemed out of Egypt to be His own special people. The tragic history of that covenant is told by the sad prophet Jeremiah in very few words, ' . . . which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.' Both to him, however, and to Ezekiel was given the revelation of a new covenant that God would one day make. This was to be of a different order from the old. That had been founded upon law, 'Thou shalt not . . . thou shalt . . .' but the new would be founded upon the promises of God, 'I will . . . I will . . .' Even as the old involved sacrifice, the new was established by 'the blood of the new covenant,' the precious blood of Jesus our Lord. The value of that sacrifice, and of the promises were assured to the believer at Pentecost by the coming of the Spirit of God. Ezekiel had prophesied, 'A new heart will I give you . . . and I will put my Spirit within you.' This is the Spirit who witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God. This is the wonder of the new relationship which was first realised at Pentecost. The Spirit unites us with Christ, baptising us into the one body.

At Pentecost also we see the new community of saints in its first days. Originally composed of Jews only, they were to learn, some rather slowly and painfully, that in the Risen Christ there were no longer any barriers. All had been broken down by His Cross and the message of salvation was to begin at Jerusalem, but in ever-widening circles it was to be proclaimed to the uttermost parts of the earth. It was left to the great apostle to the Gentiles to declare a few years later, ' . . . there is neither Jew nor Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.' Pentecost is for us not only to rejoice in our personal salvation, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His,' but also to recognise and rejoice in the unity of all believers.

'To Him united on the Throne,

Our Life, our hope, our Lord the same.'

Only a brief summary is given of the life and activities of the new Community, but here are embodied principles which should surely mark companies of Christians in all times and in all places. They remained steadfast, not as

Israel of old of whom Hosea said, 'Your goodness is as the morning cloud.' Thus they continued in the fellowship, which always involves walking in light and in love. The teaching of the Apostles was their guiding principle. They regularly 'broke bread' for had not this been the expressed wish of their Lord before He went to the cross? They were also marked as men and women who prayed. Their possessions were held for the common good and their life was no austere 'separation from the world,' but was full of gladness and singleness of purpose, and the people recognised the beauty of this new community. Where such conditions prevail, the Spirit of God works and many were added through His sovereign working.

Notes on Revelation

by



JIM FLANIGAN
NORTHERN IRELAND

"THE LETTERS EPHESUS, SMYRNA AND PERGAMOS."

Many interesting and profitable volumes have been written on the letters to the seven churches. What we offer here is but an introductory summary, an emphasis of the chief features of each epistle.

EPHESUS.

Once known as the "Gateway to Asia," and the "Light of Asia," where Oriental religion and Greek culture converged, this great city was probably noted most of all for the magnificent Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. The greater wonder of Ephesus however, was that in such a place God had His "ecclesia," a company called out for Himself, from all the confusion and sin. It has been said of the work of the Lord in Ephesus, that Apollos prepared the soil, Paul planted it, Timothy cultivated it, John watered it, and God gave the increase; so, the church in Ephesus.

This letter comes from Him Who holds, sovereignly, the stars in His right hand. He walks, observingly, in the midst of the churches, nothing escaping His notice. He knew, and appreciated, their works, their labour, their patience, and their intolerance of evil men and evil things. He saw them busy and active and orthodox. In all this toil and endurance they had not fainted. This verb "fainted" is the root of the noun "toil," which is more correctly "weariness." There is a paradox, and a play upon words, as if the Lord would say, "Though weary, thou hast not wearied; toil for me has been no toil." They had toiled to the point of exhaustion but had not wearied. All this the Lord knew and appreciated, and commended, but there was something sadly lacking. Once, He might have said to this assembly, as was said to another, ". . . thy work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*, (1 Thess. 1) but sadly now, there was work, and labour, and patience, but a departure from a love that used to be. They had known a better love, but had left it, and if this was not evident to men, it was known to Him, who in an earlier letter to Ephesus had been presented to them as Eridegroom and Lover (Ephesians 5:25-32). Their bridal affections had waned now, and the Lord missed that. It was a serious omission, and not to be minimized, that the driving force of their activity should be duty and orthodoxy, and not love to Him. "I know," He says.

So serious is this heart departure, that it threatens the very existence of the lampstand. I stood one day to admire a magnificent rambling shrub, which covered the gable wall of a house in colourful glory. As I admired, the owner said sadly, "But look—," and he pointed to an injury by which, about four inches from the ground, the main stem had been severed. "What will happen?" I asked. The answer was sad and simple, "It will die," he said. We must return in love to Him. It is not enough to hate what He hates, though that is proper, but we must return to positive love to Christ. The gracious reward is, that Paradise, and Eden conditions, are restored. This is the third mention of Paradise in our New Testament (Luke 23. 2 Cor. 12).

Prophetically, here is a picture of those early days of Apostolic testimony, in which, so soon, there was departure in heart from Him Who desired so much the love and affection of His people.

SMYRNA

The story of the suffering church is told in four verses. "Smyrna," is a derivation of "myrrh," which was an aromatic gum from Arabia. Myrrh was sweet to the smell, but bitter to the taste; a sweet bitterness; a bitter sweetness. It is mentioned in the New Testament, only in connection with the Birth, Death, and Burial of the Lord Jesus. From the bitter sufferings of the Lord's people there so often exudes a sweetness, that not only flows out to others, but rises to heaven too. So it was with Smyrna. Their suffering is two-fold; present and future. They were enduring tribulation, poverty, and Jewish antagonism. They had yet to face imprisonment, trial, and death. One storm had not yet passed and another was about to break. In such circumstances the Lord, in grace, will not reprove or criticize, and the letter is all comfort and consolation. Omit too, the reference to "works," as in v.9 (A.V.); this is usual in the other letters, but is not here. The Lord will go direct to their sorrows, and says, "I know thy tribulation." This is not the Roman "tribula," or lash, but a word meaning "to crush, or press," as grapes in a winepress, or as wheat in the mill stones. "I know," says the Lord. It is not the "I know" of omniscience, but the "I know" of experience. He Who had been to Gethsemane knew what crushing was.

"Gethsemane, the Olive Press,
And why so named, let angels guess!"

He knew their poverty too. He had been poor in Bethlehem and Nazareth. But how much better to be poor (but rich), than to be rich (but poor), like Laodicea (ch. 3.17). There are poor rich-men, and rich poor-men. The Laodiceans were poor rich-men. The Smyrnians were rich poor-men, like their Lord. For Him too, like them, there had been bitter persecution from the synagogue. The blasphemy of the Jews had now constituted them "the Synagogue of Satan." When, later, heathen opposition is spoken of, it is "the Throne of Satan," and when the trouble is heresy and apostasy, it is "the Depths of Satan" (ch 2, verses 12 and 24).

What encouragement to them, that He Who experimentally knew their sorrows was alive! He was the First and the Last, greater than any Emperor of Rome (Isaiah 41.4; 44.6; 48.12). He too, had died—but lived! They must not fear

the wrath of Caesars or Neros, with their presumptuous claims to deity; Jesus was Jehovah, and knew their sorrows. Was there Jewish blasphemy? and heathen revilings? and Diabolical opposition? Well! Sixty years earlier other Jews had inspired Rome against *Him*, and Diabolis the Slanderer had been there too. They must take courage. For "ten days" they would be crushed. The suffering may be extensive, and intensive, but it was limited, and under His control. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." God is faithful; be *thou* faithful; and eventually, the reward is a victor's crown, whether of Rejoicing (1 Thess. 2) or of Righteousness (2 Tim. 4) or of Life (James 1) or of Glory (1 Peter 5) an incorruptible victor's crown (1 Cor. 9). And even if our faithfulness should result in physical death, we have the assurance that that is all—the second death can never touch us, we are His.

Perhaps, looking at the letter prophetically, there were indeed in those early days, ten distinct waves of persecution and martyrdom. Stake, sword, arena, and wild beasts, all played their part. Some of our brethren were burned as human torches, to light up the arena where others were compelled to fight with beasts. It is said that the final wave of persecution, the Diocletian, actually lasted ten years. But the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, and as we must now see, Satan changed his tactics and strategy.

PERGAMOS.

As Ephesus and Smyrna were centres of commerce, Pergamos (or Pergamum) was the capital of corruption. It was an illustrious city of wealth, fashion, and mystery, renowned for its learning, its refinement, its medicine and science. It boasted a library of some 200,000 volumes, second only in the world to the great library of Alexandria. It was the Cathedral City of Paganism, where Temples, Universities, and Palaces of Paganism abounded. There were temples to Juno, Jupiter, Venus, Bacchus, and Aesculapius. Here, first, in Asia, was set up the worship of the Emperor as God. The image of Caesar was venerated with the burning of incense. Here too, was the residence of the pagan Roman Viceroy. In a word, the Throne of Satan was there in Pergamos.

In the midst of such corruption, the assembly had not

denied either the Name or the Faith. They were true to the great doctrines relative to the Person of Christ and the gospel; and this, even when martyrdom had invaded their ranks. But what the Lord had against them was that they harboured and tolerated Nicolaitanism, which was Balaamism. The Lord distinguishes between the assembly and "them," but "they" were there, nevertheless. As Israel had had Balaam, this assembly had the Nicolaitanes. What had been "deeds" in Ephesus (2.6) was now accepted doctrine in Pergamos. Balaam was the devourer (such is the meaning of his name) who mixed the people of God with Moab. As a result of his evil counsel, 24,000 of Israel eventually fell under judgment. The Nicolaitanes were similarly devourers of the people. So the meaning of their name—conquerors of the laity. They were the false apostles of 2 Cor. 11, libertines, who led the people to impurity. This was a greater threat to the testimony than the persecution of Smyrna, and the Lord approaches them with the two-edged sword. His people must be separate. He knows that they live where Satan has his Throne, and that testimony in such circumstances must be difficult, but they must be separate from it all, and He has against them that they are tolerating those who would destroy that separation. Idolatry and fornication, filthiness of the flesh and spirit, are not compatible with testimony to Christ. "I will come unto *thee*," He says, "and will fight against them."

To the overcomers, the promise is very sweet. They shall eat the hidden manna. When? Perhaps now, but in a fuller sense, then, when the battle and the pilgrimage are over. The faithful shall share with God His appreciation of His Son. How much has been hidden from us that we would love to know. Thirty years of fragrant living in Nazareth delighted the heart of God. Of those years we know so little. Are they "hidden manna," which God will share one day with His people? A white stone will be given too. The interpretation is difficult. It may have been a token of acquittal; or it may have been an honour to one returning victorious from battle; it may have been an award to a Freeman of the city; or a symbol of friendship with names of friends inscribed upon it. Whatever, we may be sure that here, in some way, is a token of His pleasure and appreciation.

Prophetically, in Pergamos, we trace the dark days, when "Church" and State were wedded together; when being a Christian no longer meant variance with the world, and the line of demarcation was obscured. May the Lord help us to maintain a distinctive testimony until He comes.

(To be continued)

DOCTRINAL BRIEFS

RESURRECTION

by **W. W. FEREDAY**

There are unquestionably natural laws, and God is the Author of them. But only irreverence could suppose Him to be subject to, or bound by, natural laws. In this, as in everything else, God is supreme, and acts as He pleases in the universe of His own creation. Resurrection is a Divine act. All other miracles pale before it. That a great fish should swallow a prophet, or Jericho's walls fall flat are mere trifles when compared with the power that can enter the domain of death, and call forth in bodily form persons long since forgotten from this scene.

Three things come before us in our consideration of this theme: the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of believers, and the resurrection of unbelievers. If Christ's resurrection is fable and not fact, then is Christianity a hollow farce. Preaching and faith are alike vain. Believers, instead of being saved, are yet in their sins, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. So the Apostle argues in 1 Cor. xv. Thank God, no such uncertainty exists. Christ's resurrection is one of the best attested facts in the history of this world. The precautions taken by the authorities of that day, the stern regulations concerning sleeping soldiers, the unbelief of the disciples, the large number of those who interviewed the Saviour subsequently, all combine to prove that no pious fraud was perpetrated, but that God really raised His beloved Son from amongst the dead. The fact itself is of immense import. It was God's public vindication of the claims and character of the crucified One, it signified His acceptance of His atoning work, and it involved the complete justification of every sinner who believes in His name.

What God did for Christ, He will presently do for all who belong to Christ. They will have a resurrection in

character like unto His. "Every man in his own order ; Christ the first-fruits ; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23). The notion of a general resurrection at the end of time is erroneous. No such confusion could possibly mark the ways of God. He has drawn a sharp line of demarcation between those who serve Him and those who serve Him not. At the moment of Christ's descent into the air according to 1 Thess. iv., all believers who have fallen asleep from the beginning until that time will be raised from their tombs ; and, together with the changed living ones, will be taken in triumph into the Father's house. Apocalyptic martyrs will subsequently be added to their number, but the mass of the believing dead will be raised at Christ's return. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 6).

A first resurrection implies that there will be a second. This will be the resurrection of judgement, and will take place at the close of Christ's kingdom—at least a thousand years after the resurrection of believers. The Father having given the Son authority over all flesh, He will, at the appointed hour, summon even His enemies into His presence. Alas for all such ! Constrained to meet Him as Judge whom they spurned as Saviour, they will be confronted at the great white throne with the record of their works to their confusion and dismay. Beyond that dread event there is no resurrection ; the second death is "a death that never dies," and none will ever be raised out of it.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(12) THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

This essential of Christianity is being blatantly denied not only by ungodly critics but by Christians in spite of the challenge of our Lord to His enemies, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin" (John 8.46).

His sinlessness is based on fact and confirmed by His disciples who lived closest to Him and were in the best position to know (1 Pet. 2.22; 1 John 3.5).

SINLESSNESS CONTESTED

Today we are confronted with the resurrection of an old heresy that teaches that it was possible for the humanity of Jesus to sin. Some assert that as Deity He could not sin but as Man He was capable of committing sin even though He did not sin. Some even draw a parallel between the creation of Adam and the incarnation of the Son of God.

The denial of the Virgin Birth nearly always goes with denial of the virgin life of Christ. The Manhood of Christ is to be studied not in the abstract, but in its actual, absolute, necessary harmony with His Deity, under His Divine Personality. Had the Manhood sinned, the Christ would have sinned in His Manhood; the highest moral impossibility. In the highest sense our Lord was incapable of sin, physically, morally and spiritually. All is in contrast when we look at Adam in Rom. 5.12-21; it is disobedience with obedience; sin and righteousness; condemnation and justification; death and life. Our Lord's humanity was holy. In 1 Cor. 15.45-50 the contrasts are clearly emphasized. The first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the Second, a life-giving spirit. The first man was natural, the Second was spiritual, so supernatural. The first is of the earth, earthy, the Second is the Lord from heaven. Peccability implies weakness and this is no part of our Lord's humanity.

SINLESSNESS CLAIMED

BY THE LORD HIMSELF. His challenge still remains unanswered (John 8.46). Satan himself could proffer no charge against Him (John 14.30). It is contended that none of the four evangelists says categorically that He was sinless but they record nothing that tells us against this. They could not, for there was no wrong to relate. A study of His life reveals a consistent consciousness of immunity from sin. The fact that Jesus never confessed sin implies, in His case, that He never did sin. The testimony of His Father is final (Matt. 3.17; 17.5). His own testimony (John 8.29).

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE. Our Bible categorically affirms the sinlessness of our Saviour. Peter the man of action, says He did NO sin (1 Peter 2.22). This is not merely Peter's own estimate, he was writing under the inspiration of God's Spirit who caused him to make this sweeping remark. It relates to all the details of His life from Bethlehem till Calvary. He called the Saviour

“the Holy One of God” (John 6.69). John the man of contemplation, says “that in Him IS NO SIN (1 John 3.5). The very principle was absent, the root of sin was not in Him. He was not able to sin having been born of God. He was able Not to sin. Never for so much as a moment did He touch a level lower than absolute moral perfection. He had a holy nature immune from sin.

Paul the man of knowledge says that Christ KNEW NO SIN (2 Cor. 5.21). He had no experimental knowledge of sin. Hebrews 7.26 states the holiness of His character:—“He was holy” (in His birth); “harmless” (in His life); “undefiled” (in His death); and in His resurrection “separated from sinners” R.V. and “made higher than the heavens” (in His exaltation). In birth, “That holy thing” (Luke 1.35). “He was tested in all points like as we are, yet He was without sin (Heb. 4.15).

THE TESTIMONY OF FRIEND AND FOE. Judas, “I have betrayed innocent blood” (Matt. 27.4). Pilate and his wife, “This just man” (Matt. 27.19,24). Demons confessed, “I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God” (Mark 1.24). He was marked by positive holiness. Peter “the Holy One and the Just” (Acts 3.14). The malefactor, “This man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23.41). The centurion impressed by the Lord’s serenity and victory exclaimed, “this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15.39); “a righteous man” (Luke 23.47).

His resurrection demonstrated the fact of His sinlessness. It proved His righteousness, because He had gone to the Father (John 16.10; Rom. 1.4). May we thank God daily for a sinless Saviour.

The above testimonies CONFIRM the sinlessness of Our Lord. The new nature in the believer “CANNOT SIN” (1 John 3.9). Since that new nature is fashioned after the image of Christ, dare we say then that it was possible for Christ to sin? God forbid.

These testimonies from, John, Peter, Paul and the epistle to the Hebrews all emphasize the sinlessness of the humanity of Christ.

As it is impossible for God to lie, so it is impossible for God to sin. Our Lord was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3.16) and in His humanity, no sin was ever con-

ceived, "He knew no sin;" no sin was ever committed, "He did no sin," and no sin was ever inherent "in Him was no sin."

Like man He walked, like God He talked,
His words were oracles, His deeds were miracles.
Of God the best expression, of man the finest specimen,
Full-orbed humanity, clothed with Deity,
No taint of iniquity, no trace of infirmity,
ECCE-HOMO — Behold the Man,
ECCE-DEUS — Behold thy God.

THE SABBATH, THE LORD'S DAY, AND THE BELIEVER

by E. OGDEN, Lancs.

We are living in days when the sanctity of the first day of the week has been destroyed beyond recognition by the world, and indeed held in light esteem by many of God's own children. The liberty of grace on which the Lord's Day is based is in danger of giving way to a license of free will, and thus the first day is not as wholly separated unto the Lord as it should be. On the other hand, there are some believers who still question the authority and validity of Sunday over the Sabbath and would have us return to its legal observation.

Whether the believer should observe the seventh or the first day of the week as the pivot of his worship and public testimony is a question that demands correct scriptural interpretation. It will therefore be necessary to consider the important place the O.T. gives to the Sabbath, and then to note how and why the Sabbath had to make way for the new day, the first of the week as recorded in the N.T.

We shall cover our study by following three avenues of thought. 1. The *principle* of the Sabbath. 2. The *practice* of the Sabbath. 3. The *passing* of the Sabbath.

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SABBATH.

The literal meaning of the word 'Sabbath' is "The rest."

Genesis chapter 1 describes creation in all its grandeur and beauty; phase by phase, stage by stage, day by day, until at the end of the sixth day the culmination was reached.

The first three verses of Genesis chapter 2 relate to the day that followed, the seventh day. This was the day on which God, having completed His work, rested. It was not, however, recorded as the Sabbath until the manna was given to the children of Israel in the wilderness (see Ex. 16.23). It is important to notice nevertheless that when the manna was given, there was no judicial penalty for a breach of the rest God had ordained. It is true that if a man did not comply with God's commandments concerning the gathering of this heavenly food, he and his family would suffer domestically and physically, but not judicially. It was the responsibility of each household to apply themselves to the recognised principle whereby they obtained the manna. It is so with the people of God today. God has given us His Word. We will suffer loss if we do not obey it. It is no judicial law we break by neglecting to feed upon the Word of God, neglecting our prayer life, or by forsaking the assembling of ourselves together with the local church in its regular testimony of worship and service, but by so doing we impose upon ourselves personal penalties and setbacks which could indeed be the first steps to backsliding.

2. THE PRACTICE OF THE SABBATH.

When God gave the manna to Israel He was dealing with them on the ground of grace, but when He gave Moses the tables of stone, the Sabbath was associated with creation, and its keeping then became a distinct commandment of God's Holy law. (see Ex. 20.8-11). He was then dealing with His people on the ground of the law, and the commandment to remember and keep the Sabbath became interwoven into the fabric of God's law. It is a point of consequential interest that the command for the recognition of the Sabbath precedes the instructions God gave concerning the establishment of the seven set feasts of Jehovah (see Lev. 23). The Sabbath was established in relation to the feasts, and the feasts were established in relation to redemption past and redemption for Israel to come. The Sabbath therefore had to do with "the rest" of redemption. It is however, a paradox that the true rest of redemption could never be experienced while the Sabbath remained. Such rest depended upon the resurrection of the Lord of the Sabbath on the eighth day of the Jewish Calendar, the first day for the believer.

Israel were constantly reminded of the rest God had provided for them, but they never fully entered into it. It was by full possession of the land of promise that their rest would be accomplished. That was to be their ultimate gain—rest! But they never completely conquered the enemy. There were still giants in the land. It was unbelief that kept them out (see Heb. 3. 17-19). Unbelief will always spoil the rest of the believer. It is one of the Devil's most successful sources of attack. It prevented God's earthly people from enjoying the fulness of His provision for them. It prevents His spiritual people from entering into the restfulness of communion with their Lord. The brother or sister who has little faith, has little rest. They who have a deep faith will also have a restful spirit.

Our Lord made it very clear that the Sabbath was made for man, and stated too that He was Lord of the Sabbath, and because of that, He had the authority to do the things He did on the Sabbath day. Perhaps there is significance of spiritual meaning that the Lord did seven miracles on the seventh day, the Sabbath!

3. THE PASSING OF THE SABBATH.

This brings us to the resurrection, but we do well to ponder upon the burial that preceded it. Paul gave equal emphasis to His burial when recording the events that followed Calvary. (see 1 Cor. 15. 3-4). The body of our beloved Lord lay in death in the silence of that garden tomb for the entire Sabbath. It has been said that the greatest honour bestowed upon that last Sabbath of the old economy was that the Lord Jesus, after pouring out His soul unto death, made it the one complete day of His bodily rest in death, as proof that His work was accomplished. As the sun completed its course, another Sabbath passed, the last to be recognised by God, and place was given to a new day.

With His resurrection, the seventh day of the old creation expired, transmitting its sanctity, but not its binding legality, to the eighth day, becoming, as the first day of the week, the believer's day of rest in the authority and power of a new creation. How necessarily must the Sabbath yield its claims to that new day on which the Forerunner of the redeemed race rose to take Headship over the church.

The change from the seventh day to the first day of the

week was foreshadowed in the O.T. by the use and importance of the eighth day in Israel's calendar of the ceremonial law to which there are many references that would take us outside the scope of this study, but which will bring profitable contemplation to the thoughtful mind. Suffice it to say that special honour was attached to the eighth day. It was then that the male Israelite baby was circumcised. This is of course the great type of separation. It was the day on which the priests were consecrated. This is the great type of service.

In relation to the past it was the eighth day. In relation to the present it became the first day and for the church it will ever remain so. In Col. 2. 16-17 we read that with other facets of the law, the Sabbath was a shadow of things to come. The legalist would lurk in the shadow, but the liberated believer will rejoice in the glorious Substance, the Lord of Resurrection glory. How like our God to draw us away from the law and give to us His Son to share with Him the rest of the new day. Under the law, and before at creation, rest came at the end of work. Under grace, rest comes at the beginning, and is the source of power for all work, and the proper condition for service.

But let the scriptures prove their own point. Of the ten commandments, nine comprised the moral law. The other, the Sabbath was ceremonial. The N.T. refers in principle to one of the nine, killing, and forbids it. It refers in particular to the remaining eight, into the numerative detail of which we cannot now enter. Search where you will in the N.T. however, the keeping of the Sabbath is not enjoined to be observed by the church. "The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1.17). He is our Great High Priest at the right hand of God in the heavens. Touched with the feelings of our infirmities, He is at the throne of grace from whence we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (see Heb. 4.16). He is there because He rose from the dead on the first day of the week. The Sabbath could not have brought Him there. It is therefore a day of triumph which the church rightly celebrates.

There is no doubt that the immediate transition from the seventh to the first day was acknowledged and accepted by the Apostles from the resurrection. The Apostle John on the

Isle of Patmos had his own name for it "The Lord's Day." Because so much of the Revelation John received is to take place during the period referred to in the Scripture as the Day of the Lord, there are those whose judgement we respect who consider the terms to be synonymous. They remind us that there is no scriptural evidence of the use of the term the Lord's Day by any of the other Apostles. On the other hand John was in exile during which he would surely have developed an increasing appreciation of all that the Lord was to Him. It seems no strange thing to this writer, that this was John's own personal term for the day of resurrection, a term now so widely, and we suggest, properly used by His redeemed ones today.

On the Lord's Day, the Spirit found John in a state of isolation and in an attitude of meditation in preparation for the experience of revelation (see Rev. 1. 9-19). Well may we ask, is this how the Lord finds us on the first of the week? It is His day, free from the obligations of the Mosaic law, and the encroachment of unspiritual exercises. Do we give it to Him entirely through each hour, or do we compromise by introducing matters which are better left for the remainder of the week? Of course the spiritual preparation for the Lord's Day with its specific sanctity should be made daily during the week as we gather, like a basket of first-fruits, every thought savoured concerning the Lord Himself, to pour them out in a flow of adoration and worship as we remember Him in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup in the fellowship of love.

The Sabbath has passed, but the rest of God is above the law, and still remains the blessed portion of His children until we share it with Him in the completeness of eternal days.

May the Lord the Spirit lead us all into the simplicity of these profound truths which He has given us to enjoy in His word.

THE THINGS THAT ARE FREELY GIVEN. 1 Corinthians 2.12

There are three kinds of givers — the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. To get anything from the flint you must hammer it, and then you get only chips and sparks. It gives nothing away if it can help it, and then only with a lot of display. To get anything

from the sponge you must squeeze it. It is good-natured; it yields to pressure, and the more it's pressed, the more it gives. But then there is the honeycomb. It takes delight in giving without being asked at all. It just overflows with sweetness.

**The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ**

by
the late
**William
Hoste, B.A.**

**THE ATONING
DEATH**

The Atonement is the display, as nowhere else, of the moral glories of the Triune God; the central fact of His ways with man.

The Incarnation divides time; the Cross eternity. Christ was foreordained as the Lamb slain, before the foundation of the world, (1 Pet. 1.19), and as the Lamb once slain, He will be the theme of endless praise.

God could create the worlds with a word or judge sin in a moment of time, but to atone for sin, so that He might be just and the justifier of the ungodly, is a problem of infinite magnitude. Man must either make personal atonement, and that he could never complete, or another must do it for him and the only one Who could, is God. and that only by "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10.10). This is the true, deep meaning of the death of Christ. On the one hand, "men by wicked hands have crucified and slain Him;" on the other hand, "He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2.23). "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3.18). No wonder then that the Atonement runs like a scarlet line of sacrificial death from Abel to Christ.

The Cross pervades all Scripture; the historical books prove its necessity; the Levitical foreshadow its meaning;

the Psalms portray its experiences; the prophets foretell its sufferings; the Gospels describe its fulfilment; the Acts proclaim its blessings; the Epistles explain its doctrine and the Revelation exhibits its fruits.

Some have maintained that the blood in connection with the sacrifices means the life of the victims transferred to the offerer, but this idea rests on a confusion. It is true that blood in the veins means life, but blood poured out means the life yielded, that is death; "He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53.12). A body deprived of its blood is dead. The blood on Joseph's coat proved to Jacob his son's death (Gen. 37.31). In the Lord's Supper the bread and the wine separated, speak, not of His life communicated, but of His life sacrificed. "Ye do shew the Lord's death, till He come" (1 Cor. 17.26). Every sacrifice was a fingerpost to Calvary, with the device "Without shedding of blood, is no remission" (Heb. 9.22).

In the Gospels we notice that, while only the briefest account is given of our Lord's life and ministry, or even of that fundamental truth the Incarnation, His death is described in minutest detail by each Evangelist. We need not be surprised, if the efforts of the Modernist to get rid of the Atonement, have necessitated a dissection of it, out of the very organism of the Scriptures, leaving for the Living Word, a bag of bones. But why should the Gospel writers dwell on these harrowing details? Surely out of love to their Lord they would pass over with the merest reference the humiliation of His shameful death, "but the Spirit suffered them not." Even on the holy mount Moses and Elias instead of discoursing, as would have been natural, of the Heavenly glory they had just left, or of that Kingdom glory which was to come, "spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9.31). To them that decease was of transcendent importance, and so to the apostles in their preaching in the Acts and in their teaching in the Epistles.

How sad that there should be found professedly Christian teachers to assert that the whole idea of atoning sacrifice is of heathen origin and that, merely, because the need of sacrifice is felt in heathen religions. The theory is so unscriptural as scarce to need confuting. Such a need might well be explained as innate in sinful man, or as being a

trace of the original ordinance of God communicated to Adam. In any case the Jewish sacrifices were ordered by Jehovah in plain terms for Israel (Lev. 1.1; 4.1; 6.1, etc.), and are interpreted in the Hebrews Epistle as figures of the Only Sacrifice, which can take away sins—the Lamb of Calvary.

Those who object to what they term “a blood religion,” or “a religion of the shambles,” cannot do so on the ground that such is not found in the Scriptures, but for subjective reasons which may be referred to later. Atonement is however the *sine qua non* of Divine forgiveness, and to reject it is suicidal.

The Incarnation was no compliment to humanity showing how high they had risen, but a proof how low they had fallen. There is now no gospel of the Incarnation, except in so far as it was the necessary preparation for the Atonement. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (John 12.24). The Lord was born in order to die, but as man He was not subject to death, as we are on account of sin, but only capable of dying. Death had no claim upon Him as has been well said, “Christ came not so much to preach the Gospel, as that there might be a Gospel to preach,” and the only Gospel is “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Etymologically the word means *at-one-ment* or reconciliation, and indicates for those who press this meaning, the bringing together of man and God, and that, as though the need lay wholly on man’s side.

But the usage of a word is often a safer guide than its strict etymology and it is clear that much more is conveyed in the word than a “making it up.” The Hebrew root *kah phar* primarily means ‘to cover over,’ e.g., “Thou shalt pitch (LXX, ‘asphalt it’) the ark (*kah-phar*) within and without with pitch” (*koh-pher*, Gen. 6.14); but then, secondarily, it comes to mean ‘to make satisfaction,’ ‘to appease,’ because these only have the effect of ‘covering,’ or in Scriptural language of remitting sins. This is the sense the word bears in connection with the Levitical sacrifices, e.g. Ex. 16.63. “And Aaron shall make an atonement.” In fact, whenever we have ‘atonement’ in A.V. it is this same root *kah-phar*, which is also translated *reconcile* (e.g. Lev. 10.20; Ezek.

45.20) and sometimes *pacify* (Ezek. 16.63; Prov. 16.14; or Deut. 21.8; "Be merciful"). 'Mercy seat' is the same root *kappohreth*, also *ransom* (Ex. 30.12; Job 33.24; 36.18); and *satisfaction* (Num. 35.31 and 32).

The Septuagint equivalent is *exilaskomai* to appease, propitiate, the same root as that used in Heb. 2.17, to denote the object of the Saviour's death, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," also in Luke 18.30, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The substantial form is *hilasmos*—propitiation, as in I John 2.2, and 4.10. This is connected with *hilasterion*, the mercy seat (Heb. 9.5) and in a spiritual sense in Rom. 3.25, "Christ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." In Rom. 5.10, atonement (R.V. reconciliation) is the equivalent of *katallage*, which word, as Dr. Moule insists, "habitually points to the winning rather the pardon of an offended king, than the consent of the rebel to yield to his kindness."* Thus "Be ye reconciled to God" will mean not so much "Bend your pride to His unalterable benevolence," but "secure while you can His acceptance." This is very important and is borne out by Matt. 5.23, 24, where it is the offender who is exhorted to be reconciled to his offended brother, by confession and amends. God has a controversy with man, until that is settled righteously, He can have no dealings with him. The Hebrew word *sah-lek*, to forgive, is from a root to lighten and that is indeed the effect of forgiveness of sins, the burden rolls away and peace is enjoyed. It was only because our Lord was on the way to the place of atonement that He could pronounce such words, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9.2). In order "to take away sin" from us, He had to take it on Himself and suffer a sacrificial death as the Lamb of God (John 1.29).

When we propose, as is now the case, to give a Scriptural interpretation of the Atonement, we are told by some, that it is quite unnecessary, that we ought not in fact to have "a theory," as they term it, of the Atonement. But this is hardly possible. How can we help forming some idea of what the death of Christ for us means? And those who speak thus do not mind having "a theory" themselves, what we may call the "moral" or "subjective" theory. According to this, the death of Christ, as a wonderful manifestation of

*Outlines of Christian Doctrine, pp. 79, 80.

the love of God, creates in the human heart penitence for sin, trust in the Divine goodness and the desire to keep his commandments and that it is on the ground of this subjective change wrought within the sinner, that God is objectively propitiated. But how is this to be made practical? For apart from atonement, the subjective feelings most naturally produced by the cross would be indignation at the perpetrators of His sufferings, and pity that He should have suffered so unnecessarily; but the conviction that He suffered for me does bring home to me God's love, and produces love in return, and some desire to please Him. Otherwise how does what happened at the cross really shew God's love to man or lead effectively to a change in him? Unless there was some imperative need for Christ to suffer for the salvation of men, His passion would tend to produce exactly the reverse impression to that alleged. Supposing the captain of a mutinous crew jumped overboard in mid-ocean, leaving behind him an explanation that he had only done this to shew his love to his men. Would this act be intelligible, or would it not rather be put down to a weak sentimentalism, if anything, an encouragement to the wrongdoers?

The whole imagery and order of the Jewish sacrifices combat the idea that it is some subjective change in us which earns the favour of God. No such thing as any subjective change in the offerer is even contemplated in the law of the Levitical offerings. Was the cross, as Dr. Dale* has well asked, merely "God's method of conquering the human heart" or "had it a direct relation to the remission of sins?" Apart from this latter he adds, "I confess myself unable to attach any meaning to the statement that the death of Christ was a revelation of His love." This moral theory is woefully weak in driving-power, and virtually charges God with foolishness.

Though we would shrink from any claim to give a complete account or interpretation of this great truth, we do maintain that the Scripture itself explains it in no uncertain sense, and the only way to understand the Bible as a whole, is to accept the evangelical doctrine of the Atonement. That alone links, in one harmonious whole, the Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and the Epistles. (To be continued)

*The Atonement, Preface to 7th edition, p. liv.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

by ERIC PARMENTER, Wimborne.

The disciples are brought in against the setting sun of the ministry of John Baptist, with which a world era was brought to a close—"for the law and the prophets were until John" Luke 16.16.

John after he had observed in Ch. 1.29, the work that the Lord Jesus came to accomplish: now indicates those whom the Lord would gather to Himself who were the result of His work on the cross. These would be representative men as to the present church period. In the matter of winning souls for Christ it becomes obvious from John 1 that there is no stereotype method with God, but a variety of ways are used to bring men and women to Christ.

DIVERSITY OF METHODS. A casual reading of the passage reveals that the first disciples did not all come the same way. The first two both found Christ as a result of the preacher's message (verses 35-40). The attitude of the preacher is noted in verse 35 "John the baptist stood . . ." there was no fleshly activity: the content of his message centred upon Christ—"Behold the Lamb of God" the first mention of the lamb in the Old Testament—"Where is the lamb?" is answered in the first mention of the Lamb in the New Testament. "Behold the Lamb of God." The vital truth of the message revolved around the Person and the work of Christ.

Next, two were brought to Christ as a result of personal witness—verse 40 Simon Peter, verse 45 Nathanael. The operative word in both cases is Findeth "he first findeth" (verse 40) "Philip findeth" (verse 45). Out of a deep sense of joy and satisfaction found in the Saviour, Andrew found his own brother (v.41) and brought him to Jesus (v.42). Philip found Nathanael—(v. 45) the witness borne to Christ by Philip raised a question with Nathanael which he set forth as an objection—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (v.46). But the objection is met by Philip with "Come and See" (v.46). As we consider Andrew there is the reminder of personal responsibility to the family circle: and the lesson we learn from Philip is that we must expect to meet with objections.

One, we next learn was found by the Lord Himself—

verse 43 "Jesus was minded to go forth . . . and findeth Philip" it is with some interest that we observe that Philip was from Bethsaida, yet neither Andrew nor Peter, both of the same city, made contact with him: But God had not reached the end of His resources—should the preacher prove unfaithful or the believer prove indifferent God will save men in the exercise of His sovereignty apart from all human instruments.

DIVERSITY OF MEN. The Lord Jesus dealt with each one differently, *Andrew*—he does not appear as a dominant figure but rather an inconspicuous man willing to be a link in the chain of God's working, scripture refers to him as "Simon Peter's brother" having brought Peter to Christ he is content to fall into the background as Peter comes into prominence.

The means of contact is indicated in verse 38 "Jesus turned . . . saw and said 'What seek ye?'" The question of the Saviour was meant to be a test to their motives—the question revolves round *What* not *Whom*. What were they seeking for in Christ? the implication in the word 'Seek' is that of 'desiring earnestly' the answer given was an evidence of that desire—"Where dwellest Thou" suggesting the thought of fellowship and communion: Such was the attractiveness of Christ to their souls that they desire fellowship with Him. The Lord responded to that desire in words full of grace—"Come and see" and they came and saw and abode with Him (v. 39). What deep impressions must have been made upon them!—to abide with Christ for them was but a foretaste of what every believer will enjoy for all eternity.

Simon Peter in contrast to Andrew had every confidence—his was a character marked by strong personality: full of self confidence—here was a man of impetuous nature and hasty tongue yet the Lord looked upon him and said "thou art Simon" (v. 41-2) indicating what he was naturally confident yet vacillating "thou shalt be called Cephas" what he became spiritually through contact with Christ: it was Peter who in face of Israel's rejection of her Messiah when asked by the Lord Whom say ye that I am? Replied "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16.16), it is worthy of note that Peter's Confession brought together a number of articles in the Greek setting them before every

word by means of which the confession enhances the truth expressed, "Thou art *The Christ, The Son of The God The Living*" the sonship of which Peter's confession speaks is a proclamation indeed of Deity.

Philip was a man who is occupied with circumstances and who calculated without Christ. When the Lord put him to the test in John 6.5-7 by asking his advice, 'Philip whence shall we buy bread?' Philip's answer reveals that he calculates the problem in the realm of material resources, "two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one of them may take a little." Yet this was the man who was sought after and found by Christ (vv.43-44). The Lord said unto him "Follow Me" (lit) "follow with Me" indicating the thought of discipleship and companionship. What impressions were made upon Philip are evidenced in his words, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and prophets did write."

Nathanael "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile" such were the Lord's words concerning this man, one in whom there was none of Jacob's crookedness and craft. Was Nathanael a somewhat disillusioned man? Verse 46 records his initial reaction "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth" but Philip pressed him to "Come and See" and in the presence of Divine Omniscience he is forced to cry "Whence knowest thou me" verse 48 and a further evidence of omniscience caused him to testify "Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel."

DIVERSITY OF MINISTRY is to be seen in these representative men.

Andrew is connected with bringing souls to Christ "he first findeth his own brother Simon . . . and he brought him to Jesus." (Ch. 1.41).

It is Andrew who introduces the lad with the five loaves and two small fishes (Ch. 6.8-9).

He tells the Lord about those certain Greeks who desired to see Jesus. (Ch. 12.20-21).

It is of interest to note that he was of Bethsaida meaning 'The house of fishing' thus the Lord says—I will make you fishers of men, Mark 1.17 and with Andrew the business of finding men for Christ began at home.

Another point of interest is found in the meaning of Andrew's name (i.e.) courageous: manly: and this is not

surprising for it demands a Manly courageous spirit to win souls for Christ.

John is not connected so much with bringing souls to Christ but rather Shepherding the family of God: the characteristic word of John's writings is 'Little Children' seven times over in his first Epistle he uses this diminutive of affection (lit) dear children—yet in his ministry we find that he covers over nothing. There is a deep affection in his heart for God's family yet he would maintain Divine standards in his ministry to them. Again he is most self effacing—never referring to himself by name in his writings but rather as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' meaning that he lived in the enjoyment of the knowledge of the Lord's love for him: When we turn to his Revelation we find that he never stands aloof (Rev. 1) "I John your brother" he would always link himself with the family of God.

Peter would be representative of the teacher—he was one who received a twofold commission from his Lord, one before the cross, the other after the cross.

Luke 22. v. 32. . . when thou art turned again strengthen thy brethren

John 21. . . feed my lambs

Peter's ministry must be based on love for Christ so three times the Lord puts the question to Peter 'Lovest thou me'

When he writes his first epistle his brethren are in trials and persecutions so Peter takes up his pen to encourage them and brings forward the grace of God as the source of strength and support.

When he writes a second time false teachers have arisen disseminating error thus Peter would warn his readers and emphasise knowledge as their source of safety and security bringing in the Lamp of truth in the midst of the darkness lighting up three mountain peaks associated with future glory cf 2 Pet. 1.19, 1.16, 3.13.

Nathanael would be one occupied with the prophetic word, this would be indicated in his reference to the prophets and the Lord conversing with him on matters relating to the future but having surveyed the first disciples we have noted in passing they were all different in character—brought to Christ in different circumstances—having a different sphere in which to move, yet all had something to contribute.

Perhaps we could put it this way, they all had gift but not all the same gift, but what gift was bestowed was used for the mutual profit of all.

Is this not so today? We all have been given gift but not the same gift yet what has been imparted to us needs to be used for the profit of all, realising that we all serve the same Lord.

WARNING — RESEARCHERS !

We suggest that correspondents, elders and members of assemblies would be well-advised not to fill in, or to allow others to fill in on their behalf any questionnaires about the numbers attending, and the conduct of the various meetings and activities of the assembly with which they are associated. The assemblies of the Lord's people are independent, autonomous—responsible to the Lord alone for all they do. Surveys and statistics relative to so-called "brethren" are unscriptural and completely unnecessary, whether they be made by persons or groups inside or outside assembly fellowship.—THE EDITOR.

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (3) by JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen

'ABIDE WITH ME'

HENRY FRANCIS LYTE (1793—1847)

It was in the year 1800 that two young boys were sent by their father from the village of Ednam in the Scottish border country to Portora Royal Boarding School in Co. Fermanagh. Henry Francis Lyte, the younger of the two boys was only 7 years of age when he arrived in Enniskillen, while his brother was just a few years older. Separated from their parents and material support not forthcoming for their upkeep at the school, Dr. Burrowes, the then headmaster, took an active interest in them and became their benefactor and foster-father. Little did Dr. Burrowes know then that Henry Francis Lyte was to become the author of that famous and immortal hymn, dear to all our hearts, the hymn 'Abide With Me!'

Lyte wrote that hymn right at the end of life, just two months before he died. He was then 54 years of age, and it was in Brixham in the south of England in the year 1847. Lyte had spent 10 years at Portora, graduated B.A. and B.D. at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1815, and after a short ministry as curate at Taghmon in Co. Wexford, he settled in the fishing town of Brixham on the

south coast of Devon. There he ministered to those fishermen and their families in All Saints' Parish Church for about 25 years.

The great day when the hymn was born was the 4th September, 1847. It was the first Sunday in September, but it was Lyte's last Sunday with his own people of Brixham whom he loved so dearly. Though a sick man, he resolved to minister to them on that last Sunday. His text was chosen from Luke's Gospel, ch. 24. v. 29. "Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." Feeling exhausted he rested in the afternoon and in the evening went out to sit on the edge of the cliffs at Berry Head overlooking Torbay Bay. It was a lovely sunset over Torbay Bay and the sun of his own life and ministry was westering and going down. That lovely text from the Gospel was still ringing in his ears. With such thoughts and while sitting on a great stone yonder at Berry Head, he composed and wrote the words,

'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide,
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Thro' cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where grave Thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!

Hold then Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine thro' the gloom, and point me to the skies;
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Lyte left the same week for the South of France where he died two months later and was buried at Nice, a beautiful marble cross marking the spot. Still each evening at Brixham at 8.00 p.m. the bells of Lyte's Parish Church peel out the strains of 'Abide With Me!' for the fishermen as they put out to sea.

This hymn is immortal—it has been sung over and over again at Wembley Stadium; it was sung at the beaches of Dunkirk; at

Westminster Abbey by a large and notable company; at Khartoum as General Gordon waited patiently and with apprehension, and in the Antarctic as Sir Ernest Shackleton lay on his deathbed. Nurse Edith Cavell as she goes to execution in Brussels is attended by Mr. Gahan, the British Consul. Together they repeat very softly and very slowly the words of 'Abide With Me!' When the moment of parting comes she clasps his hand with a smile, "We shall meet again—heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee" and turning away she is heard to quietly breathe, "In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

Dr. F. W. Boreham says, "This hymn assures us that, so long as the world stands, no man need be lonely who will extend the hospitalities of his soul to One who loves to abide with all who will court His company." It was so at the doorway at Emmaus on that resurrection evening when Cleophas and his companion constrained the risen Saviour to come in and abide. It was so for Henry Francis Lyte at the age of 25. Though then an ordained minister and while visiting another dying clergyman, they both discovered that they lacked inward assurance of salvation and peace. But together they sought it and through the Scriptures they found it—rather they found Him, the living Saviour; threw wide open the door of their heart and life to Him who has pledged to be the unfailing companion along life's highway, and through that valley when the darkness deepens and other helpers fail and comforts flee. May we all hunger for that Divine companionship!

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor: A. M. S. Gooding

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor: 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee :

Joint Treasurers :

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Secretary : John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

Friends, excepting those residing in Great Britain, should please forward gifts to: John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



CONTENTS

CARING FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

by J. G. Good

ROMANS OUTLINED

by J. B. Hewitt

THE PROPHECY OF JOEL

by E. R. Bower

THE ATONING DEATH

by Wm. Hoste

NOTES ON REVELATION

by J. Flanigan

ABRAHAM, HIS EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

by J. Campbell

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by J. Strahan

JESUS CHRIST

Isaiah 9, v. 6

—and His name shall be called
**WONDERFUL - COUNSELLOR - THE
MIGHTY GOD - THE EVERLASTING FATHER,
THE PRINCE OF PEACE**

“Tell me the name, then, when the day is dawning,
Ere through the busy world my way I take.”
'Tis 'WONDERFUL' - He'll gild the dullest morning
If thou wilt live thy life for Jesus' sake.

“Tell me the name when noontide finds me viewing
With anxious eyes the problems that oppress.”
'Tis 'COUNSELLOR' - thy failing strength renewing,
He'll teach thee wisdom, banish thy distress.

“Tell me the name when evening shadows creeping
O'er land and sea, proclaim the coming night.”
'Tis 'EVERLASTING FATHER' - He, unsleeping,
Will let no threat of ill thy soul affright.

“Tell me the name when life's short journey ending,
My senses fail, my mortal eyes grow dim.”
'Tis 'PRINCE OF PEACE,' all human peace
transcending,
He'll give thee rest ; thou shalt abide in Him.

*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee,
—Psalm 9, 10.*

CARING FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

by J. G. GOOD (Bicester)

The four Evangelists all refer to the incident concerning Joseph of Arimathea, regarding his burial of the 'body of Jesus,' recorded in Matt. 27.57, Luke 23.50, and John 19.38. In the account by Matthew the word stressed is 'rich' in keeping with the Royal character of the Gospel, telling us of the Capacity of Joseph, the King has limitless resources. Again, Mark in his Gospel emphasises the Character of Joseph, 'an honourable counsellor' a servant must have character, we are reminded that there is no genealogy in Marks Gospel. Luke in his Gospel is depicting the perfect Manhood of Christ, he alone tells us that Joseph was 'a good man,' (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them), the Conduct of Joseph is in view here. Finally, John writes about the Son of God, possessing in perfect, spotless Manhood, the attributes of Deity, he alone describes Joseph as 'a disciple of Jesus, but secretly,' John 2.25, John reveals the Convictions of Joseph, a crisis reveals the man of the purpose of God. The word to the prophet Elijah, comes to mind, 'Yet have I left Me seven thousand' I Kings 19.18. Why Joseph? Where were those who had companied and publicly served with the Saviour?

Arimathaea was the birth-place of Samuel, another man for a crisis, referred to as Ramathaim-Zophim, I Sam. 1.1. The meaning is significant, 'the two high places of watchers' (Newberry margin). Would this be suggestive of Positional and Practical elevation? Back to Joseph, 'who himself waited for the kingdom of God,' can we be aware of what we are Positionally, without being affected Practically? Listen again to Luke, 'he was a good man and a just' Luke 23, 50-57. In the Epistles of the New Testament, Positional Truth is presented in order that the Practical implications might be effected in the life of the believer! There must also be an attitude of mind, on the watchtower of vision and hope, occupied with coming Glory!

It is significant that we find in the New Testament, two Joseph's caring for the Body of Christ, both designated 'good' men. We are introduced in Acts 4.36, to another Joseph, (he will add), he was given a sur-name by the apostles, such was the character and qualities of the man! Barnabas, son of Paraklesis, son of consolation, and son of

exhortation. We are reminded of the dual role of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, one called alongside to help. Our Lord Jesus, speaking to His own in the Upper Room, John 15.26 'He will teach you all things,' again still in connection with the sending of the Paraclete, 'I will not leave you orphans.'

The traits of character so clearly seen in Joseph of Arimathea, are displayed in Barnabas, relative to their concern and care for the Body of Christ. We read that Joseph 'begged' the body of Jesus, asked and continued to ask, is this not the idea of exhortation? The thought of consolation pervades the action of Joseph, 'he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb.' Whatever his thoughts concerning resurrection were, he was deeply concerned about preserving the body of Christ. The ministry of comfort, is of great importance to the Christian, see I Thess. 2.11, 4.17, and 2 Thess. 2.17. We give something of ourselves when we minister comfort, but we must have before we can give. 2 Cor. 1.4.

Looking at the references to Barnabas in the Book of the Acts, we see a servant concerned for the spiritual welfare of the Church which is His Body, in its local aspect. In Ch. 4.37 he was marked by Sacrifice, the portion of Scripture in question does not envisage communal Christianity, the selling of land and houses was peculiar to the Church at Jerusalem. What we have is the impulses of love meeting a local need, this book is transitional in character, we must go to the Pauline Epistles to see the established pattern. 2 Cor. 9.7. When we turn to Ch. 9.27 we find that another characteristic feature marking Barnabas was that of Sympathy, taking Saul of Tarsus and introducing him to the saints at Jerusalem, to be devoid of sympathy and compassion for others bespeaks a poverty of soul, it is the Christian who imbibes the spirit of his Master who is ready to act as a comforter. Again, in Ch. 11.24, Barnabas is recognised as a Spirit filled man, consequently as a Strengthening man, can we claim to have the former, while acting contrary to the latter! The priorities of the ministry of Barnabas were right, 'he exhorted them all that with purpose of heart, that they would cleave unto the Lord' verse 23. Finally he was a Selfless man, verse 25, 'then departed Barnabas to Tarsus to seek Saul' the thought is that he searched

until he located Saul. How many servants of the Lord, would ask others to share in a thriving work? We are far too anxious to stamp our name on success stories, and too unwilling to recognise in others the movement of the Spirit of God.

The Church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch, to see how this work was proceeding, a work which was commenced by un-named servants preaching the Gospel, what a blow to organisation and ordination! We see the emphasis is no longer Jerusalem, but a wider field is in view in the purposes of God. The choice of Barnabas was a wise choice, it was opportune, 'a good man,' no officialdom, no exerting of apostolic authority, carrying no edict from the Jerusalem Church. Is this not the type of servant required to establish young Churches and older ones too? Teaching by example, feeding produces regulated growth, not forced or fickle. This was a ministry directed at important vital issues, 'cleave unto the Lord,' soil conditions must be right, how important is a good healthy root system! When roots are established in the right rooting medium, there will be a ready absorbing of the nutrients of the Word of God, which will give balanced growth which will remain!

The last reference to Barnabas is found in Acts 15.39, reminding us that all human histories are marked by failure, and Barnabas's no less, it is sad that our strong point is often our weak point, and we fail in the field of service where we have helped others to overcome. There was only One Perfect Servant, Who never failed. Isaiah 42. 1-4.

'O Lord with sorrow and with shame,
We meekly would confess,
How little we who bear Thy Name,
Thy mind Thy ways express.

ROMANS OUTLINED

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield.

Written by *Paul* from *Corinth A.D. 59* 16:23, During his *third Missionary Journey*. Carried by *Phebe* 16:1.

1. *Personal Introduction*. 1:1-15. *Messenger of Justification*.

2. *Practical Exposition.* 1:16-15.13. *Message of Justification.*
 3. *Personal Conclusion.* 15:14-16.27. *Ministry of Consolidation.*

Principles. or *Problems.* *Practice.*

1. *Doctrinal* 1-8. 2. *Dispensational* 9-11. 3. *Devotional* 12-16.

Theme : "THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD."

Variety of Uses Over 50 times.

KEY VERSES. 1. 16-17. SIN 60. FAITH 62.

- (a) RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRED. Ch. 1. 18-3.20.

CONDEMNATION OF ALL AS SINNERS IN GOD'S SIGHT.

The Ungodly Gentile 1.15-32. By The *Witness of Creation.*

The Unrighteous Jew Ch. 2. By The *Witness of Conscience.*

Is Universally True. Ch. 3.18 By The *Witness of*

Commandments.

We need "FREEDOM FROM WRATH" Now and in the Future. Here we see *God in Government.* He is *Just.*

- (b) RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED. Ch. 3. 21-26.

Throughout the Word of God — Gen. and Isaiah v. 21.

By the Grace of God 3. 24

In the Son of God. 25.

Revealed by the Spirit of God. 19-30.

Brings "*Freedom from Guilt*" and Condemnation.

Now *God in Grace* becomes the Justifier.

- (c) RIGHTEOUSNESS RECKONED. Ch. 4. Justified.

Not by the *Works of Morality.* 1-8 but *Freely.*

Not by the *Rites of Religion* 9-12 but *Fully.*

Not by the *Deeds of the Law* 13-25 but *Finally.*

Two Witnesses give evidence

ABRAHAM—The *Principle* of it *Before Law.* 1.3.

DAVID —The *Pattern* of it *Under Law.* 5.8.

- (d) RIGHTEOUSNESS RECEIVED. By Faith. Ch. 5.

The Justification of Sinners }
 The Reconciliation of Enemies } 1-11.

Grace offers A Full Salvation. 1-11.

Grace offers A Free Salvation.

Brings me "Freedom from the Fall."

- (e) **RIGHTEOUSNESS REALIZED.** ch. 6-8.
 (1) By identification with Christ. ch. 6.
 Buried 1-5. Crucified 6-7. Dead 8-11. Raised with Him.
 12-14. Brings freedom from the slavery of sin.
 (2) By emancipation from the law. ch. 7.
 Its Claim. vs 1-6. Character. vs 7-13. Conflict. vs 14-25.
 (3) By Sanctification through the Spirit. ch. 8.
 The liberation of Sons. vs 1-17. Expectation of Hope.
 vs. 18-27.
 Adoration of Heart. vs. 28-34.
- (f) **RIGHTEOUSNESS REJECTED.** chs. 9-11.
 Ch. 9. The Past.
 The Jews election of Grace The Olive Tree.
 Ch. 10. The Present.
 The Jews rejection of Christ The Vine.
 Ch. 11. The Future.
 The Jews restoration by God The Fig Tree.
- (g) **RIGHTEOUSNESS REFLECTED.** chs. 12-16.
 By Saintship. ch. 12. The Christian and the Church.
 By Citizenship. ch. 13. The Christian and the State.
 By Relationship. ch. 14. The Christian and his Lord.
 By Stewardship. ch. 15. The Christian and his Work.
 By Comradship. ch. 16. The Christian and his Friends.
 OR Righteousness reflected in our Worship and
 Ways. ch 12-13. Walk ch 14, Work ch 15, Welcome ch16.

THE PROPHECY BY JOEL

by **E. R. BOWER, Malvern Link.**

INTRODUCTION

Joel has been described as "the prophet of the Holy Ghost" and, if such be so, his short "Word from the Lord" is of importance to all Christians, as well as to those for whom the Word was originally intended, centering, as it does, upon the Day of the Lord.

We are well aware that it is the Apostle Peter who, upon the day of Pentecost, and speaking by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), gives us a major clue to the meaning, and therefore the understanding, of this prophecy.

Of Joel himself nothing is known beyond the name of his father (v. 1). He is one of the 'undated' prophets, although dates have been assigned to him which range from the eighth or ninth centuries B.C. to the second century B.C.

Of one thing we can be sure—the obscurity of the prophet, or the lack of knowledge concerning the time of his writing, does not diminish or lessen the importance of the "Word of the Lord that came" to him (v. 1). Given to Joel as the Word of God, it remains the Word of God. Just one part of those things which were written aforetime.

With all the benefit, in hindsight, of Peter's knowledge and understanding of the O.T. Scriptures (an understanding which in some respects differed to that of the Apostle Paul), his message to the "Men of Judea" and to all that dwell at Jerusalem (Acts 2) is a good starting point for this brief study of the prophecy. Let us note how Peter explained the great events of the day of Pentecost. Said he, "This (that which was happening) is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2. 16-28). Thus Peter 'dates' the FULFILMENT of the Word of the Lord by Joel.

Was Peter wrong in his assumption? Hardly, for he himself was speaking in, and by, the Spirit of the Lord.

At that particular moment in time Peter was correct, but what he did not know (or so it would appear in the light of his letters, and also in the light of the subsequent history of the book of the Acts of the apostles) was that Israel would reject their Messiah and the 'clock of prophecy' would be stopped; instead of a complete fulfilment there came an hiatus; a postponement and in its place — the CHURCH.

The significance of Pentecost is seen in the opening words of Acts 2; "And when the day of Pentecost was FULLY COME"—not just that particular day, but Israel's Pentecost. The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits had come and gone; "Christ our Passover" had been slain (1 Corinthians 5.7); He Himself was the "Firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15.20-23).

Israel will yet cry, "Alas, the day."

Turning back to the prophecy (2.28-32) we note that the context of (and the preface to) the passage quoted by Peter is, "I will restore to you THE YEARS . . . and ye shall

know . . . the Lord your God . . . and it shall come to pass AFTERWARD . . .”

Israel's rejection of their Messiah, our Lord, Jesus Christ, resulted in an extension of the lost years—the “years that the locust hath eaten.”

Chap. 1.1-4. THE LOST YEARS. A CALL TO AWAKE.

In addressing the ‘old’ men, Joel is speaking to those who would appreciate the meaning of the ‘lost years.’ In speaking to ALL the inhabitants of the land, i.e., Israel as a whole, Joel calls immediate attention to the importance of his message, and of the sign which God was giving them in the shape of the locust swarms. This was indeed a case of “tell it to the generations.” In the words of Exodus 20.5, this message was to “the third and fourth generation of them that HATE Me.” An echo of this is, perhaps, seen in the four generations of the locust (v.4).

The law-loving Jew would understand the reference here to the words of the “second law” (Deuteronomy 4.9; 6.6-7; 11.19; see also Exodus 14.8-16). They would also think of that which was written upon their phylacteries and upon the door posts of their houses. See Psalm 78.3-8.

We are told that the Hebrew text of v. 4 has but twelve words—“Gnawer's remnant, swarmer eats; Swarmer's remnant, devourer eats; Devourer's remnant, consumer eats.”

Did the thought of ‘something left’ remind Israel of the Word of God concerning a ‘remnant’? Perhaps of Micah 5.1-3; “Thou, Bethlehem Ephrata . . . out of thee shall come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel . . . then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.”

So with the simile of a locust swarm, the prophet summarizes the wasted and lost years; the faded hopes; the unfulfilled ambitions; the relentless passage of the years since the almost forgotten days of golden God-given promises yet to be fulfilled.

The Jews refer the four generations of the locust to Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Cf. Jeremiah 51.27-28.

If the Jews of the day of Pentecost believed this, no wonder that they would respond to Peter's “This is that.” Those years of Gentile dominion were, indeed, wasted years, but they will yet be restored. (2.28-32).

See Deuteronomy 31.24—32.47; a song for the ‘last days.’

Chapter 1.5-8; THE RESULT OF WASTED YEARS.
ISRAEL'S DEVASTATION. A CALL TO LAMENT.

The wasted years had, in the main, degenerated into a 'could not care less' attitude of mind. Realization that the blame for the waste could be laid at their own door had not yet come to them. "Life goes on; it is too late now; eat, drink and be merry" in the face of a disaster which, so far as they were concerned, might not come; and if it did come, what then? "Yet a little sleep, a little folding of the hands to sleep" (Proverbs 24.33-34)—and their poverty HAD come! It took a disaster to awake them; as indeed it did do—but only for a while. True of nations; true of individuals; true of both individual and collective testimonies of the people of God. How often does the Scripture exhort, "Stay awake" and to "Watch." "Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." (Matthew 25.13).

How graphic Joel chapter 1 is; how vivid its picture of a locust swarm, but that it is but a sign-picture is evident when God speaks, "He (the invading nation) hath laid MY vine waste, and barked MY fig tree;" (v.6). Both vine and fig tree are emblematic of Israel. See, for instance, Isaiah 5.1-7, and note our Lord's references to the fig tree in the vineyard (Luke 13.6-9); the sprouting of the fig tree (Matthew 21.19,33). See, too, Matthew 20.1-17. The land, the vine and the fig tree belonged to God. What lessons there are to learn for us in this our day! "Ye are not your own . . . ye are bought with a price." (1 Cor. 6.20).

A number of expositors believe that the 'nation' of v.6 is a literal swarm of locusts; this may be so, but nevertheless the very fact that God is looking at the stripping of HIS possessions indicates that something more than locust swarms is intended. The nation of Israel was in a state of somnolence, and the cry from God is "Awake . . . for a nation IS come up . . ." (v.5). The invasion, spoken of as already present, is such as had not been seen before (v.2) and this tends to the belief that Joel's prophecy is apocalyptic in content especially in view of Acts 2.16-21; Cf. v.6 with Revelation 9.8.

The 'nation' of v.6 is personalized in v.7. "He hath laid My vine waste, and . . . he hath made it (the fig tree) bare."

The call to Awake (v.5) is followed by a call to lament

(v.8), and here we are reminded of God's relationship with His people as depicted by Hosea (2.14-16) and Amos (5.1-2). Israel will yet lament for her unfaithfulness to the "husband of her youth." See Zechariah 12.10-14.

Chapter 1.9-20; THE PRECURSOR OF THE DAY OF THE LORD. A CALL TO LAMENT.

The scene of devastation pictured by the prophet could be ascribed to the locust swarm; it could be the result of the invasion of v.6, but vv.19-20 tell us, "the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath devoured the trees of the field . . . the rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured . . ."

The Day of the Lord (v.15)—that Day of which other prophets have spoken on almost a hundred occasions with such expressions as "the day" and "that day" or "that great day" — was near, but as yet it had not come. There was still time! "The Day of the Lord has to do with God's active and open intervention in world affairs at the end of the age . . . events on earth involving Israel and the nations . . . is associated with judgment, with destruction, and the terror produced by these momentous happenings." (J. H. Large. "Days of Scripture." Treasury of Bible Doctrine. Precious Seed Publications). Cf. Isaiah 2.12-19; (first mention); Zephaniah 1.14-15; 1 Thessalonians 4.15-17; Revelation 6.15-17; Revelation 6.17; and many other Scriptures.

What Joel describes as happening about them was but a foretaste of that which was to come.

The LXX shows v.15 as beginning with, "Alas, alas, alas for the Day!" and this reminds us of the "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth" (Revelation 8.13) where the first "Woe" (9.1-12) was a swarm of locusts; the second (9.13-21), horsemen, and the third (11.15-12,17) concerns the woman in childbirth. Cf. this passage here with Revelation 8.7-13, and 16.1-9.

Despite the effect of the devastation upon the offerings, despite the mourning of the priests, the Temple worship and ritual appeared to be continued, even to the sounding of the trumpet alarm (1.13,14; 2.1,15-17). The fact that there was Temple worship might indicate the prophecy as being in the days of Haggai or Zechariah or—a yet future Temple.

The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ

by
the late
William
Host, B.A.

THE ATONING
DEATH

The first point we would emphasize is that—

1. THE ATONEMENT IS UNIQUE. A careful distinction must be drawn between the sufferings attendant upon the Lord's faithful ministry—opposition and rejection—and His atoning sufferings. His whole life was a pathway of suffering. He suffered by sympathy (e.g., "Jesus wept"); He suffered for righteousness at the hands of man; He suffered under the testings of Satan; "He suffered being tempted;" He suffered too by anticipation, as in the garden of Gethsemane. There the cross cast its darkest shadow, but it was only the shadow. He saw more vividly than ever before what the cross would entail of contact with sin and consequent abandonment by a Holy God. But even in that agony He was not forsaken of God; He could still say "Abba, Father." As Dr. Dale remarks "all that He did and suffered during His *life* is never said to be *for us*."* Only in the darkness of the cross did He bare our sins in His own body and drank to the full the cup of judgment. Then Jehovah "called on His sword to awake against His shepherd, against the Man that was His fellow," and "all His waves and billows went over Him" (Zech. 13.7; Ps. 42.7). Only a Divine Person could inflict or endure atoning sufferings. Nothing short of His death could suffice. He was perfectly obedient to the law, "He magnified it and made it honourable" but this was for the glory of God, and as the obedient One "made under law." But this only proved Him qualified to make atonement for others. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," not by keeping it

*The Atonement, p. 130.

but by "being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3.13). This is shown in the ceremonial of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). There in the seclusion of the Holy of Holies, lighted by the Shekinah glory a secret transaction, atonement Godward was carried out between Jehovah and the high-priest. Atonement is always connected with the shedding of the blood of the sin offerings, and its presentation and sprinkling in the Holiest of all. When it comes to the scapegoat bearing away the sins of the people into a land of separation, nothing is said of atonement, for its blood was not shed. It never came back, which showed that the sins were gone for ever, but the high-priest did come back to shew that by the blood he could live in Jehovah's presence. By the same token God could go on with His people for another year, 'Passing over their sins.' But the bodies of the offerings were burned (*saraph*—burning of judgement) without the camp (Lev. 16.2). "Wherefore Jesus that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13.12).

2. THE ATONEMENT WAS AN ACT OF OBEDIENCE

The Lord did not run unsent. He was the Servant of the Father. When emphasizing the voluntary character of His death, He adds, "This commandment have I received of My Father" (Jn. 10.18). The first Adam was put to the easiest possible test. He was bidden to abstain from one tree, on pain of death, while free to eat of all the rest, and he disobeyed. The last Adam passed through a test of infinite severity. He was commanded to submit to "death, even the death of the cross," and He obeyed. These two acts, of disobedience or obedience, are presented in Rom. 5 as the great determining factors for evil or blessing in the history of the race. But was then this severest of all possible tests arbitrary?

3. THE ATONEMENT WAS IMPERATIVE. The death of Christ was not something accidental, for which anything else might have been substituted, but essential. Our Lord spoke of His sufferings and death as a stern necessity. "Even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3.14). "The Son of Man *must* suffer many things" (Matt. 16.21; 17.12, etc.). "*Ought not* Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24.26). "It *behoved* Christ

to suffer" (Luke 24.46), all of which passages refer to His passion. The Lord Jesus Christ, as has been said, "with all His love for man, and with all His devotion for their salvation, never shrank from declaring them guilty and lost, and from unhesitatingly recognizing the justice of the divine condemnation." That latest product of religious opportunism, known as 'Evangelical Liberalism,' while professing to hold the Person of Christ and justification by faith, has no room for the fall, eternal punishment and the Atonement in the expiatory sense. One cannot help wondering how far the claim to be evangelical is justified.

These men have fallen so completely under the spell of evolution, which is at best a philosophy, rather than scientific fact, that in spite of the warnings of true scientists like the late Lord Kelvin, who was too great to confound hypothesis and fact, they regard it as the great foundation truth, to which all else must bow—"Mankind then, being evolved from the beasts, was *not* "created in the image of God" and did not "fall," for that would have interrupted the great evolutionary process, by which man was slowly developing through animism and polyeism to the true monotheistic idea. The sinful "propensities" in man are merely traces of his bestial ancestry, for which he can hardly be held responsible. What need then for an atonement?" Thus these teachers argue. But if four rivers watered Eden, a fifth arose from it, the great stream of humanity, poisoned so effectively by sin in its very sources, that every drop is contaminated. Physicians of no value those, who prescribe for poor, suffering mankind a faith in evolution. How true it is that a man wrong on Genesis 3 is wrong everywhere!

The truth is, Man not only fell from his high estate in Eden (Rom. 5.12), but has been falling ever since. The law has shown it. God's standard is perfection. There must be full attainment or full atonement. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all" (James 2.10). Sin moreover is not a mere failing to reach a standard (*hamartema*) but it is lawlessness, (*anomia*) see 1 John 3.4, R.V.; that is a man may be sinning even by performing philanthropic and religious service *independently of God* (see Matt. 7.22, where the same word *anomia* is employed). It was the presence of the Son of God on earth which was the final test for man. The law said, "Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." When God came down as Immanuel to dwell as neighbour among men, they hated and crucified Him. As the late Dr. Mackay wrote, "The last thing is out about men, he would kill God if he could." "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8.7), be it in Jew or Gentile, civilized European or degraded Hottentot, Archbishop or Antichrist.

4. THE ATONEMENT WAS VOLUNTARY. That an innocent man should be *forced* to suffer for the guilty would be flagrantly unjust, but what if the substitute were willing? Though a blameless person would not be allowed in our courts, for other reasons, to die for the guilty, yet the principle of substitution is admitted as legitimate. Only the other day a story was told in the paper of a magistrate who himself paid the fine of one he had just convicted and condemned. And if, as sometimes has occurred, a man loses his own life in the attempt to rescue a would-be suicide, his act, far from being condemned, is applauded as heroic. The Son of God was not sent by *force* or offered as an unwilling victim by the Father, rather His response to His call was "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10.9), and then again, "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10.18). There is a theory, that the true explanation of our Lord's death is that it was merely the inevitable outcome of the incarnation and of His perfect life of holiness in a world of sin. Such a life must lead to the cross. This theory is at least intelligible. Its weakness lies in the fact that it contradicts the spontaneous character of our Lord's passion. Right up to the eve of the cross He could have avoided it. He could have had more than twelve legions of angels for one prayer, but it was never uttered, for "how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" (Matt. 26.53).

5. THE ATONEMENT IS EXPIATORY. This was the Godward side of the cross, in view of satisfying the Divine justice. It is not true that "God is love, and nothing else." "God is Light;" "Our God is a consuming fire;" "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven." The Divine attributes are not merged into one another to form an indefinite compound with nothing distinctive, but stand out, each in its true place and proportion. Law governs love, not love

law. Sin was a barrier which, unless righteously dealt with, must for ever have blocked the way of forgiveness. Men may repent, but this does not remove past guilt. The confession of a criminal affords no righteous ground for his release. A man may amend his life, but present obedience is a present obligation. Not all the fruits of Cain, the tears of Esau, or the remorse of Judas could take away their sins, and if no man can make satisfaction for himself it is certain he cannot redeem his brother (Ps. 49.7). It is when we realize that God's righteous claims are immeasurable, and that none but He could meet them, that we see His character standing out at the cross in all its moral beauty and perfection. His justice demanded an infinite sacrifice, His love provided it in the Theanthropic Person—our Lord Jesus Christ. When Jehovah said to Israel, "I have given you the blood to make an atonement for your souls" (Lev. 17.11), who could have thought the antitype would be the blood of His own beloved Son. The greatest picture of Divine Love is the cross of Calvary; He did not love us because Christ died for us, He gave His Son because He loved us: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4.10).

"Oh 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
The love of God to me;
It brought my Saviour from above,
To die on Calvary."

None but a Divine person could traverse the infinite distances of God's holy judgment against sin and return, but, thanks be to God, He did return. He who uttered 'the orphan cry,' "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me"? could a few moments later say, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." As has been well said, the propitiation "emanates from the depths of the Godhead." "If God the Father* were distinct in substance, as well as in personality from the Son, as the Unitarian theory demands, then the mercy shown would be altogether of the Son, but it was "God Who so loved the world, that He gave;" it was "the Father who spared not His Son." It is His own love that God commends, in that Christ died for us. The self-sacrifice of the Son in dying, entailed a cor-

*Dogmatic Theology, Shedd. Vol. ii, p. 408.

responding self-sacrifice in the Father in giving. And this was in order to remove the barrier: "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9.26). The object of the Atonement is not primarily to affect man's disposition to God, but to safeguard the righteous character of God. The important thing is not what man thinks of God, but what God thinks toward and about man. Can God righteously forgive him? Propitiation provides a just ground for this, otherwise it is idle to talk of forgiveness.

6. THE ATONEMENT WAS VICARIOUS. That is the manward side of the cross. He suffered not for Himself, but in the place of others. "The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for (*anti*) many" (Matt. 20.28; Mark 10.45). *Anti* has undoubtedly the sense of substitution, as in Gen. 22.13, "Abraham offered up the ram in the place of his son" (LXX *anti* Isaak; see also Matt. 2.22). But the more usual preposition is *huper*, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for (*huper*) his friends." "He delivered Him up *for* us all." "He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin *for* us." "Christ also hath once suffered for (*peri*) sins, the just for (*huper*) the unjust." *Huper* is more extensive in its meaning than *anti*, denoting either 'in the place of' or 'for the benefit of,' which, must be settled by the context. In any case when persons are in question, the sense of 'in the place of' cannot be excluded, e.g., "We pray you in Christ's stead (*huper*) be ye reconciled to God." Here the sense of 'in the place of' is clear. When sins are in question, 'for' represents some other preposition, *peri* or *dia*.

Christ is the substitute for His people, those who receive Him as Saviour. The question of the bearing of sins is a family secret, made known to God's children. The Apostles never preached to the unsaved, "Your sins have been borne by Christ," but writing to fellow-believers Peter could say "Who His own self bare *our* sins in His own body on the tree." In the same way in Isa. 53.6, it is those who confess their personal sins, "All *we* like sheep have gone astray," etc., who can add in the language of faith, "and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of *us* all." Christ is said to be the propitiation for the whole world (1 John 2.2, R.V.), but in Heb. 9.28 we read "Christ was once offered to bear

the sins of *many*." If a large sum was devoted by the Government to pay the debts of a community, wholly insolvent, on condition that each debtor made a full disclosure of his affairs and accepted the offer, the sum might be more than required to pay the debts of all, but only those who fulfilled the conditions could actually say, "Our debts have been paid by the Government." Potentially all debts might be paid, actually only a proportion would be. The apostles proclaimed the great facts of Christ's death and resurrection and on that ground forgiveness and eternal life to all who believed. They did not even present the work of Christ doctrinally, but simply lifted Him up, who had died and risen, and proclaimed Him Lord and Christ for men to acknowledge and submit to. It is in the Epistles we find the doctrine.

PREACHERS !!

We would earnestly press upon every evangelist to urge upon his hearers the facts of the Gospel, and never to dissociate these facts—death and resurrection—from the causeless love of which they are the fruit. It is a light and frivolous age, and sensationalism is characteristic of the day. The Christian taste is vitiated. The triumphs of the Cross in apostolic times were won by the preaching of the Gospel in words clothed in the power of the Holy Ghost, and in a preaching of which facts were the prominent feature; the resurrection of the Lord being the pivot on which all was made to turn (see Acts 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 17). In the desire to produce "startling results" modes and methods of work are resorted to which were utterly unknown to the early heralds of salvation, and which in their nature practically ignore the necessity of the new birth and the utter ruin of man. The Gospel of Paul, of John, of Peter "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1. 16). Evangelists, aim high and labour to produce in the power of the Holy Ghost solid and enduring results. What is the value of gathering a quantity of chaff? You are only thereby collecting fuel for the coming fire. Let *quality* rather than quantity be the object of your high ambition.—*Selected*.

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . Preach the Word. —2 Timothy 4, 2,3.

Notes on Revelation

by



JIM FLANIGAN
NORTHERN IRELAND

“THE LAST FOUR LETTERS”

THYATIRA. Only in one other place in the New Testament do we read of Thyatira. In Acts 16 Paul arrives at Philippi and preaches by the riverside. Lydia is saved, and though she was then at Philippi, she is described as “a woman of Thyatira.” Did she return there? Did she carry the news of salvation back there? We cannot tell, but eventually there is an assembly in her home town of Thyatira.

The Lord approaches as “The Son of God,” but He has at least ten other “Son” titles. He is Son of the Father, Son of the Blessed, Son of the Highest, Son of Mary, Son of Joseph, Son of the Carpenter, Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of Man, Son of His Love. “Son of God” is full of Divine authority and personal glory. Whatever some brethren may think or say, the Jew certainly regarded it as a claim to Deity, (John 5.18). To them, it was not inferiority, but equality, and in such glory the Lord writes to Thyatira. He then displays the Divine attributes. There is Omniscience—Eyes like a flaming fire, discerning and discriminating. There is Omnipotence—Feet like burnished brass, trampling out what He hates.

Characteristically, the Lord will first of all commend whatever is commendable. He approves their works, their love, their ministry, their faith, their patience, and their works again (which were increasing). But they had a big problem. It could be summed up in one word—“Jezebel.” How different was she to Lydia. Was she just a dominant woman in the assembly? or the wife of a prominent brother? (for the word “wife” may be implied) or is the name symbolic? Either way, any way, Jezebel was their problem. The original Jezebel is one of the most wicked personalities

in Bible history. She was an idolatress; a persecutor; a murderess; a thief; a liar; a hypocrite; an unscrupulous, unprincipled Sidonian Princess who married King Ahab, and introduced Babylonianism into Israel. In great subtlety she introduced the Baal mysteries *alongside* the worship of Jehovah, and so the seduction began. There was a Jezebel person or system in Thyatira. The same persists until this day, seducing from Christ, from Calvary, from the Word of God, from the simplicity of His Truth. These she would replace with other mediators, with ceremonies, rites, rituals, traditions, philosophies, reasonings. It is the "deep things" of Satan now. But there is a remnant. May the Lord help us to insist like Paul, that in the midst of it all, we shall know nothing but Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2.2).

The Lord appeals to the remnant—"Hold fast till I come." There is a reference also to the morning star. Is this the first mention of the Rapture in the letters? Their encouragement is the prospect of sharing His glory when the days of rejection are over. The men who were true to David in Adullam, were closest to him when he was vindicated. But note that from this point in the letters, the appeal to him "that hath an ear" is the last thing in each letter. It is an appeal now to a remnant.

SARDIS. Thirty-five miles from Thyatira, south-east, lay the city of Sardis. Once a famous city, built on a plateau, on a narrow ridge of mountain, its position made it almost unassailable. It was an imposing sight; walls and towers, temples and houses and palaces filling the elevated plateau 1500 feet above the plain below. But in 549 B.C. it was captured by Cyrus of Persia. One of Cyrus' soldiers discovered a secret path of steps cut into the cliff face. Silently, at night, the Persian troops ascended one by one. There was no guard or sentinel at the top, as this was deemed unnecessary, and when the citizens awoke next morning their proud citadel had been captured. "I will come on thee as a thief in the night." Prophetically, Sardis is a picture of dead Protestantism. We must distinguish between Protestantism and the Reformation — they are not synonymous terms. The later was a divine movement, the former is a human system.

Sardis had forgotten. So has Protestantism. She has for-

gotten the Inspiration of Holy Scripture; she has forgotten the Deity of Christ; she has forgotten His Virgin Birth and His Sinless Humanity, and His miracles too. His Cross and His Resurrection, and the subsequent Pardon for the guilty are all forgotten truths with her. Conveniently too, she has forgotten Eternal Punishment, the doom of the lost. Indeed, perhaps every fundamental truth is forgotten somewhere in the great system. The call is to remember, and to repent, or to be suddenly taken unawares by His coming, as was the Sardis of old by Cyrus. This is not the Rapture, but a judicial coming to them. They had a reputation, that they lived; in fact, great Protestantism is dead, and her works are incomplete.

The promise to the remnant, a few, is that they would walk in white with Him Whose garments were white and glistening on the Mount of Transfiguration; and if men were rejecting them, because of Him, and erasing their names from the registers of worldly society—never mind, there was another Book, in which their names were inscribed indelibly and eternally. Rejoice! Your names are written in Heaven, and one day the Father and His angels will acknowledge your faithfulness.

PHILADELPHIA — the word means “Brotherly love.” There are six other occurrences of the word in the New Testament (Rom. 12.10, 1 Thess. 4.9, Heb. 13.1, 1 Peter 1.22, 2 Peter 1.7 twice). God speaks through the meaning of the name. Philadelphia is an evangelical and ecclesiastical awakening of brethren from out of the deadness of Sardis. No doubt we have seen it in the thrilling history of the 19th Century. Note the number “3” again, as we have noticed it in chapter 1.

1. *The 3-fold Character of the Lord.*

- (i) **HOLY.** Intrinsically so-Holy, Holy, Holy (Isaiah 6 and Rev. 4). Whether in awful Godhood, or incarnate in impeccable Manhood, He is thrice holy.
- (ii) **TRUE.** He is, as we should be, girded always with Truth.
- (iii) **SOVEREIGN.** He has authority to open and/or to shut. We rest in this. He is behind the scenes. He has the Key to all the treasures.

2. *The 3-fold Character of the Assembly.*

- (i) **WEAKNESS.** They had little strength, but they entered the door which He had opened, like the early Jerusalem fishermen-preachers.
- (ii) **STEADFASTNESS.** They had kept His Word—how much He appreciated that.
- (iii) **FIDELITY.** They had not denied His Name. Among men, in the world, His Word is denied and His Person assailed. They had remained true to both.

3. *The 3-fold Comfort.*

- (i) **“I WILL KEEP.”** Twenty-four times in seven letters the Sovereign Lord says, “I will.” His promise here is, to keep; and even when the trial is universal, He will keep us too, from that very hour.
- (ii) **“I WILL MAKE.”** The Jew, the synagogue, will ultimately have to bow to this—that Christ loved the Church.
- (iii) **“I WILL COME.”** The Morning Star will appear. His personal coming will assure our deliverance from the hour of tribulation. Meantime, guard “thy crown.” May this not be a crown of present testimony, rather than a future reward?

4. *The 3-fold Challenge.*

Overcome!—and I will make you a pillar (you who have little strength); in the Temple (you who have been persecuted by the synagogue of Satan). I will inscribe upon you—

- (i) **THE NAME OF MY GOD.** As the sculptor engraves his name upon his work, so are we His workmanship. “Mine!” says the engraven name.
- (ii) **THE NAME OF THE CITY OF MY GOD.** Twenty years earlier Jerusalem had been destroyed. The overcomer would have citizenship in an abiding City.
- (iii) **MY OWN NEW NAME.** His Name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22). Will there be continuing fresh revelations of His glory? Eternally, new disclosures of His Beauty?

Let us be Philadelphian, true to Him in the midst of failure and darkness.

LAODICEA. The very sound of the Name is ominous. Laodicea has become a synonym for the lukewarm satisfaction of the last days. Of the seven assemblies, only Laodicea and Ephesus are mentioned elsewhere in scripture. Was the letter *from* Laodicea, referred to in Col. 4.15, actually the epistle to the Ephesians? an encyclical letter which had gone first to Ephesus, then to Laodicea, and then to Colosse? Would not these two epistles, to Ephesus and Colosse, in fact save us from Laodicean conditions? It is an interesting question, and searching too.

Notice once again, how predominant is the number "3" in this letter also. The presentation of the Lord is three-fold. There are three aspects of the self-sufficiency of the church. There are three charges concerning its condition (which she did not know). There are three courses of action which the Lord counsels.

Our Lord is introduced as "The Amen." How fitting is this in the closing letter. Here is finality and completeness. In Isaiah 65, Jehovah is referred to as "The God of the Amen." As we may say "Amen" to express our full agreement and approval of another man's statement, so Christ is the Amen to all the truth of God. He is not only the final word, but He ratifies and endorses every promise and precept and stated purpose of God. He is the faithful and true Witness. How does this contrast with the failure and pretensions of the Laodiceans. He is the Beginning, the Originator, the Author, of the creation of God—the Fountain-Head. He is the Uncreated, Who created all. He is the Eternal, from whom all else springs.

There is nothing to commend in Laodicea. They were rich, in a material sense, but as we have seen, they were poor rich-men in contrast to the rich poor-men of Smyrna. What makes their condition very sad is that they did not know. They were "poor"—the word is that for destitution, —and they did not know. They were blind, and like the Pharisees, they did not know. They were naked, wretched in their rags, but insisting "I am rich . . . and have need of nothing." "I know," says the Lord, and He appeals. "Buy of Me." He says. But are His blessings not free? Let us.

remember that making room for Him will always cost something. He offers riches, vision, and dress. Riches that will abide vision to see ourselves, and Him. Dress—fine, white, and pure. How tender and gentle is His appeal. How reminiscent of that in the Song of Songs 5.2—"Open to Me, My love." How many of us listened for years to the appeal of Rev. 3.20 before we knew that it was not a call to the unconverted at all, but an appeal to an assembly. He, of Whom it is recorded, that "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not;" He, to whose earthly parents at Bethlehem someone said "No room," is now, at the end of the dispensation, outside, knocking. May we make room for Him now. If we do, He will make room for us, and we shall share His throne.

In the next chapter, that Throne is dramatically brought to our view.

(To be continued)

In my study hangs a copy of a painting, "The Return from Calvary." Silhouetted against a black and angry sky stand three crosses on a gentle hill just outside the city walls. In the foreground and climbing up stone steps are broken-hearted friends. I see Mary supported by John and, perhaps, another Mary. Behind them come others weeping and sad. Yes, a pitiful picture and yet the artist, by a touch of colour, portrays hope, and as we look at that picture we want to say to those who mourn, "Oh, dry those tears. He is tasting death now, but in a few hours death will be swallowed up in victory!"—T. H. WARREN.

ABRAHAM— HIS EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

by J. CAMPBELL (Larkhall)

Over the years, so much has been profitably written of Abraham, who has the distinction of being called the "Friend of God," although God spake to Moses "as a man speaketh unto his friend;" this affectionate term is reserved exclusively for Abraham. He was the only human to whom God disclosed the coming holocaust of Sodom, and it was

as a result of thought unerringly Divine, that choice was made of him alone, to share Godhood secrets. Yet, I would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, of the life of the Patriarch; who dwelt contemporaneously, for 15 years with Isaac and Jacob.

His knowledge of God throughout his life was progressive: though for some years interrupted by his visit to Egypt. Stephen in Acts 7.2 tells us "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham." This is a disclosure not recorded in the Old Testament of the Patriarch: and refers to an experience before the incidents noted in Gen. 11 and 12.1.

God acts that way. He fits the vessel for subsequent service. This is what motivated Abraham to leave Ur, where he had been an idolater (Josh. 24.2). The overwhelming display of His Glory weaned him forever from all the allurements of that illustrious city. Paul had a similar experience on the Damascus road. Henceforth his service was energised by the exceeding glory of the Heavenly Vision. And God gives His servants personal disclosures; ministry meant for themselves alone; to equip them for their service. Where the demand is *Surrender* and *Separation*, it is the GOD OF GLORY Who is manifested.

His history with God in the Old Testament begins in Genesis 12. He is commanded by the Lord to abandon his country, his Kindred and his father's house; and as a compensation, God would give him a land as yet undisclosed, and make him a great nation, as yet undefined. Where the demand is linked with promise and pronouncement, it is the covenant-keeping God, JEHOVAH, Who speaks: the One Who was, and is, and is to come.

In Gen. 14.18, Abram is refreshed by bread and wine, by Melchizedek, incidentally the first mention of such: and Abram gives him the best of the Tithes, after the Battle of the Kings; while Melchizedek, this priestly man, advances Abram in his knowledge of God, by referring to Him as "The Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and Earth". When the request is made by Sodom's King for the persons in exchange for Sodom's goods, Abram swears by "The Most High God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth". Where the thought is that of worldly gain, Jehovah is aptly presented as, THE MOST HIGH GOD.

When faced with his childlessness and its problems of succession, God is presented as ADONAHY, Sovereign Lord! and he is further advanced in his knowledge of God. In the same chapter, v. 7, God is disclosed under another title, that of I AM, where the thought is foreknowledge and election. "For I know him". (18, 19) is foreknowledge: while in the matter of JUDGMENT (18.25) He is addressed as "THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH".

When Sarah conceives, when she is past age; and the thought is IMPOSSIBILITY, God is disclosed as THE TRIUNE GOD, where matters impossible with men, find their solution in God!

Finally, Abraham's knowledge is completed in Ch. 21.33, where he calls on EL, THE GOD OF ETERNITY, where the thought is COVENANT-KEEPING. Abraham plants his Tamarisk tree, an evergreen, symbolising and ratifying his Covenant with Abimelech, regarding the well dispute.

From this point, let us consider Abraham under 10 different character studies, as they present themselves, in an orderly way throughout Genesis. That of the PILGRIM will be the first to gain our attention. At 75 years of age, Abram leaves Ur and Haran, taking with him Sarai, his wife, and Lot, Haran's son, and their families. He heads for Canaan, via Sichem: and the plain of Moreh. There he builds his altar, then removes to a mountain on the east of Bethel. Again building his altar, he calls on the Name of the Lord. On his arrival in Canaan, he is startled to discover the Canaanite in the land! No doubt to dispute his claim, and retard his movements. Whenever conscious, positive effort is made in the pathway of Divine orderings, the enemy will undoubtedly challenge our rights, as allowed of God, to promote faith in Him, and exercise our spirits for guidance. Abram meets famine conditions, the first, see Ch. 26.1. This is historical accuracy: there never had been one before; and Abram has nothing to fall back on to guide him. Instead of seeking Divine direction in his dilemma, he takes the easy course, in leaving God's promised territory, and moves to Egypt, without consulting his God. A lesson for us all lies here. Why do good men, in famine conditions, leave the Assembly, which can claim His Presence, and move elsewhere? It cannot be because of the right that is outside; in many cases it is because of the wrong which is inside.

Thus he fails as a **PILGRIM**, when the enemy contests Divine ground, and when famine conditions arise.

Next, as a **BACKSLIDER**, entering Egypt, he resorts to subterfuge. Because of personal danger, he suggests to Sarai his wife to tell a half-truth, a half-lie, and seeks refuge in compromise, linked with deceit. He observes, as for the first time, Sarai's physical attractions, and fears for his life. She is commended to, and taken into Pharaoh's house. Abram is well treated, and all seems set fair; but the Seed Royal is in danger. Abram is rebuked by a less honourable man than himself, and sent away. He probably spent 7 years in Egypt, where he raised no altar, offered no sacrifice and heard no pronouncement from God. There, a relationship with Hagar was established, which not only blighted his and Sarai's life of pilgrimage; but adversely affects our own generation in the Ishmael posterity Hagar produced, the problem the Arab world presents today. He has lost his testimony and gained material prosperity, through contact with Egypt. How often these are complimentary to each other.

Thirdly, as a restored backslider, in Gen. 13 he is depicted as a prosperous **HERDMAN**, enriched in cattle. Back to Eethel is his aim, to the very place where his tent had been at the beginning. The place of departure becomes the place of recovery. No progress is ever made until guilt is acknowledged, repentance evidenced, and, where possible, restitution is fully made. Barrenness of soul marked him, yet glimmerings of revived faith in his return to the place of the altar. Sweet place of communion: calling on the Name of the Lord!

Worldly prosperity begets strife between brethren. This is deplorable. Men blessed of their God in material wealth and possessions, uncharitably displaying features of covetousness and contention. Note the implied suggestion of revolted dignity in Newberry's telling marginal comment, "We be **MEN** brethren, as if this lapse of decorum was to be expected from children acting in a childish manner, but not between men of stature and dignity. Furthermore, looking on are the sworn enemies of God's people, uniting in their mutual joy of witnessing disunity between them, and glorying in it. Evidences here of moral recovery in Abram, who, in magnanimity of soul allows the covetous Lot to make his selection.

For, he to whom the land has promised been,
Can righteously afford to cede the day :
He ever wins, who leaves the choice to God,
The better portion in the end is his !

Chapter 14 of Genesis reveals Abram in a fresh light, that of WARRIOR. When news of Lot's capture in the famous Battle of the Kings reached Abram, He, himself commanded and led forth his own private army of 318 trained men, instructed in strategy, and rescued Lot, and recovered all his goods and womenfolk. This incident discloses the ordered arrangement of Abram's household; how, at such short notice, he could immediately muster men he had already trained in the defence of his property. He seems to be better at rescuing others than himself in moments of danger. His integrity in the matter of Sodom's goods, set against the inference that Sodom's King, and not his God, had made him rich, is choice; and reveals Abram as a man in touch with Divine realities. He despises riches at the expense of the slightest reflection on the character of his God. And he is rewarded, for God has been honoured in his pronouncement, "Them that honour Me, I will honour." (1 Sam. 2.30). The Lord develops and enlarges His promise of the land, its utmost limits from the Nile to the Euphrates, the cradle and the crux of civilisation. The covetous eyes of Godless Nations have scanned this area. "The gold of Havilah is there," and the hidden lakes of liquid gold in oil, presently controlled by Ishmael's seed, the Arab, rightly belong to Israel as the true children of promise. And men take out what they never put in. And God, because of his refusal to be enriched from such an unclean source, becomes to Abram his Shield, as protecting him, and as his Exceeding great Reward; as compensating him for his righteous stand against Sodom's wily suggestion of —Get rich quick—tactics.

At the moment of victory, Abram is refreshed and strengthened by Melchizedek, AFTER the battle is won! How much we need the services of the Lord Jesus then; perhaps more so than when the battle is engaged. Verse 22 reveals that Abram had already "Lift up his hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and Earth." How decorous and dignified in his approach to

Deity! What a contrast to the “You and Yours” of ignorant familiarity of today; as if we were addressing Someone on terms of equality, when our true place is in the dust.

The problem of Heirship besets the mind of Abram. In a vision, the Lord communicates with him again, declaring He is his Shield and exceeding Great Reward. Abram is baffled by such a pronouncement, and must express his impatience. His own solution to Heirship at this moment is Eliezer, his steward. The Lord declares “This shall not be “thine heir,” v. 4 of Ch. 15. He had already promised Abram He would make him a great nation, Ch. 12.2, and his seed as the dust of the earth, (13.16). The Lord in Ch. 15 elaborates His promise, describing Abram’s coming seed as the stars of heaven for multitude, while as yet he is childless. Sarai’s impatience is evident in Ch. 16.2. After 10 long years of barrenness, she suggests to her husband a solution. Seed by proxy, and Abraham, like Adam, listens to Sarai, his wife, to obtain children by Hagar, her maid. Thus he becomes a BIGAMIST, and breaks the Edenic law of monogamy (Gen. 2.24); and as a result, introduces into his home, and in a larger measure, into God’s universe, disharmony; the effects of which, we suffer internationally today, in the Arab problem—Ishmael’s descendants. While Abram lives to rue the day he hearkened to the voice of Sarai. She is despised by her Maidservant, and a spirit of jealousy fills her heart, exerting pressures on Hagar in the home, so much so, that Hagar flees to the wilderness of Shur, where the Angel of the Lord discovers her, and commands her to return, with the promise of numberless progeny; beginning with a live, male, birth, to be called Ishmael, by heaven’s decree.

At the institution of the covenant of circumcision, both Abram and Sarai have their names exchanged to Abraham and Sarah, with the promise of a son—Isaac—born in Ch. 21. When he is grown, his mother, Sarah spies Ishmael mocking Isaac; and demands the latter’s expulsion, with his mother, Hagar. The Lord ratifies this edict, and what to Abram, initially was pleasurable, Ch. 16.4, becomes very grievous, Ch. 21.11. Can you visualise the scene, rising early, He gives Hagar bread and a bottle of water, he *himself* placing it on her shoulder! God makes us to feel, and that

rightly, the full effects of our former wrongdoing, for Abram loved that lad, Ch. 17.18. To summarise on the question of Heirship:—

Abraham made two suggestions, Elieser and Ishmael.

Sarah made one. Hagar.

God said, neither. His answer was in Isaac.

(To be continued)

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (4) by JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen

'THERE WERE NINETY AND NINE'

ELIZABETH CECILIA CLEPHANE (1830—1869)

In the year 1874, Moody and Sankey, two American evangelists entered a train in Glasgow. They were on their way to Edinburgh to start their first great mission in Scotland. On the platform Mr. Sankey had bought a newspaper, and on his journey he looked through it in the hope to find some items of interest, maybe some American news. Just before reaching their destination his eye caught some lines written in the Poet's Corner of one of its pages,

'There were ninety and nine that safely lay,
In the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of gold—
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

Lord, Thou has here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer, "This of Mine
Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find My sheep".'

He read the lines over to his companion Mr. Moody. Mr. Moody, however, was so engrossed in writing a letter that he scarcely heard. Sankey cut the verses out of the paper and placed them in his music scrap book.

On the second day, that never-to-be-forgotten noonday meeting of the mission in Edinburgh, Mr. Moody spoke with all his wonted fervour on the Good Shepherd from Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15. Dr. Horatius Bonar then got up to address the audience. Mr. Moody whispered to Mr. Sankey sitting by his side on the platform, requesting him to sing some appropriate solo at the close of the

meeting. But what would he sing? Suddenly the thought flashed into his mind, "Sing the solo you read in the train." But he had no music. His heart went up to God, for he felt he must sing those words. As he sat down to the organ the music came note by note, based on an old plantation melody 'A wonderful stream is the river of time' which he had once heard in the southern States of America. He completed the first verse. With God's help he was able to repeat those notes through the second verse, and the third verse, and through all the hymn. What a close was that to the meeting! Hearts were touched and hearts were moved by the love of Christ. This incident tells of the first application of that lovely tune which we still sing to Elizabeth Clephane's hymn today.

Some years afterwards, a young Englishman from a lovely Christian home found himself in an hotel in Paris. He had gone there to enjoy himself and to get away from the influence of home. In the hotel he found lying on the reading table an English copy of Sankey's hymns. He had heard of Sankey. Why! his sister Mary used to speak of Moody and Sankey and had tried to influence him to attend their meetings, but he had resented it. Nevertheless, curiosity caused him to flick over the book, and he was arrested by words which he read, 'But one was out on the hills away, far off from the gates of gold—' "Perhaps, Mary would say that about me" he thought. He closed the book and went off to the opera, but he could not enjoy it. Those words kept repeating themselves in his soul. He came back to the hotel and found the book again and read through the whole hymn. God was speaking to his heart. Now he knew and felt within that he was the one 'far off from the gates of gold—' God used the words of that lovely hymn, portraying the love of Christ for sinners as the means to his salvation.

These words were written by Elizabeth Cecilia Celphane, the third daughter of Andrew Clephane, the sheriff of Fife. She was born in Edinburgh in 1830, and probably wrote this hymn in the year 1868. Miss Pittman, who has written a book on lady hymn-writers, states that "Elizabeth Clephane, by this hymn, has set in motion a sermon on the love of Christ which will never die as long as the English tongue is spoken."

The story of the lost sheep on which this hymn is based was first told by the Saviour Himself almost two thousand years ago. In it, the Saviour sees you and I as lost, just as the shepherd viewed the sheep which was lost. Nevertheless, such was its value that the shepherd counted no expense too great and no distance too far in order to recover and bring back that which was lost. What a lovely picture of the love of the Lord Jesus who went all the way to Calvary's cross in order to save you and me!

'But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere he found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry—
Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?

"They were shed for one who had gone astray,
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."

"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?

"They are pierced tonight by many a thorn."

But all through the mountains, thunder riven,
And up from the rocky steep,

There arose a cry to the gate of Heaven,
"Rejoice! I have found my sheep."

And the angels echoed around the throne,

"Rejoice for the Lord brings back His own".'

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor : A. M. S. Gooding

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be
addressed to the Editor: 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road,
Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee :

Joint Treasurers :

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Secretary : John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

Friends, excepting those residing in Great Britain, should please
forward gifts to : John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



CONTENTS

NOTES ON REVELATION

by J. Flanigan

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. Hewitt

ABRAHAM—

HIS EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

by J. Campbell

THE PROPHECY OF JOEL

by E. R. Bower

THE ATONING DEATH

by Wm. Hoste

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

by J. G. Good

TOO BIG FOR GOD TO USE HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by J. Strahan

THE FATHER'S LOVE

8.7.8.7.D. (Blaen Wern)

FATHER, in Thy holy presence,
We, like Christ shall ever be;
Not as sharing in His Essence,
But in sonship's liberty !
O, the joy, all thought surpassing,
When His likeness we shall bear ;
And, through grace, so rich, unchanging
We, Thy love, with Him, shall share !

Thus it was that Thou did'st purpose,
Father, before time began ;
And, in Christ, the Son, did'st choose us
In that glorious heavenly plan.
O what thoughts Thou hast unfolded
By the One, come forth from Thee,
Thoughts of love so full, unbounded ;
And Thyself, in Him, we see !

God our Father, Thee we worship,
As before Thee, without blame,
In the grace and joy of sonship,
And as knowing Thy blest Name ;
O e'en now our spirits praise Thee,
As we shall eternally—
Worship, honour, praise and glory
We now render unto Thee !

—*Clement Meek.*

Notes on Revelation

by

JIM FLANIGAN
NORTHERN IRELAND



“THE THRONE”

The Throne of God is mentioned twelve times in chapter 4, and everything else in the chapter is related to that Throne. Nothing is seen apart from the Throne; everything is dependent upon the Throne. As we have seen in an earlier study, John's position is changed here, he is removed, at least in spirit, from the rocky barrenness of Patmos, and in the glory he will now learn, that, in spite of the power of Rome and the Caesars, there is a greater Sovereignty. God, in supreme authority, is still on His Throne, ordering everything for His own glory. This, in fact, is the meaning of sovereignty—a God Who does what He wills, when He wills, where He wills, how He wills, for whatever reason He wills; a God Who is answerable to no one, accountable to none. What a comfort to know, that such sovereignty is interested, not only in Nations and Empires, but in the daily lives and affairs of His people. May we be helped to rest in that sovereignty in all our perplexities and sorrows.

To emphasise the relation of everything to the Throne, five prepositions, or prepositional clauses, are used—

- (i) *Upon the Throne* — Deity sitting in inscrutable splendour.
- (ii) *Round about the Throne*—a Rainbow, and twenty-four crowned elders, and four strange living creatures.
- (iii) *Out of the Throne*—lightning, and thundering, and voices.
- (iv) *Before the Throne*—seven lamps of fire, a sea of glass, and the proffered crowns of the elders.
- (v) *In the midst of the Throne*—the four living ones, who also surround the Throne; and, as we shall see in ch. 5, a little Lamb.

The whole chapter therefore, with its peoples and events, is associated essentially with God's Throne.

The Throne is *set*. Men may challenge sovereignty, but men ought to know that sovereignty is really unchallengable. "They shall perish; Thou remainest." The Throne is set in Heaven while earth rolls on in her confusion. The Throne-sitter is, in essence, indescribable, but John sees glory like the glory of the Jasper and the Sardine stones. In the reverse order, these stones were the first and last on the breastplate of Israel's High Priest, (Ex. 28). The ruby-red Sardius was first, the brilliant Jasper, with its purplish hue, was twelfth and last. It has often been pointed out, that if the names engraven on the stones of the Breastplate were ordered according to birth (as on the onyx stones on the Priest's shoulders) then the Sardius had the name of Reuben upon it, and the Jasper had the name of Benjamin. In both of these names the little syllable "Ben" occurs, which means "Son." This is interesting. When Jacob's first-born arrived (Gen. 29) they said, "Behold, a son," and so, his name, "Reuben." Perhaps, as we look to the Throne-sitter, we too shall say, "Behold, a Son." Is this the only way, in fact, in which we shall ever see God—by contemplating the Son? When Jacob's youngest was born (Gen. 35) the mother, Rachel, died, but before her death she named the baby "Ben-oni," which means, "Son of my sorrow." After her death, (and she died at Bethlehem) the father looked at the infant and said, "Not Ben-oni, but Benjamin"—"the Son of my right hand." This is the first mention of Bethlehem in our Bible; a child is born and a mother dies. From Bethlehem there came another Son. His mother, Israel, only ever knew Him as a Man of Sorrows, but to the Man of Sorrows the Father has said, "Sit Thou on my right hand." Ben-oni has become Benjamin. The Son is upon the Throne.

The emerald Rainbow haloes the Throne. Surely here is the symbol of Mercy, and Pity, and the Faithfulness of the Covenant-keeping God. The rainbow is "round-about" the Throne, complete. We never see the rainbow complete because, with our feet on earth, our vision is interrupted, and we cannot view the completeness. But the purposes of God are complete and eternal nevertheless, and one day we shall know it to be so, when, like John, we are caught up to the same glory. There too, we shall be better able to

appreciate, for this rainbow is not a dazzling spectrum of colour, but rather of that green which is so easy to look upon and so soothing to the eye. We shall, in heaven, delight to dwell on those glories of the Divine character which down here we cannot rightly comprehend.

Around the Throne John saw an array of twenty-four other thrones, (it is the same word), and seated upon these were the twenty-four elders whose identity has ever been a matter of dispute. They are, of course, mentioned many times in the Revelation from ch. 4 through to ch. 19. What we do know of them is this—they are, as early as ch. 4, seated, robed, and crowned; in a word, rewarded. They are distinct from the angels (ch. 5.11). They are distinct from the saints of the great tribulation (ch. 7.13). They intelligently appreciate the purposes of God. They cannot be Old Testament saints, since these are not raised or rewarded until the King comes (ch. 11.15-18, Dan. 12.12-13). Is it not interesting, that all the references to these elders are found in that section of Revelation in which the Church is viewed as being in Heaven, i.e. chs. 4-19? Do they not symbolise that Kingdom of priests, who, having completed their course of testimony in chs. 2 and 3, have now been translated to the immediate Presence, and are even closer than the angels?

The Throne is alive with lightnings, thunderings, and voices. The God of Sinai still lives! But before His awful Throne, and in intimate association with it, the seven Lamps of Fire burn. Here, no doubt, is the seven-fold fulness or plentitude of the Holy Spirit, in a ministry of holy liaison between God and men.

The Sea of Glass is there. The crystal purity of the Holiness of God is spread before His throne. No speck of defilement may remain unnoticed here. No spot or stain or suggestion of sin may pass undetected in the approach to the Throne. The Crystal Sea reflects the Light from the Throne and from the Lamps of Fire, and here sin cannot be. How beautiful, that on that same Sea of Holiness, in a later chapter, the saints actually stand and sing! The righteousness which once debarred us from the awful Presence, now gives us a standing before God.

The four "living ones" are now contemplated. The word

“beast” in our A.V. could be misleading. It is not the same word as in ch. 13. There we must leave the word unchanged, to convey to us all the beastly characteristics of the men there envisaged, but here in ch. 4 it is different, and is simply “living creatures.” Who are they? What are they? Are they Cherubim? Are they Seraphim? Is there a difference? They are certainly intimate with the Throne, with a very full knowledge of the purposes of God—eyes before, behind, and within. They bear the likeness too, of that Son Who now sits upon the Throne, with their lion-like majesty, their ox-like patience in service, the intelligence of true manhood, and the rapidity of the eagle soaring in flight. As we shall see in ch. 5, the ministry of these holy beings is akin to the ministry of the cherubim, heavenly guardians of God’s righteousness, and the holiness of His Throne and character. Ceaselessly, restlessly, they proclaim that holiness. It is the holiness of the Great Trinity—Holy, Holy, Holy. It is the Majesty of the Lord God Omnipotent, in whose terrible Name is embraced the Past, the Present, and the Future. He lives “for ever and ever” to the ages of the ages. How many times does this expression occur in the Revelation. It is the strongest way possible in Greek to express eternity, perpetuity. The living ones acknowledge this and accordingly ascribe glory, and honour, and thanksgiving. The elders associate with that praise and spontaneously offer their crowns of victory to the Throne-sitter. He is worthy. He it was Who gave to them the privilege of representing Him on earth, and gave them golden crowns for so doing. Now, in heaven, they return to Him what He originally gave. Every created thing comes from Him, and the glory must go back to Him. How like the great doxology of Rom. 11.36—“of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.” He is the source of all, and the channel, and the stream, and the great Originator to which everything must eventually return for His pleasure. To Him be the glory, for ever. Amen. This is true worship. May we seek to learn more, down here, of that which shall be, up there, our occupation forever. May our lives be governed, our service be rendered, our burdens be borne, and our characters be moulded, by this wonder of wonders, that soon we shall, by sovereign grace, be in the Presence of the Throned One, and in His Presence be at Home.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

(13) THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

by J. B. HEWITT, Chesterfield

(Matt. 4.1-11; Mark 1.12,13; Luke 4.1-13; Heb. 2.17,18; Heb. 4.15,16).

Temptation is not necessarily sin; we are bound to meet it as Christians. Temptation is a suggested short cut to the realisation of the highest at which we aim. The word "tempt" refers to trying, testing or proving. (John 6.6; 2 Cor. 13.5; Heb. 11.17). God tests for man's good, desiring only his blessing, the devil tests, from an evil motive, desiring only man's hurt. Christ was tested but never enticed, because there was nothing in Him to respond to sin (John 14.30; 1 John 3.5; 2 Cor. 5.21). He was the Holy One of God (Mark 1.24; Acts 2.27; 4.27 R.V.) Scripture teaches the absolute sinlessness of Christ. The impossibility of sin in Christ is exactly the same as the impossibility of falsehood in God (Tit. 1.2). To argue that His temptation was not meaningful if He could not sin is fallacious. The temptation demonstrated conclusively that He could not sin. The way steel or gold is tested is a good illustration of temptation. The test is no less valid because the gold is pure. Sin is not an essential element in humanity, it is a foreign intruder. Our Lord's humanity is perfect.

"Tempted in all points like as we are," means that temptation assailed Him along every avenue through which it can reach human nature. The experiences proper to His holy manhood were His and His sinlessness augments His capacity for sympathy; for in every case He felt the full force of temptation. He understands us perfectly. "The limiting phrase "without sin" is joined to "after (our) likeness" not to "in all points." In so far as He is after our likeness, He was in all points tempted, but this likeness had one exception or limitation, it was without sin." H. C. Hewlett.

His temptation takes place as He enters His public ministry. "The subject reveals Him to us in three ways; first, as a perfect Man; secondly, as Man demonstrated perfect through testing; and finally, as Man victorious, and therefore fitted for supremacy." G. C. Morgan.

John does not record the temptation, his Gospel being essentially that of the Deity of Christ, and God cannot be tempted (Jas. 1.13).

THE SET TIME. "Then," "straightway," "And" (Matt. 4.1; Mark 1.12; Luke 4.1). Note the order; **OWNED** by the Father "This is my Son;" **ANOINTED** by the Spirit (Mark 1.10); **TEMPTED** by the Devil (Mark 1.13). The temptation must be understood in the light of the baptism, the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted; this is part of His appointed probation. Temptation was continuous. After the approval of heaven comes the assault of hell. God sets the seal of perfection upon the hidden years, "I am well pleased." The anointing Spirit had indicated His preparedness for the work of redemption. The voice of approval was the call for which Jesus had been waiting and the Spirit was the equipment for carrying out the work; and the sign of His Messiahship (John 1.33,34). During the thirty silent years He had triumphed over all the temptations incidental to private life. Now He was to triumph over the temptations relative to His public ministry and redeeming work. It came when he was alone, when He was hungry and physically weakened. These three special temptations only came at the End of forty days of testing. All His battles had to be fought alone (Luke 22.41; Matt. 27.46).

THE SCENE. Perhaps it was what happened at the Baptism that caused the temptation. Led by the Spirit Christ went out challenging Satan, on His own initiative, to expose and defeat the Adversary of God and man. Not in a garden, but in a wilderness of barrenness, and poverty, and hunger for bread that perishes. Did the wild beasts recognise God's millennial man? (Mark 1.13; Isa 1.3; 11.6).

Jesus now stands as the second Man, the last Adam. As such He is the Head of a new race and He is the last, because there will be no other federal headship and no other race.

His Messiahship and the forty days recalls the history of the messianic people (Deut. 8.2). As pure gold He is tried in the refiners fire and comes through unscathed and undiminished.

THE SEDUCER — Satan (Matt. 4.1). The Devil! Yes, a real highly intelligent and mighty personality. The Lord Jesus believed in Satan's existence and power (John 8.44).

An evil power, ever adversary of Christ, full of malignity—unseen yet real. (Eph. 2.2; 6.12; Rev. 12.7-10 R.V.). “An angel of light” (2 Cor. 11.14). he came to tempt our Lord. Temptation of Christ a striking proof of Satan’s identity and sin’s reality.

THE SIGNIFICANCE. In Matthew the order is historical, tested as Messiah with special reference to His work and the establishment of His Kingdom. In Luke, Moral order tested as Man and as Representative of the redeemed. He emerged victorious His virtue unimpaired, purity tested and triumphant. Hebrews takes this line, as Man one with us. Our Lord was both not able to sin and able not to sin. (Heb. 4.14). Like His Incarnation a mystery, before which we bow in adoring worship. He was led by the Spirit always.

THE STAGES OF THE TEMPTATION. There were three temptations, each referring to a different aspect of our Lord’s mission on earth; they were personal, national, universal, affecting body, mind, spirit. Material, spiritual, vocational, bread, trust and purpose in life. There are three elements in human life to which Satan can appeal; appetite pride and ambition (1 John 2.16,17). They are “not of the Father and so far as they are sinful they do not, of course apply to our Lord.

FIRST TEMPTATION. This was to set up a Selfish Kingdom. This involved Christ’s personal relation to His Father. “You are the Son of God, then command that these stones be made bread. Hunger is a bodily sensation applicable to humanity, needing to eat eventually in order to the sustenance of life, and in itself not sinful. This was a test of His loyalty to the Father. The circumstance of hunger was part of the Divine plan. The temptation was specious and is focused on our Lord’s submission to the will of God. The physical side of life is temporal, material and transient and our Lord’s reply was a clear rejection of anything materialistic. The enemy said, “If Thou be the Son of God,” the Lord said, “Man” his responsibility. I am here as Man, and as a Man I meet thy temptation. Here is His submission to law and acceptance of God’s will. The spiritual must have the first place in life, the physical last.

SECOND TEMPTATION. “Set up a Spectacular Kingdom.” “Cast Thyself down, no harm will come to you.” This involved Christ’s official relation to His own nation,

Israel. Use signs and wonders, stagger them by amazement and the world will be at your feet.

This was a test of His dependence upon the Word of God. He had absolute confidence in His Father, quiet perfect trust. There was to be no sensationalism, He had accepted the Divine programme for his Life, and God was not to be tempted presumptuously (Deut. 6.16). As Israel's Messiah He would keep spiritual laws and await the day of realization of God's plan. (Psa. 2.8,9). He knew His spiritual responsibility and lived within the realm of His Father's will. This perfect man demonstrated His trust in God and is victorious over evil by obeying the word of God.

THIRD TEMPTATION. "Establish a Socialistic Kingdom." The temptation to win and woo is the most subtle of all, but it would compromise the holiness of God. This Satanic appeal to the soul tested the Lord's desire to achieve personal world dominion or to bring Worship to God. He will bring this in when He reigns in righteousness (Psa. 72. 8,11,17,19).

The perfect Servant and the righteous King could not be lured from the pathway of service by giving to Satan the place that belongs to God alone.

World-empire will come to Him by way of suffering and death (Matt. 28.18); He would not take a short cut to the throne.

LESSONS. (1) Adam had liability but not tendency to sin; our Lord had neither liability nor tendency; but we through Adam's fall, have both, hence "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26.41).

(2) If our Lord could have sinned, He could not have been our Redeemer. If He could not have been tempted. He could not have been man, and therefore one with us (Heb. 2.16-18).

(3) Appreciate His Suffering (Heb. 2.18), for suffering was keener for His spotless purity (Heb. 7.26).

(4) Appropriate His Sympathy (Heb. 4.15). He is "touched" because "tempted," He suffers with us. Yes, He understands.

(5) Use His Sword (Eph. 6.17). Knowledge of God's word, in an experimental way, is always the secret of power (Psa. 119.11).

(6) Observe the references quoted from Deuteronomy are in the opposite order to the way in which they occur

in the book. God's order is worship, trust, bread, the Devil's inverted order is bread, trust, worship.

The limit to temptation (1 Cor. 10.13); The comfort (1 Pet. 4.12,13).

ABRAHAM— HIS EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

by J. CAMPBELL (Larkhall)

Thus far, we have viewed Abram/Abraham as Pilgrim, Backslider Herdsman, Backslider, Warrior and Bygapist; now let us view him as the INTERCESSOR. In Gen. 18. 17-21, we have the disclosure, first of Divine INTROSPECTION. The thoughts of Deity are revealed in the first sentence of v. 17, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" As if pondering its magnitude and consequent effect on a mortal man, even although addressed later as "the friend of God." It reveals a longing urge in the heart of God for communion, and an interchange of thought and expression, lost at the Fall, in Adam, between the great Creator and His Creature. Jehovah marshalls His reasons to support His ultimate decision of disclosure. He calls upon His Omniscience, "I know him", v. 19, is the deciding factor; acknowledge which must have been foreknowledge, in the light of:—

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 1. He will become a great nation. | v. 18 |
| 2. All nations shall be blessed in him. | v. 18 |
| 3. He will command his children after him. | v. 19 |
| 4. His household with him shall keep the way of the Lord. | v. 19. |

Here *Divine Introspection* ends, and *Divine Inspection* begins, "I will go down and see," v. 21. God follows His own instructions, written through Moses with regard to evil reports, namely Deut. 13.14, and 17.4; Deut. 13 & 17; Gen. 18.21-22; Gen. 19. 24-28.

First, you hear of it. The cry of Sodom reached Heaven.
Second, you search it. I will go down.

Third, ask diligently. Altogether according to the cry.

Fourth, if it be true. I will know.

Fifth, if it be certain. If not, I will know.

Sixth, Offender Identified. Sodom Gomorrah, cities of the plain.

Seventh, Stoned to death. Fire and brimstone from Heaven.

ABRAHAM'S SEVENFOLD INTERCESSION

He appeals to :—

The Character of God. Destroy righteous with wicked
The Justice of God. Shall not the Judge of Earth
do right.

The Mercy of God. There lack five of fifty.

The Tolerance of God. Forty Persons.

The Forebearance of God. Thirty Persons.

The Longsuffering of God. Twenty Persons.

Grace and Judgement of God. Ten Persons.

Had Abraham made a quick, mental calculation of Lot and his family connections, numbering seven in all, and allowed for only three more of the inhabitants of Sodom to complete his final plea of ten? How telling the observation in Ch. 13.13, "But the men of Sodom were wicked before the Lord, exceedingly". "Before" meaning "Against"

Abraham, in the character of THE REAPER, MAY NOT BE so evident, as that of the INTERCESSOR; yet a glance at Gen. 21 will clarify the matter. Galatians 6.7 declares, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Abraham had sown to the flesh, he now reaps its harvest. He needed no persuasion in taking Hagar; this was pleasurable to the flesh: in the matter of sending her and Ishmael away, Gen. 21.11 says, "And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight." It took God to intervene. He must obey Sarah's voice in this, as he had in taking Hagar. God meets the crime with the appropriate punishment. In his transgressions, he:—

1. Mistrusted God as to His purpose of a coming heir.
2. Displayed a lack of patience, in awaiting the great event.
3. He sinned against God's Law of Monogamy.
4. He sinned against Sarah, his wife.
5. He sinned against Hagar, her maid.
6. He sinned against himself (see 1 Cor. 6.18).
7. He sinned against posterity, for he introduced a hybrid race.

The prophecy came true of Ishmael (Gen. 16.12). "He will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him". Hating and being hated.

Ungoverned and ungovernable. A wild ass of a man, for such is the meaning of the word; untameable. The Arabs, his descendants, exhibit this trait even today.

Last links are broken when he, Abraham, himself places the bottle of water on her shoulder, and sends her away. How he loved Ishmael. (See Gen. 17.18). "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee". Yet he sends him away, never to see him again: nor Ishmael his father, until his death in Gen. Ch. 25.9, when he joins Isaac at their father's burial. What a harvest!

Perhaps Abraham is best known in his character of **WORSHIPPER**, our eighth study. Worship is one of those elusive, undefineable words; so difficult to explain. Its root meaning is to bow oneself. It is used in Genesis at least 13 times, by Abraham, Isaac, Eliezer, Lot, Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's brethren. Ever used of homage, the act of an inferior to a superior. The finest instance of Abraham as a **WORSHIPPER**, is in Gen. Ch. 22. He is under trial. Faith exercised must be tried. That trial had many aspects. First his obedience. Full preparation is made: ass, young men, wood, fire and knife, each in its appointed order. Then his patience. A long journey of three days waiting on God to disclose the place. Then separation from those who knew not the meaning of the exercise. The curiosity of Isaac is aroused. Fire and wood, but no lamb? Abraham's prophetic expectation is revealed. God will provide Himself a lamb. Isaac, submissively bound to the altar, Abraham raises the knife, and is halted in the final act of the drama. The thicket-caught ram conveniently nearby, and substitution is made, and he receives Isaac back from the dead in a figure (Heb. 11.19).

All this is mere history to us. To Abraham it must have been mystery. His offering is orderly, deliberate, unreserved and costly. His worship is not so much in what is said—that is how we judge—but in what he did.

If Thou should call me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine:
I only yield Thee what is Thine!
Thy will be done.

Through lack of appreciation, men call waste, what God calls worship.

Gen. Ch. 23 tells of Sarah's death, her age and where

she died. It appears Abraham was not at home, v. 2, and that her death was sudden, there is no account of the ailment, or how long she was sick. Death in such circumstances is most tragic; yet Abraham behaves in a decorous manner. She was in life, a beautiful woman (Ch. 12.11). Abraham mourns and sheds tears, as is to be expected. Sixty years of married life they had been privileged to share together. A new experience now for him. He becomes a **MOURNER**. As was the custom, burial took place the same day as death, and he had neglected to secure a burying place all these years. As a pilgrim, he had no tenure to it, and sets about acquiring a burying place from the sons of Heth. He is no "bargain hunter," but pays "current money with the merchant" v. 16. How different from the present day Jew! The deal is duly witnessed by Ephron, the neutral party and in the audience of the children of Heth, 400 shekels of silver for the Cave of Machpelah, meaning "staircase or spiraling," a hint here of resurrection. Sarah becomes its first occupant, five others follow; Abraham (Ch. 25.9), Isaac and Rebekah, (Ch. 49.31), and Leah and Jacob. Rachel was buried in Canaan, Joseph in Shechem, (Josh. 24.32). Machpelah became that hallowed spot, wherein is laid the honoured dust of the Patriarchs. The universe abounds with Machpelah's, scattered worldwide, in the which the sanctified vessels of the redeemed lie, secure in the glorious hope of the awakening shout (1 Thes. 4.16), from the Lord, at His Coming!

We conclude our studies with Abraham, the **WIDOWER**. He has sent Hagar and Ishmael away, he is bereft of Sarah, and his son has married Rebekah. The empty tent of Sarah becomes the domicile of Rebekah. Abraham begins to suffer the first pains of loneliness, the affliction which accompanies old age. If not already prepared for it, it comes with two-fold force. Lost, the tender affections, gone the daily ministrations of companionship and communion of Sarah, his partner. Many a good brother has been here, and decisions of adjustment grimly faced, and the alternatives few. Either a future life of increased loneliness in one's own home, or the courteous and well meaning invitation to share their home from son or daughter; bringing with it daily, though kindness freely lavished, irksome irritations never faced before. Or re-marriage, bringing initial rebellion from im-

mediate family connections, as they envisage a loved Mother replaced by a stranger, perhaps by them never consulted, far less approved. Abraham makes his choice — second marriage. He is still in the vigour of life: Moses like, his natural force unabated. What vast physical changes took place in his body at 100 years old, when as one who considered his body now dead. (Rom. 4.19). Changes which he carried within him, even after Sarah's death, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; although lifted from its context, this principle remains inviolate. (Rom. 11. 29).

Marriage and re-marriage both have a mention in the Word of God. Guidance is given to the Priest, (Lev. 21.14). He may not take a widow or a divorcee; but Abraham had not this and other subsequent scriptures to guide him. He marries Keturah, meaning Fragrance. By her he obtains six sons, and at least another two by his concubines. He is "like a hind let loose". Wisely, he gives his all to Isaac, and sends his other sons away, gift-loaded. After 40 years with Keturah, he dies at the advanced age of 175 years. His second marriage is questionable. One of his later sons, Midian, becomes an enemy of Israel. Thus he had two wives, at least two concubines, and Hagar, and in all, at least ten sons. His long life is laid bare for scrutiny, some aspects commendable, much deplorable, yet the only man called "the friend of God." (2 Chron. 20.7; Isa. 41.8 and James 2.23). Deploring our oft deficiencies, perhaps some small reward awaits us lesser mortals.

THE PROPHECY BY JOEL

by E. R. BOWER, Malvern Link.

Chapter 2.1-14; THE INVADERS FROM THE NORTH. A CALL TO REPENTANCE.

The trumpet call (See Numbers 10) is one of alarm. The terrors of the Day of the Lord are near. The like of what was about to fall has not before been seen. Yet again our thoughts go to the Revelation—this time to the "Trumpet Woes."

Here is a 'scorched earth' policy beyond that of the locust swarm or, perhaps, beyond any merely human army. The invaders are described "as" a strong people; they run "like" mighty men; they move almost as automatons or robots; nothing seems to harm them; it (the army) moves at the behest of the Lord, Jehovah; they carry out His judgments.

The Day of the Lord is, to all intents, here (v.11). Cf. the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 12.17).

Yet, even at this late hour, God declares the Name which He proclaimed at Sinai, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . ." (Exodus 24.5-7).

"Turn ye to Me with all your hearts" cries the Lord to Israel. Repentance must be REAL. In this call to repentance (v.12) God uses a word for 'saith' which, we are told, is not of common usage in the Hebrew. It implies an authoritative and most weighty utterance as in Psalm 110.1; "The Lord SAID unto my Lord." It is used in almost every instance of the immediate utterance of God Himself; more rarely of that of the prophets or inspired organs of the Divine revelations.

These words of appeal are the heart-cry of God for His people who, He sees are slipping into inevitable disaster, and the prophet adds his own voice, "Who knows if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing . . . ?" (v.14).

Chapter 2.15-17; RESPONSE — REPENTANCE.

A CALL TO SANCTIFICATION.

Not here the alarm, or war, trumpet (v.1) but the trumpet of assembly (Numbers 10).

In 1.14 a fast was called for because of the nearness of the Day of the Lord, and here, the call is renewed but with the addition of the call for sanctification of the elders and the congregation. Not now "Alas for the Day" but "Spare Thy people."

Peter's closing message upon the day of Pentecost began with the word "Repent" (Acts 2.38). The letters of our Lord to Ephesus, Pergamos and Sardis called for them to repent. (Revelation 2 and 3).

Chapter 2.18-20; GOD'S ANSWER TO REPENTANCE— REPROACH REMOVED.

“THEN”—links with the “AFTERWARD” of v. 28.

“The Lord will answer” (v.19).

Having fulfilled its purpose as the instrument of the Lord's judgments, disaster overtakes the northern invaders. And note how very careful God is; His battle-sites are chosen beforehand and the coming battle against the northern armies is pinpointed as being between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Cf. Isaiah 34; Ezekiel 38 and 39; Daniel 11.45; Revelation 19.17-21.

It is not certain who it is that “hath done great things” (v. 20)—the invader or the Lord. If the invader, then his achievements are more than offset by the great things accomplished by the Lord of hosts. (v.21).

The personification of the northern army (literally, “him of the north”) favours the view that he is the one who has done the great things. Cf. the ‘northerner’ of Daniel 12; “He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper . . .” Some expositors equate this person of Joel's prophecy with the Antichrist. (Daniel 7 and 8).

Chapter 2.21-27; RESTORATION OF THE LAND AND THE WASTED YEARS.

The ‘land’ (v.21) is the ‘soil’ or the ‘ground’ as in 1.2; which has been subjected to all the ravages of the scorched earth policy of the northern invader. God Himself will now do great things and the soil will be restored to its fruitfulness. The ‘gladness’ of the restored ground will bring gladness to Zion. (Amos 9.13-15).

The marginal reading of v.23 reads, “He hath given you a teacher of righteousness according to righteousness, and he will cause . . .” Commentaries consulted appear to reject this particular reading, as do most of the ‘versions,’ nevertheless there are few Bible students, if any, who have not heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and they will have heard also of that mysterious person whom the Scrolls call the “Teacher of Righteousness,” and it is of interest to read that a ninth century commentary of the book of Joel (written by a member of a Jewish sect) refers to a “Teacher of Righteous-

ness.” Thus it would appear that this ancient commentator accepted what we now refer to as a ‘marginal reading.’ We might mention that the marginal reading is accepted by the Vulgate.

Through the “Teacher of Righteousness”—the Messiah—our Lord, Jesus Christ—will come the restoration of Israel and the sure knowledge that God is in their midst. There will be no more shame. The fulfilment is still future.

Chapter 2.28-32; “AFTERWARD”—BLESSING.

In the Hebrew, chapter 2 ends at v.27 and vv.28-32 are a chapter on their own. Chapter 3 becomes chapter 4 and this is significant for in vv. 28-32 are revealed the purposes of God in finality for the people—His people of Israel.

This is the point of advantage for a comparison of this ‘chapter’ with Peter’s quotation at Pentecost.

JOEL 2.28-32.

“And it shall come to pass afterward” (LXX. “after these things”).

“that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh”

“and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy”

“your old men shall dream dreams”

“and also upon the servants”

“and upon the handmaids”

“in THOSE DAYS will I pour out My Spirit”

“and I will shew wonders in the heavens”

“and in the earth, blood, and fire.”

“and pillars of smoke”

“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood”

ACTS 2.17-21.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days,”

“I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh.”

“and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy”

“your old men shall dream dreams.”

“and on MY servants”

“and on MY handmaidens”

“I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy”

“and I will shew wonders in heaven above”

“and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire.”

“and vapour of smoke.”

“the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,

“BEFORE the great and the terrible Day of the Lord come.”

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered.”

“for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the REMNANT whom the Lord shall call.”

That Peter was thinking in terms of the ‘last days’ goes without saying. For him, the Teacher of Righteousness had come in the person of His Lord, Jesus the Christ. Cf. the prophecy of John the Baptist (Matthew 3.11), “He that cometh . . . shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

Just before our Lord ascended to heaven, the disciples went to Him with the question, “Lord, wilt Thou AT THIS TIME restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

(Acts 1.6) and our Lord’s reply was, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put IN HIS OWN POWER (authority); BUT ye shall receive the POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT COMING UPON YOU . . .”

The question of the disciples reveals the thought which, at that moment, was uppermost on their minds.

It is as if our Lord was saying, “No, the kingdom is not just yet, but My Father has, Himself, the authority over the times and the seasons for the fulfilment of His promises. In the meantime YOU will have authority to go out to Israel and the world with the message of the Gospel.”

Notice how Peter’s quotation from Joel appears to stop in the middle of a sentence. The deliverance promised by the prophet is still to come, unless . . . Peter does finish the quotation a little later in his message.

Our Lord Himself set a precedent for so breaking into a sentence for it will be remembered how He entered into the synagogue at Nazareth and preached from a text from Isaiah 61.1-3, and ended His quotation at the first clause of v.2 The “acceptable year of the Lord” had come to

“BEFORE that great and notable Day of the Lord come”

“and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

(v.39) “for the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Israel, but not yet the “day of vengeance of our God.” That quotation is to be completed. (Luke 4.16-32).

We must also notice how Peter concludes his message at Pentecost—“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit **FOR THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU, AND TO YOUR CHILDREN**, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Thus Peter completed his quotation, but inserts in his message a proviso—“Repent, and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ.” The promise would be fulfilled in them if only . . .

But Israel refused! (See Acts 28).

Joel listed fourteen signs beginning with “I will pour out of My Spirit”—this to be upon all flesh, upon sons, upon daughters, upon old men, upon young men, upon servants, upon handmaidens—seven in all.

The second seven begins with “I will show wonders.” Wonders in the heavens and in earth; with blood, fire, pillars of smoke, and signs in the sun and the moon. These seven await fulfilment.

There is one other thing we should notice—the substitution of “remnant” for “all that are afar off.” Peter’s letters were for those “afar off” — the scattered of Israel — the Dispersion.

**The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ**

by
the late
**William
Hoste, B.A.**

**THE ATONING
DEATH**

7. THE ATONEMENT IS THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF MERCY. Unitarians and their imitators, Modernists, etc., deny the necessity of atonement in the expiatory

sense. They ignore God's righteousness and claims and speak as though benevolence were His one and only character. Their objection is that, to say that God requires satisfaction, is a denial to Him of the quality of mercy, but such mercy would be rather like the indulgence of a sentimental populace, who sign petitions in favour of some redhanded murderer, for whom not one of them would shed a drop of his own blood. *But the Divine Atonement is the highest form of mercy, far greater than if it were possible for God to waive the claims of justice and save everybody. That would entail no self-sacrifice. The vicarious Atonement of Christ exhibits God's mercy in a most wonderful way. The offended Lawgiver takes the place of the law-breaker. Were God all mercy He must remit all penalty and cease to be the moral Governor of the Universe. The atonement demands self-sacrifice in an infinite degree, in the Father who inflicts it on His own Son, in the Son who voluntarily submits, and in the Spirit through whom the sacrifice is made (Heb. 9.14). The Judge Himself is the sacrifice (Pascal) and again, "How hast thou loved *us*," says Augustine (*Confessions* x. 43), "for whom He that thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was made subject even to the death of the cross." To deny to the Governor of the Universe the right to enforce His laws is really to deny all government. But God has entrusted the sword to "the powers that be," and He also Himself bears a sword (Deut. 32.41-43; Isa. 27.1; 63.3).

In the view here combated, the only thing Christ had to effect was to break down man's opposition to God and His ways. But would not His life of ceaseless benevolence have sufficed for this, nay have been more effective? His death does not in itself seem calculated to inspire men with the beauty of God's character, or encourage trust in Him. The Lord trusted as none before: if this be the outcome of trusting, why should I trust? He was the obedient One, but if perfect obedience ends in such a tragedy, could disobedience end in worse? If the One who always pleased Him met with such a fate, what hope have I who seldom please Him? † Those who argue for a mercy untrammelled

*See Dogmatic Theology, Vol. ii, p. 447.

†See Dale's Atonement.

by any requirements of justice cannot have, it is to be feared, a keen sense of their own sinfulness, nor yet of the Holiness of God. Difficulty in accepting the Atonement may partly lie in regarding God as altogether such an one as ourselves. It is true that a man can hardly feel wrath and compassion at the same moment, but God can feel infinite wrath against sin and infinite compassion to the sinner. His holy wrath has nothing in common with the rage of man, but is compatible with benevolence. Aversion to the Atonement is the fruit of pride, self-righteousness and unbelief, which deify man, deny the need of expiation, and defy future judgement.

8. THE ATONEMENT IS SUFFICIENT. Though there will necessarily be an element in the sufferings of the lost, which our Lord could not experience, the sense of personal guilt, the “undying worm” of remorse, ultimate despair of regaining God’s favour, yet His sufferings were more than the equivalent, owing to the infinite greatness of His person, to the sufferings of the lost. The Lord Jesus will always have been, throughout eternity, the greatest sufferer on account of sin. God has not accepted a lesser sacrifice for a greater. It was the God-Man who suffered. He and He alone was able to exhaust the judgment of God due to sin. The proof that the Atonement was sufficient is the resurrection of Christ, otherwise He must have remained under the judgment of God. This was essential. Had Christ not been raised, there would be no atonement available for man, “our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins” (1 Cor. 15.17).

The resurrection proves that God is satisfied. Otherwise no blessing, no forgiveness, no joy, no ray of hope could ever have penetrated the darkness of this world. Now there is fulness of blessing for all who believe on His Son.

9. THE ATONEMENT CAN NEVER BE REPEATED.

This follows on what has just been said. It is sufficient. What need then to repeat it? To do so would be to deny its efficacy. It is therefore unreasonable as well as unscriptural to suggest, as the Romanist and Ritualist do, a repetition of the same sacrifice of Calvary, not only once, but millions of times down the ages. It lowers the “once for all”

sacrifice of the Lamb of God to the level of the Jewish sacrifices of bulls and goats, which were continually repeated, because it was "not possible for them to take away sins" (Heb. 9.25-28; 10.1-4, 11-14; 1 Pet. 3.18). Truly the martyrs had good reason to die rather than receive the doctrine of the Mass. The Romish priest professes to create God and then to offer Him up as a slain victim on the "altar." Is he not then the lineal descendant of those Jewish priests who offered up the Lord of glory on the cross of shame?

10. THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT. Being the result of the death of an infinite Person, its value is infinite. Potentially therefore its extent is unlimited and more than sufficient to meet the need of every sinner of the human race. The offer of the Gospel, bearing news of forgiveness and eternal life, is proclaimed to every creature in all the world. But will anyone deny to God in His sovereignty the right to lay down conditions for its reception, namely repentance and faith? To bring unrepentant sinners to heaven would be like a king filling his palace with rebels. On the other hand must God force the will of every creature to believe? Surely not. Are we therefore to hold that the results of the Atonement are left to the caprice of the human will? What then if no one believed? Christ would have died in vain as far as man is concerned. We know alas! in fact, that many will be lost in spite of the Gospel (e.g., Rev. 21.8).

That such a matter should be left to chance is clearly irrational. Here comes in another side of the truth. God is bringing many sons unto glory. There are those who repent and believe. There are also those whom God "chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1.4). The relation between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is one of the secret things which belong to the Lord, but we are face to face with it in every act of our lives; and the difficulty created by it is practically nil, and we get on perfectly well without solving it. God's election is not to prevent men believing, "God will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2.4), but to ensure some believing. There is nothing to prevent the sinner accepting the Gospel, he is urged to do it, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33.11); Stephen charged home on his murderers not their inability, but their unwillingness. "Ye do always resist

the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7.51), and the Lord reproached others with the same fault. "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life" (John 5.40). No one will take credit to himself for being saved, nor blame God for being lost.

11. THE EFFECTS OF THE ATONEMENT. The effects of the Atonement are very broad, retrospective as well as future. Every blessing, material or spiritual, that has come to man in the history of the world is on the ground of the death of Christ. The rain, the sunshine, the fruits of the earth, the covenant of night and day, the cycle of the seasons and every other temporal blessing has the same reason behind it. Without it God must have withheld any and every blessing, for man has forfeited every claim by sin. The very breath the blasphemer uses to curse the name of God, he owes to the propitiation of Christ; the fact that God's judgment lingers, that the Gospel is preached are other effects of the same cause. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself *not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (2 Cor. 5.19) enforces this point. The sins are not forgiven, but temporarily passed over to give the world time to be reconciled to God. In fact no sin was ever forgiven, no sinner saved, in any age, clime or dispensation, (and God has never left Himself without a witness) *except on the ground of atonement*, still future or finished even when, as in the case of infants, imbeciles, etc., that atonement was unknown.

There are three methods of making a purchase: either by ready money, or on credit, or on deposit account. No man can pay for his own sins, but sins were* remitted in the old dispensation, "sins that are past" (Rom. 3.25), before Christ died, "on credit" of what He was going to do; but now sins are forgiven on the ground of the price already paid at Calvary.

I need not dwell here at length on the effects of the Atonement for believers, it will take eternity to appreciate all that it means of forgiveness, life, victory and glory. We are cleansed, forgiven, justified, sanctified and made nigh through faith in the atoning blood. We can go further and

*The O.T. Saints knew the blessing of forgiveness (Ps. 32.1), but not the righteous **ground** for it. The word 'remission' in Rom. 3.25 is **paresis**, not the usual **aphesis**.

sing, "Our every joy in earth and heaven, we owe it to Thy blood." Not only so, but where the blood of the Atonement is applied, the Holy Spirit is given as Seal, Earnest, Anointing, to dwell in the believer and enable him to live for God and work righteousness.

But the Atonement has a still wider application. In Leviticus we read that atonement was made for the Holy Place, Tabernacle and Altar (chap. 16.16-20). But why for places? How can "things in heaven" be "reconciled"? (Col. 1.20), or the "heavenly things themselves" be purified? (Heb. 9.23). The Universe is a great whole. Sin has made its entrance even into the heavenly sphere. A note of discord has been introduced into the universal harmony. Now there is no thought in the Scriptures of the effects of the Atonement being applied to the fallen angels; they sinned against the light of heaven. "Verily not of angels doth He take hold" (Heb. 2.16, R.V.), but the defilement of their guilt on heavenly things must be removed, the discordant note of their rebellion attuned, satisfaction paid to the insulted Majesty of Heaven, the future stability of the Universe assured, and a solid and enduring foundation laid for the eternal glory of the Triune God. All this is guaranteed by the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

by J. G. GOOD

When looking for guiding principles and practices which should mark a New Testament Church, it is of paramount importance, to consider the beginning of things as outlined for us in the book of the Acts. This book is transitional in character, but with abiding principles for our day and age, Judaism is being set aside, as this new order is introduced. The focal point of attention, is the Church which is His Body, at the same time showing us the functioning of the church in its local aspect.

'And being let go, they went to their own company' (Ch. 4.23). A distinction is being made, the called out company is emerging from that which was around them. The idea being conveyed, is a sense of belonging, no thought of occasional fellowship, there was a link with their own

company! Is the assembly a spiritual home to us, to which we repair, after moving in a hostile world? Again in Ch. 11.26, 'The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch' this was the name which would obliterate all religious and race distinctions.

A phrase occurs time and again, 'assembled together,' see Chs. 4.31, 11.26, 14.27, 15.6, 15.30, and 27.4, this word denotes a definite coming together, a 'set feast' of the New Testament calendar. How important it is to have gatherings which are scriptural in origin and character.

Our present meditation concerns Acts Ch. 4.24, where the believers were 'assembled together for prayer. Is it merely a co-incidence, that in this first instance, we find this 'assembled together' connected with a prayer meeting? There are certain characteristic features associated with this prayer meeting, firstly, clear gathering principles are defined, secondly, valuable information is provided as to the spirituality and sincerity of those who gathered. There is progression and expansion throughout, in the Manner of Approach, Measure of Appreciation, and their Maturity of Apprehension, as to the plans and purposes of God.

ENRAPTURED BY THE PRAISE OF GOD

The greatness and majesty of God gripped their hearts, verse 24, 'Sovereign Lord,' a title occurring ten times in the New Testament, denoting absolute, unrestricted authority, the One Who ruleth over the kingdoms of men. The creatorial power of God was recognised, but the God of creation was not in oblivion, they firmly believed in the active government of God, the One Who is in absolute control of events in this world in which we live, verses 26.27. Little wonder that praise should precede prayer, as we remember, the august majesty of our God, we gladly enter His courts with praise. The book of Psalms especially, emphasise this occupation with the God of creatorial power, see Psalms 90 and 100. If this was appreciated and realised to a greater extent among us, there would be a greater reverence in approaching and addressing God in thanksgiving and prayer, and as a consequence of the reality of this truth, our confidence in our God, in the calm assurance that all things are in His control, our dependence would be unshaken, despite the difficulties of this life.

ENLIGHTENED AS TO THE PURPOSES OF GOD

The believers were in no doubt as to the part fulfilment of the second Psalm, prophetic anticipation had now a New Testament application, what a testimony to the authenticity of Holy scripture. The promises of God lying dormant, until in the purposes of God, the time is ripe to activate such promises. There should be no doubt or ignorance in the heart or mind of any Christian today, God has spoken, finally and completely, in the Person of His Son. (Heb. 1.1). What confidence and courage is produced, as we see the prophetic scriptures being accomplished, God is working His purposes out, all shall come to pass, not one shall fail! The clock of prophecy is at a standstill, until that momentous time arrives for the Lord's return for His Church, raptured into His Presence, before the 'time of Jacob's trouble!' (I Thess. 4.16). Here in Acts 4.27, we see the God-ward side of the Cross, according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, not an afterthought, but purposed by our God in the counsel chambers of a past eternity.

ENGAGED IN PRAYER TO GOD

'Lord, behold their threatenings' (verse 29), spreading their case before God, not that they might be delivered, but that preservation would be their portion. How often our prayers consist of asking for ways of escape, from the situations of life in which we find ourselves, our prayer should be for preserving and sustaining grace. In verses 29 and 30, we see that their request was not related to relief of self, but had the glory of God in view, 'that signs and wonders may be done.' We seem to have lost our way, as far as public prayer is concerned, despite the patterns of prayer recorded for us in the Word of God. Many prayers tend to be expository, rather than petitionary in content, how often is prayer used as a pretext, to air a grievance, or offer correction to those who in our opinion have erred. This prayer is worthy of emulation in our prayer meetings, because of its unity, brevity and simplicity.

O Thou by Whom we come to God,
THE LIFE, THE TRUTH, THE WAY,
Thou Who the path of prayer hast trod,
Lord, TEACH us how to pray.

ENDUED BY THE POWER OF GOD

Prayer was addressed to the God of creation, and the God of creation answered, see verse 31. A visible manifestation of the presence of God, was associated with the introduction of the Church age, but there are no grounds to suppose, that this visible display of the power of God, was intended to continue, but that it was specifically connected with the commencement of the Church era. Many still look for signs of this type, but we search the New Testament in vain, there is no suggestion that God will intervene in this way, prior to the rapture of the Church. We tend to link the power of God with energetic, demonstrative, preaching, alas this is not the case, Holy Spirit power has no connection with the ability to deliver a lively address, the power is invested in the Word of God, irrespective as to the tempo in which it may be delivered. May the preaching be in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. (1 Thess. 1.5).

ENCOURAGED BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD

'They spake the word with boldness' verse 31, this is the result of a realisation of the presence of God with us, there can never be a substitute for a sense of the presence of God in the gatherings of His people or in the individual life. Despite the seeming power of the opposition, the presence of God makes the weakest saint, more than able to conquer through Him Who loved us. The presence of the Lord removes fear, 'the angel of the Lord stood by me, Whose I am and Whom I serve' (Acts 27.23). Again, the presence of the Lord imparts hope, 'Jesus Himself drew near and went with them' (Luke 24.15). Circumstances may become difficult and trying, 'the angel of His presence saved them' (Isa. 63.9). When we look at this truth in the light of the assembly, the presence of God in the midst convicts the unbeliever. (I Cor. 14.25). The day in which we live may be different and more difficult, but our God is the same, any failure is on the part of His people. The resources available to us, are infinite, let us draw upon them, and see God move in blessing upon us. There is always a potential for blessing, where there is on the part of His people, a desire to walk in the paths of His commandments, this was the case at the beginning, may we see the evidences of blessing which marked those early days!

TOO BIG FOR GOD TO USE!

“Too big for God to use me”!
O Lord, forgive my sin,
And let the pride that hinders
Be taken from within.
So much of self in service
The blessing cannot come ;
And thus the work is useless
Which I had thought well done.

“Too big for God to use me”!
May I this lesson learn,
That eloquent orations
No soul to Christ will turn;
The people praise the learning,
The fluent pleasant speech,
Its poetry and pathos,
But these no heart will reach.

“Too big for God to use me”!
This is the reason why
Poor longing souls are famished
Who come, and go, and die!
O God my Saviour help me
In deep humility
To make a full surrender,
Henceforth to own but Thee.

“Too big for God to use me”!
But if I am possessed
With unction through His Spirit,
Then shall my work be blessed,
I'll count myself as nothing,
Seek Christ to magnify,
And use my gifts in service
My Lord to glorify.
Not I, but Christ, in future,
My lifting up shall be,
In simple, sacred language
My Saviour all shall see.
So much I'll make of Jesus,
His life, His death, His fame,
All hearts shall praise and worship,
And bless His holy Name.

And when in heaven's bright glory,
With trophies of His grace,
Which He in service gave me,
I see Him face to face—
What joy will be my Saviour's,
What joy shall be my own,
That I was not, when serving,
Too big for God to own!

*SHOW 'ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY' TO YOUR
FRIENDS—THEY'LL APPRECIATE IT!*

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (5) by JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen

'JUST AS I AM'

CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT (1789—1871)

Charlotte Elliott, the writer of this well-loved hymn was born at Clapham on the outskirts of London in 1789, the year of the French Revolution. Clapham at that period was the home of many notable statesmen who were christians. Among these were William Wilberforce, the great pioneer for the abolition of slavery, and Lord Teignmouth the Governor of India. These were all members of the National Church and sat under the ministry of the revered John Venn, their godly vicar. Venn's ministry however, left Charlotte cold and unmoved; it failed to reach her heart. Yet she demonstrated no antipathy to it, just apathy. As yet she did not personally know the Saviour.

That great experience came when she was 33 years of age. There came at that time to stay at Grove House (their Clapham home) a distinguished guest from Geneva, Switzerland, whose name was Dr. Caesar Malan. One day that godly man ventured to speak to Charlotte regarding her spiritual state. "Are you a Christian?" he enquired, to which she retorted, "Mind your own business" and left the room. She could not, however, dismiss that question, "Was she a Christian?" and two weeks later when they were together in the garden she apologized for her rudeness and confessed to Dr. Malan, "I should like to come to Christ but I do not know how." "My dear young lady" he replied you don't want to worry any more about that, come just as you are." Those words of Dr. Caesar Malan to Charlotte that day in the garden led not only to the birth of a soul but as well to the birth of a song. Dr. Malan wrote to Char-

lotte on his return to Geneva. Aware of her spiritual struggle and crisis, he tried to encourage her in taking that step to Christ, "One look, silent, but continuous and faithful at the cross of Jesus is better, is more efficacious than all else beside. Dear Charlotte, cut the cable, it will take too long to unloose it; cut it, it is a small loss, the wind blows and the ocean is before — the Spirit of God and Eternity." Charlotte took that step to Christ, that step from the darkness of doubt to the peace and blessedness of eternal light.

It was twelve years later that Charlotte wrote the hymn. She was then living in Brighton with her vicar brother Henry Venn Elliott, who ran a girls' school there. One evening when all the others had gone out to a public function Charlotte was alone at Westfield Lodge. As she lay that evening on the sofa feeling downcast and full of doubts and fears, the experience of 12 years earlier and the words of Dr. Caesar Malan again flooded her soul. It took her back to the starting point, to those words that first brought peace to her troubled heart. As she afresh laid hold of these eternal certainties, she felt she must give expression to her thoughts and reaching for a pen, she put into verse what had been her own experience,

'Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come.'

These verses, the experience of Charlotte Elliott were to be blessed to very many souls in the succeeding years. By the time of her death in 1871, she had collected in a box 1,000 letters from others telling of spiritual help through the words of her hymn.

In St. Oswald's old churchyard at Grasmere in Westmoreland, there stand in a row the tombstones of the Wordsworth family. That of the poet's favourite daughter Dora bears the carving of a lamb—a lamb with a cross behind it. Someone had sent a copy of Charlotte's hymn to Dora as she lay seriously ill. The words of that hymn brought Dora comfort and peace in her dying moments. "Why" she exclaimed, "that is the very thing for me." So she died, and her body was laid to rest in St. Oswald's churchyard, and the tombstone with the carving of the lamb and the cross

marks that spot today. On the bottom of that tombstone is inscribed a lovely scripture text, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out' (John 6.37). When Charlotte first wrote her hymn, she put those same words at the heading of the page 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' What lovely words are these of the Lord Jesus, and how true is their promise! In Bunyans' Pilgrims Progress, Pilgrim sees similar words inscribed over the portal of the Pilgrim gate, 'Notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither, they are in no wise cast out.' Through that open gate and with the assuring promise overhead, Pilgrim stepped on to the way that leads to eternal life,

'Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am of that free love
The breadth, length, depth,
and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.'

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor: A. M. S. Gooding

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor: 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee:

Joint Treasurers:

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Secretary: John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

Friends, excepting those residing in Great Britain, should please forward gifts to: John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



CONTENTS

HIS GLORIOUS NAME

by Edward Robinson

THE PROPHECY BY JOEL

by E. R. Bower

NOTES ON REVELATION

by Jim Flanigan

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

by William Hoste

SOME ASSEMBLY FEATURES

by B. Currie

2nd EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

by J. Heading

"THOU HAST KEPT MY WORD"

by W. E. Vine

THE CAPTIVATING CHRIST OF

COLOSSIANS by J. B. Hewitt

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS

by Jack Strahan

'AND THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY'

(Acts 2.42)

by G. W. BONE

Who are these, who meet like this, without device or creed?
To simple 'Gospel Halls' they come—it seems to fill their
need.

No 'minister' is seen to lead—or preach unto the flock
What are their hopes, and their desires—to build upon what
rock ?

They meet together in 'His Name'—and own Him Lord of all
Before they came to worship thus—they heard salvation call,
There's nothing known of man's ideas—within their worship
time,
And yet within the Spirit's realm,—to heaven's heights they
climb,

They stand upon the finished work; of Christ on Calvary,
And preach this, as the Gospel true—so plain for all to see.
Accepting Christ—does bring 'New Birth'—and from sin
there's release,
Through Christ — the Father can forgive — and grant the
sinner peace.

Conversion's followed by His wish, believers will obey,
To be baptised in Jesus name—a witness to convey.
And then to take the bread and wine,—in memory of the
Lord,
The 'sweet memorial feast' is held,—'according to His Word.'

This is the pattern that is set, and how the 'saints' do meet,
And welcome those—whose mind's the same, and lovingly
do greet,
'Tis but a portion of Christ's Church—who by His Word
abide,
And one day soon—the Lord shall come—and they'll be at
His side.

HIS GLORIOUS NAME

by EDWARD ROBINSON

In the scope of a short article such as this it is possible to touch only the fringe of such a subject as the great number of names by which our Lord Jesus Christ is designated in the Scriptures. They constitute a composite picture by the Holy Spirit (though words could never wholly compass) of the infinite glories of the Son of God. The names in Scripture carry the thought of renown. The O.T. contains many references to Christ, using a great number of titles, each intended to enhance the glory of His Person and increase our appreciation: in this Isaiah is outstanding. In the much loved 53rd chapter, with great feeling he refers to Him as **THE MAN OF SORROWS**, acquainted with grief, in meekness bearing the wrath of God against sin without complaint. By contrast, he extols His surpassing excellence in a magnificent list of titles, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name (singular) shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father (father of eternity, J.N.D.), The Prince of Peace.' (9.6).

If we think of this list as a constellation setting forth the moral glories of the One Who is the outshining of the blessedness of God, then Malachi furnishes us at the end of the Old Testament with this summary, 'But unto you that fear My Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.' (4.2). He is able to say of Himself 'I am the Light of the world' (John 8.12) and Peter says of Him 'a Light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts.' (2 P. 1.19). These titles in their scope take us not only to the beginning of creation and the closing up of the purposes of God but to a time prior to creation as John records, 'In the beginning was . . .' This is before Gen. 1.1: indeed, referring to what was in existence in a past eternity. He concludes the verse 'In the beginning *was* the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' (Jno. 1.1). This demonstrates the separate Persons of the Trinity 'God' denoting finality, as Paul writes 'that God may be all in all.' (1 Cor. 15.28). Luke, in the prologue to his Gospel, also uses this title

'The Word' (gr. The Logos), a most comprehensive name indicating that here was One, through Whom and by Whom all that was to be made known of the inscrutable Deity came into expression and declaration, yet withal was the lowly Jesus, here in Manhood the centre of the four Gospel narratives. Translators tell us that there is no comparable word in the English language capable of expressing the fulness of meaning in the word 'logos.'

We can well understand that John, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' who leaned on Jesus' breast, in his writings delights to repeat over and over again the name beloved by many, 'the Lamb of God.' The strength of love depicted by this sacrificial Name has endeared Him down the centuries to countless generations. It has a charm which never loses its appeal, speaking of the meekness and gentle character of the Offerer. Yet this meekness is not weakness as is evidenced by the same writer employing the remarkable phrase in judgment against evil, 'the wrath of the Lamb.' Again he says 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them : for He is Lord of lords and King of kings.' (Rev. 17.14). How fittingly in this same last book in the Scriptures does John link together several times the Name of God with that of the Lamb. So the hymn writer sings :—

'God and the Lamb shall there,
The Light and Temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share,
The unveiled mystery!'

It is in this book of the Revelation that so many of these titles appear, e.g. (5.5), 'The Lion of the tribe of Juda and the Root of David,' this latter, of course signifying His deity. At the same time He is the offspring of David, having taken so lowly a place in Manhood, though in the royal line (22.16). Perhaps the most comprehensive, on which He Himself pronounces is 'I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.' (Rev. 21.6). Again this is repeated (22.13), the Lord adding 'the First and the Last.' There is here a clear connection with the word in Hebrews (12.2), 'Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith.' (Leader and Completer, J.N.D.). This word 'Author,' occurring four times in the New Testament and used only of the Lord, is trans-

lated from the Greek (Acts 3.15) as 'The Prince of Life' and (J.N.D.) 'The Originator of Life.' How full then is the word of God of the glories of this blessed One, the Son of God, in order that He might acquire an ever increasing place in the minds and the affections of all redeemed by His exceeding grace.

THE PROPHECY BY JOEL

by **E. R. BOWER**, Malvern Link.

Do the "signs of OUR times" bear any resemblance to the seven which remain to be shown? As we see pictures of a nuclear explosion, do we see the "pillars of smoke" or in the "mushroom cloud" the darkening of the sun and a blood red moon?

Chapter 3.1-17; THE GATHERING OF THE NATIONS— RETRIBUTION.

"In **THOSE DAYS**, and in **THAT TIME**"—that is, in the days of restoration, "I will **ALSO** gather the nations" (vv.1-2). This is not the 'northerner' who is spoken of here—the invader of chapter 2, for he has been destroyed. This gathering is of **ALL** nations, and as it was with the northern armies, so again here; the meeting place for the battle is specified. Not Megiddo (as suggested by those who equate the two locations) but the valley of Jehoshaphat. Cf. Zechariah 14.

God will no longer tolerate the divided state of **HIS** land; **HIS** people; **HIS** NATION.

The Land of Israel is not yet as God intended it to be—see Genesis 15.18; Exodus 28.31; 1 Kings 4.21;—and in our own day, especially since Israel became a nation again (1948), we are witnesses to the desire of nations on Israel's borders to keep that which they already have of God's Israel, but their desire also to abolish the State of Israel altogether. The division of the "glorious land" will bring sure judgment upon the spoilers. But Israel must beware that she does not attempt to pre-empt or hasten the purposes of God Who has said, "I will restore."

What the prophet saw is coming to pass before our eyes. Not swords into ploughshares, or spears into pruning hooks; not now nation speaking peace unto nation (Isaiah 2.4; Micah 4.3). This is yet to come. What Joel saw was the very reverse.

Whether it is “all nations” (v. 2), or the “nations round about” (v.11), “The wine press is full; the vats overflow” (v.13). See Revelation 14.15-20.

Amid war and seismic disturbance “His people” will be safe, for God will be a refuge and a stronghold (v. 16). (See Revelation 12.14-17).

Israel Restored! The long, long years of waiting are over.

When the Lord roars out of Zion and Israel sees the multitudes in the valley of decision (or, ‘threshing’), when Israel witnesses the awe-inspiring judgments of their God upon the nations; THEN Israel will know that Jehovah is truly their God Who dwells in Zion, His holy mountain. THEN shall Jerusalem be holy and strangers will no more pass through (v.17).

Chapter 3.18-21; CONSUMMATION.

“IN THAT DAY”—in the day when Israel recognizes her God—the ancient promise of a land flowing with milk and honey will indeed come to pass.

Joel, like Ezekiel (47.1-12), visualizes that river of living and life-giving water flowing from beneath the threshold of the House of the Lord, and the land will become again as Eden. Cf. Amos 9.11-15.

Israel, at long last, will dwell in the Land of the Promise—the Promised Land.

Was Joel anticipating that glorious vision that John saw (Revelation 21 and 22) of “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife?” Of “that great city, the holy Jerusalem?” Of that “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb?”

Drawing to the close of these notes, a short meditation by Kingsley Melling (published in “Echoes of Service”) engaged attention. Entitled “The year of the locust” it reads—

“What a marvellous promise is unveiled for us in this word from the Lord to His ancient people after the terrible devastation caused by the plague of locusts. “I will restore to you the years that the locusts hath eaten.” (Joel 2.25).

Consider the reliability of the promise. It does not depend on us but on the fact that God's steadfast love (Joel 2.13; R.S.V.) can be depended on where there is true repentance and true faith "Yet even now . . . turn ye unto me with all your heart . . . rend your heart and not your garments . . . turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger . . ." (Joel 2.12-13, R.V.). Judgment is His strange work and with it there is always the promise of pardon. The promise is conditional but there is a guarantee with it and the Guarantor is none other than God Himself.

Consider the nature of the promise. We are accustomed to say that the past is gone and there is nothing we can do about it. This promise assures us that God can do something with our past that we cannot do. He can restore it in some miraculous fashion. The locust years were lost years; years of fierce hostility to God or years of wasted opportunities and tragic backsliding. How can God restore such years? There are some striking illustrations. Malcolm Muggeridge becomes a preacher of the faith he once destroyed. C. S. Lewis becomes a champion of orthodoxy from being a champion of atheism. C. M. Joad turned back to God after many years wandering away from God. These men in middle life have each in his own way become an illustration of the promise, "I will restore the years that the locust hath eaten." The greatest example of all time is Saul of Tarsus.

There is assurance and hope for the backslider in the promise of restoration.

"So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame:
So purer light shall mark the road,
That leads me to the Lamb."

How can we be so sure? Because the promise remains to all who repent and return. "I will restore the years that the locust hath eaten."

Joel wrote to the people of God, warning them of the approach of the Day of the Lord. It seems as if the message was largely ignored, and will be ignored until just a remnant remains.

How often have we, in the assemblies of God's redeemed people, heard expression of wonder at the way in which Israel behaved throughout her history, but have we who

are the members of the body of Christ learned anything from the example of Israel?

To the early Church, the coming of the Lord was always imminent; it was, perhaps, "Today."

To the Church of our own day, the picture of immediacy has lost its colour. The promises have become dimmed with age.

"Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3.4) is still a question—not perhaps in words—but in deeds.

Believer, look about you! See the signs of the times!

"He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10.37).

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Romans 13.12).

Notes on Revelation

by

JIM FLANIGAN

NORTHERN IRELAND



"THE LAMB AND THE BOOK"

It is important to note the continuity of chapters 4 and 5. The chapter division should be ignored. Chapter 4 is but a prelude; it is the ante-chamber, the vestibule, to the glory of chapter 5. It is important too, to remember that the events of these chapters are yet future. While we may delight to see the present glory of the Lamb depicted here, nevertheless, the events are strictly future, and await the calling home of the Church.

In the opening verse of chapter 5, a minor, but important, change must be made in the text of our authorised version. The scroll is "ON" the Hand of the Throne-Sitter, not "IN." To see the scroll as being held "IN" His Hand, is to miss the beauty of the scene. The scroll is lying "ON" His Hand, extended, offered, to any who has the right and ability to take it. What is this scroll, with all the appearances of a

sealed legal document? Surely it must be more than just a book of prophecy (as suggested by some). John would hardly have sobbed as he did just because there were events yet unrevealed. Have we not here rather, the Title-Deeds to a mortgaged earth? —the Rights to a world which has been ruined by sin? For centuries this old earth has been in a state of neglect and disrepair because of Adam's sin. Man has forfeited all title to it. But God's purpose from the beginning has been that it should be under the rule of Man, and here He is still extending, offering, the Title-Deeds to a worthy one. But there are conditions written in here. There must be ability and power to put the property in order. "Who can do it?" cries the Angel. "Who is worthy?" "Who is able?" The call resounds through earth and heaven with no response. The centuries have witnessed the puny attempts of Caesars and Neros, and many a Dictator, at world rule. The world has yet to see the greatest usurper of all. But John weeps, and angels wait, and principalities and powers watch, and none is found worthy. From the Universe of Science, Politics, Philosophy, Arts and Religions none is forthcoming. The sublimest power is necessary, and none has it; and still, the Title-Deeds lie offered on the Hand of the Throne-Sitter.

One of the elders speaks to the weeping Apostle. "Weep not," is the exhortation. What a story of tears and sorrow this world has seen. Since the first recorded tears of Genesis 21 : 16, not only mothers like Hagar, but fathers too, and prophets and Kings, and apostles, have joined in the weeping. It has been a long, sad era of tears, but now, One has been found to dry the tears of the centuries—a Worthy One! The Lion of the Tribe of Judah! (Gen. 49). The Root of David; David's Son and David's Lord. Not only "offspring of David," but "Root of David" too (Rev. 22). He sprang from David, but He was before David. John looks through his tears, as Mary did long ago in the garden, and sees, not the Lion of Judah, but the Lamb of God, in the midst of the Throne. As is often pointed out, it is a diminutive word here—a little Lamb. The marks of sacrifice are upon Him, as if freshly slain. The memory of Calvary will ever be fresh in Heaven. But there is power too. The seven horns of Omnipotence, and the seven eyes of Omniscience are seen. Here, combined in the little Lamb in plenitude, is Right and Power, Authority and Ability,

and there now follows what has been called "the sublimest individual act in the book of Revelation"—"He came, and took the book, out of the right Hand of Him that sat on the Throne."

It is the signal for the great outburst of praise. The heavens reverberate. Elders and Angels join in "the song with which the heavens ring," and all exalt the Lamb. He is the theme and substance, and subject and object of the worshipping host, and at least one hundred and four million voices proclaim His worth. (Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands). Harps and incense bowls are the fitting symbols of the praise and adoration of the saints and they sing the song of redemption.

If the A.V. text of verses 9 and 10 is correct, then, conclusively, the elders are not angels, but redeemed men. Some, of course, will not accept the accuracy of this text, and will see the song as a general ascription of praise to One who has redeemed men by His Blood. The redeemed ones are Royal Priests, destined to reign.

A myriad voices join in a seven-fold ascription of praise. What a reversal of the earthly story is this exaltation of the Lamb. Power and strength to Him Who was slain in apparent weakness; riches and wisdom to Him who lived and died in poverty and ridicule; honour and glory to Him Who bore the shame; blessing to Him Whom men blasphemed. And the Universe joins in the song, and repeats the substance of the great doxology, and the sound re-echoes again and again as the Lamb is extolled.

The living creatures are here too. If we equate them with the Cherubim, then what a scene is this. For centuries, since they first stood at the gate of Eden (Gen. 3) the Cherubim have blocked the way back to God. They have stood in Tabernacle and Temple, watching, guarding. They have defied man to draw near, except on God's terms. They have stood in the way to the Holiest. But now they watch in wonder. A Man has gone up to the Throne—the Man of Calvary. He has approached the Throne in His own right and has taken the scroll. The living ones have but one word to say—"AMEN." They acquiesce. These Holy Guardians of God's rights have no complaint. The Lamb has a right to the Title-Deeds, and they bow in agreement as He takes them.

The elders worship again, and in the next chapter the scene will shift again from Heaven to Earth, so that we may see the unfolding of events as the Kinsman-Redeemer deals with the property and makes preparation for the Millennial Age.

The
Doctrine
of . . .
Christ

by
the late
William
Hoste, B.A.

THE
RESURRECTION

The greatest miracle of History is the Lord Himself. Being what He was the Resurrection ceases to be a miracle, it was a necessity. It would have been a miracle had death held Him fast. This the Spirit of God makes clear: "Him hath God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because *it was not possible* that He should be holden of it" (Acts 2.24). This impossibility was not only personal, but moral, for the Spirit of Christ had spoken before through David, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. *Thou wilt shew me the path of life*" (Ps. 16.10); also through Isaiah, "Thy dead men shall live, *together with my dead body shall they arise*" (ch. 26.21). The Lord plainly foretold His resurrection to His disciples (e.g., Matt. 18.21; 20.19), and to the Jews, as a sign (John 2.19) and as a proof of His authority (Jn. 10.18).

It is useless to pretend as some have done, that bodily resurrection matters nothing, that the essential is that the influence of Christ persists down the ages; a fact certainly no one can doubt. It reminds us of thieves trying to persuade their victims that their jewels are worthless, to be able to rob them with impunity. No, resurrection in the sense of 1 Cor. 15 always means bodily resurrection. Had

Christ not thus risen there would be no dispute to-day about Christianity, the thing itself would have perished in oblivion. How else can Christ's present world-wide influence be explained, except on the ground that He was what He claimed to be, and that He did rise from the dead? The literal resurrection is an essential part of the faith; the backbone of Christian testimony (Acts 2.24; 3.15, etc.); the keystone of Christian doctrine (1 Cor. 15); the groundwork of Christian conduct (Rom. 6.4; Col. 3.1).

1. ITS DENIAL

But scepticism opposes the Resurrection by devices of every kind often mutually irreconcilable. There is

(a) *The method of blank denial.* Renan is reported to have said, "I would not believe Jesus rose even if I saw it," which accords with Luke 16.31, and Voltaire said much the same, and they have successors to-day. With such it is impossible to argue. And yet why should men who accept the marvels of nature, radium, electrons, wireless, and glory in their cleverness in discovering them, reject miracles? As Huxley once said, "The mysteries of the Bible are child's play compared to those of nature." Surely this ought to facilitate faith. "That a fullgrown human body should be produced from a microscopic cell, is as difficult to believe on the face of it, as that a spiritual resurrection body should be produced out of the natural earthly body."*

(b) The "discrepancy" difficulty. It may be difficult to harmonize all the details of the appearances of our Lord, as given in the various Gospels, but one would not deny the sun had risen because of discrepancies among observers. In fact the "discrepancies" of the various narratives, if such there be, would be an argument for their genuineness. The narrators did not trouble to agree on every detail. They had no time. There was no collusion. Had the story been a fabrication, everything would have easily harmonized. That morning the tomb in Joseph's garden was the centre of attraction for the various companies of disciples. If we knew all, we could harmonize all.

(c) *The official explanation.* The Lord's plain statements as to His Resurrection do not seem to have penetrated the minds of the disciples, but His enemies providentially did

***Dogmatic Theology**, Shedd. Vol. ii, p. 649.

not forget them, and the very adequate precautions they took against a planned resurrection, in making the sepulchre as sure as they could, ought for ever to have ruled out the explanation invented by the high priests for the guard to propagate (see Matt. 28. 11,15). A corpse is not an easy thing to hide, why did they not find it and produce it? Not the greatest sceptic denies that the disciples firmly believed in the Resurrection, but how could they if they had stolen the body?

(d) Then there is the theory of *the mistaken tomb*. The suggestion is that the women went to the wrong sepulchre, as though our Lord was buried in some great modern cemetery, instead of a private garden "wherein was a sepulchre." Had it been otherwise, their joy would have been short-lived, the true grave would have been indicated and the body produced.

(e) *The "swoon" theory*. The Lord, according to this theory, did not really die, but only appeared to. But how was this possible in view of the certificate of death given by the Roman centurion, the piercing of His heart by the soldier's spear, and the certainty of the disciples, who otherwise would not have left the body three days and nights in a cold sepulchre? Even Strauss sees the impossibility of such a theory. "One who had thus crept forth half dead from the grave and crawled about a sickly patient in need of medical and surgical assistance . . . but who notwithstanding finally succumbed to His suffering, could never have given the disciples the impression that He was the conqueror over the grave and death, and the Prince of life."*

Truly, we hear "the father of lies" behind such a theory, for it denies the whole fabric of Christianity—Atonement, Forgiveness, etc. Besides, it contradicts the story; He did not appear after weeks of suffering, an emaciated convalescent, but on the third day, in all the vigour and freshness of resurrection life. This denial of the reality of Christ's death on the cross contradicts the unanimous apostolic testimony in the Acts and the Epistles and the universal voice of the church in all ages.

(f) *The "hallucination" theory*. This is the theory of Renan and Strauss. Perhaps it is almost the most incredible

**Leben Jesu*, p. 298, as cited by Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 456.

out of a bad list. It all hangs on the supposed morbid mental condition of the disciples. They were brought up to the highest pitch of nervous excitement. Elijah and Enoch had *escaped* dying, why should not their Master *emerge* from death? Yes, it must be so; and they succeeded in working themselves into such a state of expectancy, as to be asking for hallucinations, and they got them: a "passing shadow" must be their Lord; a "chance murmur," proved it; "the rattle of a window," to their strained and nervous minds, spelt, what it never does to us, especially at night, "Peace!" The whole of this theorizing falls like a castle of cards before one fact. Nothing is more certain than that the disciples did not dream of such a thing as seeing their Master alive. They were completely disillusioned by His death. The very reports of His Resurrection startled them, but were rejected as incredible, and when He did appear "they were terrified and affrighted and thought they had seen a vision." It was only the plainest proofs that broke down their unbelief, but once they were persuaded, nothing could shake them, though they had no inducement to believe, for it would mean to each, a life of danger and persecution.

The whole theory before us contradicts, not only the facts, but the very nature of a hallucination, which is personal and incommunicable. In this case we are asked to believe that 500 persons all had the same hallucination at the same moment. How can this theory explain the empty grave, the soldiers' fear and the subsequent conduct of the disciples? Moreover, the appearances were not only on one day, or a single occasion, nor yet only to one person, but to various persons, on several occasions and during forty days. Then they stopped suddenly, which would not have been the case had they been hallucinations. It has been objected that He did not shew Himself to all the people, as though He ought to have done so and forced their faith; but on what principle of right could His enemies expect this?

2. THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

(a) *What then are the recorded facts?* It was to "witnesses chosen beforehand," first to Mary Magdalene, (Mark 16.9; John 20.16); then to her and the other Mary (Matt. 28.9); next to Cephas (Luke 24.34; 1 Cor. 15.5); then to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, and again the same

evening to the eleven in the upper room (Luke 24.13,36; John 20.19; 1 Cor. 15.5); later to the five hundred, then to James (1 Cor. 15.6,7); later still to the seven disciples at Tiberias (John 20) and then finally to the apostles at the Ascension (Luke 24; Acts 1). Of these a certain number, beginning with Cephas, the first male witness, are cited in 1 Cor. 15 as testifying to the great fact. To these Paul adds himself: "And last of all He was seen of me, as of one born out of due time." This stands on the same footing as the other appearances; not a mere vision, that is, but a real objective sight of the Living Christ (Acts 22.14). This changed the persecutor into the apostle, and became the mainspring of his testimony, a truth without which Christianity cannot stand, as he proceeds to shew, for "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (*kene*, empty, v. 14); "Your faith is also vain" (*kene*, v. 14); "We are found false witnesses for God" (v. 15); "Your faith is vain" (*mataios*, foolish, v. 17); "Ye are yet in your sins" (v. 18); "Those who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (v. 18); "We are of all men most miserable" (lit. to be pitied, v. 9); "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (v. 20).

(b) *He rose with a spiritual body.*

The Lord did not appear in some mysterious guise, in the dusk or at a distance; on the contrary He appeared in lighted rooms, or in the light of day, visible, tangible, that is in a real body "of flesh and bones." It was identical, in the sense of being recognizable. Nothing of His first body was left behind in the sepulchre. It was not however identical in condition, but a spiritual body, in contrast with that of Lazarus, which was raised a natural body, only to die again later. It had new qualities, in which the Spirit had full control. It could become invisible or unrecognizable at will. It rose too above certain laws of matter, not experiencing interference from ordinary matter (e.g. of "closed doors"). The appearances were unexpected, and were as convincing to all who saw them, as any fact of their lives, and one to which they felt compelled to testify. The Resurrection was the ultimate manifestation of the power of God (Eph. 1.19,20); and of Christ's victory over death as the Holy one of God (Rom. 6.9; Acts 3.12,15); the final proof of His Divine Sonship (Rom. 1.4); the guarantee of the

justification of the believer (Rom. 4.25) and of his future resurrection (Rom. 8.11; 2 Cor. 4.14); the firm basis of our faith and hope in God (1 Pet. 1.21); and the assurance to all men of the coming judgment (Acts 17.31).

SOME ASSEMBLY FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

by **B. CURRIE, Belfast**

1. THE GATHERING OF THE ASSEMBLY

It is the conviction of many that a generation has arisen in some assemblies who having been brought up under the influence of assembly meetings have professed salvation and have been added to the assembly without any real conviction with regard to the principles of gathering. Such are open to the subtle advances of philosophy, ritualism, ecumenism and modernism. Also as we fast approach the end of this dispensation the unpleasant characteristics of men listed in 2 Timothy 3.1-4 manifest themselves more openly. Unfortunately the features of the world all too soon infiltrate the minds and lives of the saints leading to a lowering of standards and a loss of power in testimony.

It is with such background of drift and departure that this series of articles is undertaken, the purpose being to instruct the young and remind the old of the unchanging and unchangeable principles of God's Word. In this first paper we shall consider—

THE GATHERING OF THE ASSEMBLY

(i) The People Who Gather.

In the New Testament the assemblies are called 'churches of God' (I Cor. 11.16), 'churches of Christ' (Rom. 16.16) and 'churches of the saints' (I Cor. 14.33). These titles tell us respectively of the—

- (a) Dignity of the Origin of the Assembly — God
- (b) Majesty of the Ownership of the Assembly — Christ
- (c) Suitability of the Occupance of the Assembly — Saints

Since the whole company bears these titles then the individuals who compose that company must belong to God,

to Christ and be saints. This is exactly how the New Testament describes those who have been saved. I Peter 2.9, 'a people for God's own possession' (RV), Titus 2.14, 'a people for His (Christ's) own possession and Rom. 1.7 'beloved of God, called saints.' It is obvious therefore that the first requirement of those who gather is that they are genuine children of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Secondly, the commission given by the Lord Jesus included not only gospel preaching but the command to baptize, (Matt. 28.19-20; Mark 16.15-16). A cursory reading of the Acts would reveal that the apostles carried out this commission to the letter and thus we read 'then they that gladly received His word were baptized' (2.42), 'But when they believed . . . they were baptized, both men and women' (8.12). See also 8.36-38; 9.18; 10.45-48; 16.14-15, 33; 18.8. It should be unnecessary to point out that nowhere does Scripture teach the sprinkling of infants, rather the teaching is that all believers should be baptized and none but believers should be baptized and that by immersion.

That Paul never expected any of the Corinthian saints to be unbaptized is obvious from his question in I Cor. 1.13 'were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Note he does not say, 'were those of you who were baptized, baptized in the name of Paul?' as if distinguishing two companies, but it is rather assumed that all who love the Lord would follow Him symbolically in death, burial and resurrection, (Rom. 6.3-4).

Thirdly, the Lord's commission also included teaching. i.e. prior to gathering with the company there was to be a time of learning. This would ensure that a person was clear as to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus and also the privileges and responsibilities of assembly fellowship. Since leaven spreads this clarity is vital. Twice in the New Testament Paul warns that 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' In I Cor. 5.9 the leaven is immorality, while in Gal. 5.9 it is wrong doctrine. Prior to reception a person must be proved to be morally and doctrinally pure.

(ii) The Person to Whom they Gather.

There is only one ground of gathering and that is Matt. 18.20 'For where two or three are gathered together in (or unto) My Name, there am I in the midst of them.' Precious words spoken by the Lord Jesus. This excludes entirely

gathering to an ordinance (Baptists), a form of government (Presbyterians), a method of worship (Methodists), or a geographical location (Church of Ireland). We have scriptural authority for alone owning the name of Christ, an attitude which led to the early believers being nicknamed Christians in a derogatory fashion (Acts 11.26).

That Matt. 18.20 refers to a local church is easily proved by referring to verse 17 where the offended brother is enjoined to 'tell it to the church.' It is obvious that this cannot refer to the church incorporating all the saints from Pentecost to the rapture referred to in Matt. 16.18, since it would be impossible for a brother on earth to hold intercourse with Christians already at home with the Lord. It can only mean the local company of which he is a member. In the Old Testament God commanded His people to gather only where He had chosen to place His Name (Ex. 20.24; Deut. 12.5; 14.23; 16.2 etc.). The New Testament Assembly is no less the place of His Name and believers owning any other name (even Brethren) are dishonouring His Name. May it be said of us, we 'have kept His Word and hast not denied His Name' (Rev. 3.8).

(iii) The Promise Associated with Gathering.

It might be asked 'why is so much importance placed on the truth of gathering to His Name?' Matt. 18.20 again supplies the answer—'there am I in the midst.' While it is true that the Lord's presence is promised to individual believers (Heb. 13.5) and especially those on active service (Matt. 28.20), the only promise of His Presence associated with the collective gathering is when we meet 'unto His Name.'

The church in Laodecia (Rev. 3.14-22) professed much but was not enjoying the Lord's presence since He was outside. One feels that there is much today among the assemblies designed to make up for, or camouflage, the fact that the Lord's presence is not realised. There is nothing in all the world to compare with being simply, solely and scripturally gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, enjoying His presence in a real definite manner.

(iv) The Purpose for Gathering.

That God never intended man to be an isolationist can be gleaned from earliest times when He said concerning Adam,

'it is not good that man should be alone' (Gen. 2.18). This is confirmed by the Holy Spirit in Heb. 10.25, 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is! However some may ask, 'for what type of meeting do we gather?' From a search of the Scriptures we find authority for the following meetings :

(a) *Breaking of Bread*—Acts 2.42; 20.7; I Cor. 11.23-32. The breaking of bread was instituted by the Lord Jesus and was observed on the first day of the week where there was an established assembly. (The practice of breaking bread privately while on holiday, etc., is foreign to God's Word). Its design basically was two fold—to call to mind a Person, 'this do in remembrance of Me,' and to announce an event—'ye do show the Lord's death.'

It was never intended to be administered a few times per year by priest or parson and partaken of as a prerequisite to salvation, but was rather to be the focal point of a Christian's life when he would live throughout the week in such a way as to be suited for such a high and holy privilege as remembering the Lord. This is obvious from I Cor. 5.8 where the feast mentioned is not the Lord's Supper but rather a reference to the feast of unleavened bread.

(b) *United Prayer* — Acts 1.14; 2.42; 4.24-31; 12.5,12. These many references underline the importance of the assembly prayer meetings which should neither be neglected nor underestimated. Perhaps the reason this meeting in particular being generally poorly attended is because it is purely spiritual. There is absolutely nothing to appeal to the flesh, but the spiritual appreciate its value.

(c) *Reading of the Scriptures and Ministry* — Acts 2.42; 11.26; These passages and others serve to impress upon us the importance of Bible study. We ought to be eager to learn more of the Word, Ways and Will of God.

(d) *Reports* — Acts 14.26-28; 15.3-4,12. From these we learn that the saints gathered to listen to brethren telling how they had seen the hand of God with them. Often we hear missionary reports which start with the commencement of the work in a region many decades ago, continue with a geographical and political description of the area and at the conclusion the saints gathered have learned

very little about the work in which the brother himself is involved. Surely a report ought to be related to the spiritual state of the people and the christians informed as to how the brother reporting had been labouring.

(e) *Excommunication*—This solemn subject will be dealt with later but suffice to say that both the joy of reception and the sorrow to discipline are assembly functions.

(f) *Evangelism*—Acts 2.14; 10.33. For the continuance of an assembly there should be a zeal for the spread of the gospel. While the true evangelist will take the gospel to places previously unreached with the gospel, those in the local assembly ought to be active with the gospel in their own district. I Thess. 1.8; Phil. 1.27.

It will be noted that the meetings listed above were for all the assembly. The common practice today of segregating saints by either age or sex is totally unscriptural. In fact such practices can permanently damage the unity of the assembly. The only exception is obviously when the responsible brethren meet to attend to the affairs of the assembly.

(v) *The Picture of Gathering.*

Among many in our Bible, John 20.19-20 affords a beautiful illustration of the assembly. Briefly note the following—

‘the disciples were gathered’—only those who were the Lord’s were present.

‘at evening’—this is when we gather, in the evening of the world’s history waiting for the dawn of the Lord’s return.

‘the doors were shut’—there was a complete separation from the world outside.

‘for fear of the Jews’—Judaism with its bedecked priesthood, ornate buildings, visible altar, visible incense, choirs, singers and instrumental music had no part in the upper room.

‘Jesus stood in the midst’—this is the great attraction and yet no attraction could be greater, the assurance and enjoyment of the Lord’s Presence.

All who gather to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have a conviction about divine principles have experienced the delight of the disciples—‘Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.’

2nd Epistle to the THESSALONIANS

by J. HEADING, Aberystwyth

(1) THE POSITION OF THE EPISTLE

Paul's two short Epistles to the Thessalonians are full of prophetic interest. Yet before studying any Epistle we should make a detailed study of its background and objectives, examining carefully its position in the Scriptures. In particular, we must see how any Epistle of Paul fits in with his missionary journeys described in The Acts.

From these two Epistles we can glean some of the things that Paul taught while he had been present with them in Thessalonica during his second journey. For example, "when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know," (I Thess. 3.4). Even more surprising is "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. 2.5), namely the man of sin in the future day showing himself as God in the temple. There is no hint whatsoever of this detailed teaching in Acts 17.1-9, during the relatively short stay when Paul was first with them on his second journey. In other words, the apostle taught *all* aspects of truth to young converts, whether actually recorded by Luke in The Acts or not. This should be compared with his teaching relating to the Lord's supper, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," (I Cor. 11.23,) but there is no mention of this in Acts 18. 1-11 when he was first in Corinth. In other words, young converts of one to two years standing should be deeply acquainted with every aspect of truth presented at the apostolic standard, and this applies both to assembly fellowship and service, and also to prophetic matters. When he was teaching these things, Paul himself was a man of maturity in such truth; he had been converted for ten years before he embarked on his first journey, and another six years had passed before he was at Thessalonica on his second journey, shortly afterwards writing these two Epistles to this young church.

The reasons for Paul's movements in the Lord's service are very instructive. To provide guidance, God sometimes used what we may call "personal" means, "natural" means and "spiritual" means. For example, at the beginning of his second journey with Silas, Paul said, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord," (Acts 15.36); this was *personal* exercise. He then found a previous convert, Timothy, at Derbe, "well reported of by the brethren." He accompanied Paul, and the churches increased in number daily, (16.5). The Spirit then prevented a movement westwards into Asia, for example, into Ephesus; this was *spiritual* means. After this, the apostle was guided by *spiritual* means; he had the vision, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," (16.9). Only *he* saw the vision, but immediately we (Luke and the others) sought to go into Macedonia. They all came to Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia, where converts were gained and a church was formed; they departed after an uproar and a spell of imprisonment. So the missionary group followed the east-west highway westwards to Thessalonica, another principal city, where the north-south and east-west routes crossed; this constituted *natural* means. Paul preached in the synagogue for three sabbaths, showing from the Scriptures that Christ had to suffer and rise again, and that Jesus whom Paul preached was this Christ. As a result, a great multitude believed (Acts 17.4), and the church was taught. At this time too, the Philippians sent gifts to Paul, (Phil. 4.16). Because of an uproar caused by the Jews, Paul, Silas and Timothy removed to Berea, where there was further trouble, leading to another example of *natural* guidance, in that "they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens" (17.15), though Silas and Timothy had remained behind. Seeing the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry, Paul sent to Silas and Timothy for help; while he waited for them to arrive, "his spirit was stirred in him" (17.16).

Upon their arrival, the apostle was much concerned about the church at Thessalonica, and the persecution endured there. So he sent Timothy back "to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions," (1 Thess. 3.1-4); also that Timothy should bring back news: "I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you," (v. 5).

(Note : Timothy was sent on other missions by Paul : to Thessalonica, to *comfort* them in tribulation, (1 Thess. 3.2); to Corinth, to *communicate* Paul's teaching, (1 Cor. 4.17); to Macedonia, to *concern* himself with Paul's needs, (Acts 19.22); to Philippi, to *care* for their state (Phil. 2.20; to Ephesus, to *charge* some to teach no other doctrine, (1 Tim. 11.3)).

In 1 Thessalonians 3.6, Timothy returned to Paul who had by that time removed westwards to Corinth; he brought good tidings of their faith and love, their remembrance of Paul, their desire to see him, and finally some problems. To answer one of these prophetic problems, the Epistle 1 Thessalonians was written by Paul, Silas and Timothy; it was sent by Silas and Timothy. In chapter 1 of this Epistle, Paul recalled their faith and service. In chapter 2 he recalled his service and conduct when amongst them. In chapter 3 he recalled Timothy's subsequent visit to them, and his joy at the good news upon his return. Then in chapter 4 Paul dealt with their prophetic problem : that those already dead would not share in the rapture when the Lord comes for His church. The apostle corrected this by showing that the dead in Christ would rise *first*, actually just before those still alive and remaining on earth. Finally, in chapter 5 the "day of the Lord" would fall upon men in general, but *not* upon believers in the church. The "day of the Lord" was an Old Testament concept, and not an experience through which the church would pass. Historical events relating to Assyria and Babylon were used as a picture to describe this future period (Isa. 13.6,9), this being the time of divine judgment preceding the Lord's return in glory to reign.

In Acts 18.5, Silas and Timothy returned from Macedonia (this is *not* the return described in Acts 17.15, nor that recorded in 1 Thessalonians 3.6; rather, it is the return described after the delivery of the Epistle). While still in Corinth, Paul later received news that the Thessalonians had further prophetic difficulties, this time regarding the subject of the day of the Lord. There had arisen false teaching, deriving from a false letter that claimed to be from Paul. This false teaching asserted that the persecution then being experienced was equivalent to the fact that the day of the Lord had actually arrived. (Note that 2 Thessalonians 2.2

should read “the day of the Lord” and *not* “the day of Christ,” this latter day appearing in Philippians 1.6; 2.16). So the same three writers then wrote the Epistle 2 Thessalonians to correct this false teaching.

In chapter 1 Paul viewed the *present* persecution of Christians in the light of the *future* coming of the Lord Jesus in glory and in judgment. In chapter 2 the day of the Lord cannot possibly be occurring in the *present*, since this day will be associated with the “man of sin” after the church has been raptured, this “son of perdition” being destroyed at the Lord’s coming in glory. In the *present* day, God grants repentance through His Spirit, but in the *future*, after the Spirit has been taken, God will send strong delusion instead, (2 Thess. 2.11). This future period is completely different from present circumstances (as Revelation 4-20 is different from chapters 1-3). Finally, in chapter 3 Paul dealt with the behaviour of the Lord’s people in the *present*, while the Lord waits to come for them (3.5). Who took this second Epistle to its destination is not recorded.

Four years later at the end of his third journey, Paul sent Timothy and Erastus from Ephesus into Macedonia (which would include Philippi and Thessalonica) to prepare for him to follow, (Acts 19.22; 20.1). The apostle also sent Titus to Corinth to bring him news about that church before he journeyed to Corinth through Macedonia. Thus he came to Troas and Macedonia, (2 Cor. 2.13), meeting Titus and writing the Epistle 2 Corinthians to precede his visit there. In Macedonia, he went “over those parts,” giving them much exhortation (Acts 20.2), these “parts” including Thessalonica. In the central chapters of 2 Corinthians, Paul recalled the liberality of the Macedonians in providing for the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8. 1-5; Rom. 15. 25-31). The reason was that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord.” At the same time, Paul boasted of the Corinthian collection to the Macedonians (2 Cor. 9. 1-5). But when “they of Macedonia” came with Paul to Corinth, they had to see the reality of this collection matching the way in which Paul had boasted of it. Thus the apostle came to Corinth for three months (the “Greece” of Acts 20.2). From there, he journeyed back through Macedonia, with Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, 20.3-4. This man Aristarchus of the Thessalonians was a

fellow-traveller (Acts 19.29); a fellow-labourer (Philem. 24); a fellow-prisoner (Col. 4.10). In other words, the Thessalonian assembly produced some grand saints in the service of the Lord!

After that, Paul was a prisoner for five years in Jerusalem, Ceasarea and Rome, (Acts 21.28); there is no record of any contact with the Thessalonians during that period until he was released, except that Aristarchus was with Paul and Luke on the boat (Acts 27.2). After his release, the apostle went again into Macedonia, leaving Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1.3), giving ample opportunity for further apostolic ministry on prophecy in the Thessalonian assembly. Finally, Demas forsook Paul in a Roman dungeon just before his death; Demas "loved this present world"—he loved liberty rather than fellowship with Paul in bonds—and he "departed unto Thessalonica," (2 Tim.4.10). No doubt he took news about Paul to Thessalonica, but Scripture is silent as to how this church received him, a man having left the beloved apostle in the lurch at the end of his life.

The curtain falls at this point on the scriptural record of the Thessalonian assembly. This background will help us the better to understand the objectives of the Epistle 2 Thessalonians.

"THOU HAST KEPT MY WORD"

by **W. E. VINE**

Of the principles in the New Testament relative to local churches or assemblies, one of the most important is the establishment of each on its own basis of dependence on the Lord, in independence of the control of any other church. In the New Testament pattern there is no such thing as the amalgamation or combination of churches even in a district, to form an organisation or system. There is no centre from which all are governed. Each church of God (a N.T. term for a local church) is itself responsible to the Lord, under the guidance of the Spirit, in accordance with the revealed will of God. Had this been adhered to, sects would not have arisen.

This involves another, namely, the dependence upon the Lord for the provision of spiritual gifts, such as elders, or overseers (called bishops in Philippians 1.1 and Acts xx

28 R.V.). The N.T. presents no such thing as a single "minister" over a church. The temporary work of Timothy at Ephesus was that of a visiting missionary (1 Tim. 1.3). He was to see to it that faithful men would act as ministers of the Word after he left (2. Tim. 2.2). The raising up of elders was the work of the Spirit, and their recognition was on the basis of their manifest qualifications in character and conduct and the existing exercise of their stewardship (Titus 1. v.5-9 R.V. and 1 Thess. v. 12). Any overseeing brother should aim so to engage in his work that if the Lord takes him, the testimony may be carried on efficiently by others in the gathering.

Again, each church was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for its worship and testimony when the assembly was gathered in its collective capacity (1 Corinthians 14 v. 26-33; Phil. 3.3 'who worship by the Spirit of God' R.V.). The conduct of such gatherings was not under the control of a single person, or according to a pre-arranged order. So with the Lord's Supper, there is an entire absence of any such thing as "the administrating of the sacraments" or the dispensing of the elements by a presiding functionary. The bread is that which "we break" (1 Cor. 10.16). The brother who breaks the loaf or pours out the wine, where such acts are necessary, is simply rendering the service of preparation for his fellow-believers to partake. He is not performing representative acts. Ecclesiasticism in this and other respects sprang up, not as a Spirit-guided development, but as a distinct departure in post-apostolic times, from the teaching of the Scriptures.

Again, each church was designed to be a centre of missionary activity in testimony in its own locality and in regions beyond (1 Thess. 1.8) and missionaries went forth from such in simple dependence on the Lord for guidance as to their service and their supplies (Acts 13 v. 2-3 lit. "they let them go"). They were under no human authority.

In all these matters, as well as those relating to Christian life and conduct, the Word of God was designed to be the all-sufficient guide and rule of conduct. The faith is "the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3. R.V.). No addition was to be made, nor was there to be any deviation from it. The Scriptures were not received from the authority

of the Church as such, but from individual writers under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Be it ours to adhere to the scriptures of truth that we may receive the Lord's approving word, "Thou hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My Name (Rev. 3 v. 8).

Let your conversation (manner of life) be as it becometh the gospel. —Philippians 1 : 27

Israel's whole manner of life took its form from the fact that God was in their midst. We too, pilgrims moving through the wilderness, have been brought into the marvellous light which shines in the face of Jesus Christ. If Israel then manifested the glories of Jehovah, how much more should we. The world does not care an iota whether you are in Christ. But conscience and heart are touched when they see Christ in you. —A. G. Ingleby

May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel, seeing only Him. —K.B.W.

THE CAPTIVATING CHRIST OF COLOSSIANS

by J. B. HEWITT

Written from Rome by Paul in AD 61-62

Chapter One

CHRIST THE SOURCE OF OUR WEALTH— "OUR HEAD"

(A) THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST vv. 1-14

The Appreciation it brings, v. 1-4;
The Activity it Produces, v. 10, 11;
The Associations it begets, v. 5-9;
The Assurance it Bestows, v. 12-14.

(B) THE GREATNESS OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST. vv. 15-19.

His Relation to God emphasizing His Personality, v. 15.
His Relation to Authorities emphasizing His Power v.16.
His Relation to Creation emphasizing His Priority v. 17.
His Relation to the Church emphasizing His Pre-eminence, v. 18.
His Relation to the Father emphasizing His Possession of Deity, v. 19.

(C) **THE GRANDEUR OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.**
vv. 20-23.

The Realm of His Work — Heaven and Earth, v. 20a.
The Reason of His Work — To Reconcile All Things
v. 20b.

The Reach of His Work — You, His Enemies v. 21.

The Result of His Work — To Present you Holy v. 22b

Our Response to His Work—Be not Moved Away v. 23a

(D) **THE GRASP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST** vv. 24-29.

Paul Preaching and Suffering v. 24, 25; Paul Praying
and Supplicating 1.29—2.3; The Minister of the Body
v. 23b; Suffering v. 24; Serving v. 25; Striving v. 26;
The Mystery of the Body v. 25, 26; Hid v. 26a;
Manifest v. 26b; Displayed v. 27; The Method of the
Minister v. 28, 29; Preach, Warn, Teach, Present,
Labour.

Chapter Two

CHRIST THE SECRET OF OUR WISDOM

“OUR FULNESS”

(A) **THE SUM OF ALL WISDOM** v. 1—3.

THE MYSTERY v. 2.

Conflict for it v. 1; Comprehension of it v. 2; Content
with it v. 3.

(B) **THE SOURCE OF OUR LIFE** v. 4—8.

THE MESSAGE v. 5,6.

Their Enemy v. 4,8; Their Unity v. 5; Vitality v. 6;
Stability, Maturity v. 7.

(C) **THE SUFFICIENCY AGAINST ERROR** v. 9—13.

THE MEANS v. 11-12.

Fulness in Christ v. 9,10; Freedom in Christ v. 12;
Fellowship with Christ v.11; Forgiveness from Christ v.13

(D) **THE SPOILER OF OUR FOES** v. 14, 15.

THE MIGHTY VICTOR.

The Transaction of the Cross—Guilt Removed v. 14.

The Triumph of Christ — Enemies Vanquished v. 15.

Victor over Gnosticism v. 8; Legalism v. 11-15;

Victor over Ceremonialism v. 16,17; And Asceticism
v. 20-23.

**(E) THE SUBSTANCE OF EVERY SHADOW v. 16-18.
THE MATTER.**

Asserting Christian Liberty v. 16;
Accepting the Reality v. 17;
Abandoning Speculation v. 18.

**(F) THE SUSTAINER OF HIS CHURCH v. 19—23.
THE MOTIVATOR.**

Union with Christ v. 19;
Association with Christ v. 20;
Loyalty to Christ v. 21-23.

Chapter Three

CHRIST THE STANDARD OF LIFE — “OUR LIFE”

(A) RISEN WITH CHRIST v. 1-4 OUR POSITION.

(a) The Fact of Union with Him v. 1-4.
Our Association v. 1; Our Aspiration v. 2;
Our Acceptance v. 3; Our Anticipation v. 4.

(B) CONTROLLED BY CHRIST v. 5-25 OUR PRACTICE

(b) The Function of Union with Him v. 5-9.
Purity in our Ways v. 5-7; Courtesy in our Words v. 8,9.
(c) The Fruit of Union with Him v. 10, 11.
The New Start—Renewal of Soul v. 10;
The New Society — Removal of all Barriers v. 11.
(d) The Features of Union with Him v. 12-17.
The Raiment we wear v. 12; The Robe that Suits v. 13;
The Rule that arbitrates v. 15; The Response we make
v. 16,17.
(e) The Family in Union with Christ v. 19-25.
In Domestic Life v. 18-21; In Secular Life v. 22-25.

Chapter Four

**CHRIST THE STRENGTH OF CHARACTER
“OUR LORD”**

Watching in Prayer v. 2-4 Elements and Objective
Wise Conduct v. 5,6 Live Uprightly, Winsomely
Words of Encouragement v. 7-9 Faithful, Helpful
Worthy Companions v. 10-15 Trusted and True
Wealthy Material v. 16 Study and Share
A Worker Encouraged v. 17 Call to Continue.

The thief cometh not, but . . . to destroy: I am come that they might have life. **John 10 : 10**

I stood by the grave of a man forty-four years of age who drank himself to death. He ignored the pleas of his family and doctor. His wife said, "Well, he is better off now." Little did she know the eternal destruction he was tasting. He had rejected the gospel. Satan is a destroyer. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who gave His life to rescue the perishing sheep. He still promises life to those who will come to Him. —D. L. Norbie

Out of my bondage, sorrow and night
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come.
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee. —Wm. T. Sleeper.

ERRATUM (September/October issue)—

**Page 139, 15th line of article by J. Campbell should read
"factor; a knowledge which must have been foreknowledge"**

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (6) by JACK STRAHAN, Enniskillen

'WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS'

DR. ISAAC WATTS (1674—1748)

It is to Dr. Isaac Watts, a little infirm man, scarcely more than 5 feet tall that we owe this world-famous hymn. Isaac Watts was born 17th July, 1674, at Southampton, where his father ran a flourishing boarding school. He was the eldest of nine children. Intellectually brilliant, he demonstrated from an early age an aptitude for writing verse. Though he lived to the age of 74, his health broke down ere he was 30 years of age and he spent the last 36 years of his life as the guest of Sir Thomas and Lady Abney in Hertfordshire. His infirmities increased up to the peaceful close of his sufferings in 1748, and he lies buried alongside other worthies in Bunhill Fields. So great was the influence of his life and work that a monument has been erected to him in Westminster Abbey.

Lord Selbourne terms Dr. Watts 'The father of English Hymnody.' Up until Dr. Watts' time at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries, there were no English hymns except the metrical versions of the Psalms. Dr. Watts changed all that, and wrote his first hymn 'Behold the Glories of the Lamb' in the year 1690. Indeed, he has given to us in all over 600 hymns. Though small and insignificant

in stature, yet in some respects he was a giant of a man. "He stands absolutely alone," says Thomas Wright, "He has no peer. He is the greatest of the great." Mr. Wright adds that "if nothing from his pen has attained to the popularity of Toplady's 'Rock of Ages' or is quite so affecting as Cowper's 'God Moves in a Mysterious Way;' if he lacks the mellifluousness of Charles Wesley or the equipoise of John Newton, the fact remains that he has written a larger number of hymns of the first rank than any other hymnist."

Perhaps, sweetest of all his compositions and pronounced by critics as the finest in the English language is the universally loved hymn, 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross':—

'When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.
See! from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an off'ring far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.'

"It would be worth anything," exclaims Hilda, one of Arnold Bennett's characters, "anything on earth to sing these words—and mean them." Indeed, it is here that Dr. Isaac Watts brings us to the cross—the cross of Christ where everything else is seen in true perspective and proportion. Here material possessions and the vain charms of life seem as nothing in comparison. That sacrifice of the Prince of Glory on Calvary's Cross was for the souls of men, and demands in return complete surrender and committal to Him.

The singing of these words has touched the hearts of many, many indeed, and without respect or distinction. They reached the empty enquiring heart of Hepsy, the poor gipsy girl, 'til she enquired as to the meaning of 'That love, so amazing, so Divine.' She listened eagerly to the story of the cross. Though she had never heard it before, she drank

in its message. Her empty heart was satisfied. That was what she had wanted.

Right at the opposite end of society, Matthew Arnold, a man of literary fame and with a mind that was cold and critical was broken and won by these words. He had just listened to Dr. John Watson (better known as Ian Maclaren) preach at Sefton Park in Liverpool on 'The Shadow of the Cross.' At the close of the sermon the congregation sang Dr. Watts' heart-reaching hymn. He went to his lodging to ponder its meaning. "Ah, yes," he remarked to Mr. and Mrs. Cropper, "the cross still stands and in the straits of the soul makes its ancient appeal." Within an hour, he had suffered a heart attack and was gone.

Gazing upon that cross, we view the immensity of that sacrifice. It was the Prince of Glory who died there for us. Never has such sorrow and love been seen before—mingled and flowing down. Francis D'Assisi once gazed with fixed contemplation to the Crucified and, says his biographer, "It was a look of faith, a look of love; a look that had all his soul in it; a look which did not attempt to analyse, but which was content to receive. He looked, and looking, entered into life."

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Editor: A. M. S. Gooding

All correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor: 7 Sparrow Gardens, off London Road, Kilmarnock, Scotland. (Telephone 24245).

Committee:

Joint Treasurers:

Thomas Beggs, James Moore (Buckna), William Neill.

Secretary: John Hogg.

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

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

John Glenville, Nestor, Hillhead, Colyton, Devon, EX13 6HH.

Friends, excepting those residing in Great Britain, should please forward gifts to: John Hogg, "Beth-Asher," 109 Lurgan Road, Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.

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