

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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CONDESCENSION MARVELLOUS

The LORD of Glory took our frame.
He stooped, and to the world He came.
That fallen men in sin and shame
Might ransomed be.

The LORD of Heaven became a Man,
To carry out His Father's plan
Devised to reach poor sinful man
And set him free.

The LORD of Life went into Death,
"To bear our sins", the scripture saith.
A Sinless Sufferer on earth
"He died for me".

The LORD of Life, an Empty Tomb,
Ascended high, a filléd Throne,
Lift up your heads, behold Him come,
Triumphantly.

—*James Neilly*

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity". So said the writer of Psalm 133. He adds "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; like the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountain of Zion". In other words, brethren dwelling together in unity is an odour of the fragrance of the moral virtues of Christ, so satisfying to the nostrils of God. It is also like the all-enveloping dew of the Holy Spirit of God, refreshing and revitalizing all who are surrounded by it. The order of the psalm in the context suggests that this good and pleasant thing can be best enjoyed when the saints gather in "a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob". (Psalm 132.5) which leads on to "the servants of the Lord, standing in the house of the Lord, lifting up their hands in the sanctuary". (Psalm 134). This is the glorious climax of the "Psalms of the goings up".

This precious harmony, fellowship, unity of the saints should be enjoyed and cultivated by all the Lord's people, hence we are to keep (not make) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace — walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love (Eph. 4.1-3). We are, by way of contrast, warned: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, looking diligently . . . lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled (Hebrews 12.14,15).

Nothing gives the enemy more joy than marring what God has wrought; defiling what God has declared holy, dividing what He has joined together. Dividing the saints from within has always been more effective than seeking to destroy them from without! Paul enjoins all the saints in Rome (the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquilla, Romans 16.5) "Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermes and the brethren which are with them" (v.14) Philologos, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympus, and all the saints which are with them" (v.15) — to "salute one another with a holy kiss". Then adds "Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which are causing divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them (turn away from them) for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ". Stand together, strive together, work together, praise together, worship together — do not divide! For our encouragement the Spirit of God

adds the promise "the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly". The enemy, the original cause of all strife and disunity is doomed to eternal punishment, the Lord and His saints will eternally triumph. He is coming! Let us stand together "Till He comes".

I would like to wish all my readers the Lord's Richest Blessing throughout the coming year or "Till He come".

CHRIST IN THE APOCALYPSE (27)

by JOHN B. D. PAGE

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST (v)

Reading : Revelation 22.16f.

THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR

On a clear night, it is estimated that over 2,000 stars may be seen with the naked eye, and yet it is said that "Lord Kelvin calculated mathematically, there ought to be 1,000 million stars in the universe", although astronomers believe there are many more than that number.

Astronomy is not a new science. Jewish tradition, according to Josephus, assures us that Bible astronomy was invented by Adam, Seth and Enoch. Even during the patriarchal period, men grouped stars under various names and named some individually according to the Scriptures (Job 9.9; 38.31ff). In those primeval times, did God communicate the names to them? "The Lord", says the Psalmist, "telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names" — little wonder that he adds, "His understanding is infinite"! (Psa. 147.4ff; cp. Isa. 40.26).

Stars vary considerably in size. Compared with the sun, some stars are much bigger whilst others are fractional in size, and they all differ in distance from the sun. They are different from one another in temperature and luminosity, for some are brighter than others. In colour, they range from blue to white, yellow and red. Paul rightly says, "one star differeth from another in glory" (1 Cor. 15.41), whilst David, gazing upwards at a night sky, says, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psa. 19.1).

In the scriptures, stars are sometimes used illustratively. For instance, for conveying to Abraham his innumerable progeny, the

Lord said to him, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven" (Gen. 22.17). Again, Jude (v.13) likens false teachers to "wandering stars", probably alluding to meteors, commonly called shooting stars, which flash across the sky instead of keeping to a set orbit.

Like other luminaries in the sky, God intended that the stars should be for "signs" besides other purposes (Gen. 1.14). Consequently, shortly after the birth of the Lord Jesus, "His star in the east" was seen as a sign (Matt. 2.2). At Messiah's second coming with the saints to the earth, "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars" (Luke 21.25), for "the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 3.15) and even "fall from heaven" (Matt. 24.29).

In view of the many times stars are mentioned in the scriptures, it is not surprising that the glorified Lord designates to Himself a stellar title. For understanding its significance, some help may be derived from a few facts about the solar system, which consists of nine Major Planets, of which the first four, Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars, being relatively near the sun, form an inner group whilst the remaining five, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, are considerably further away. They all differ from one another in size and in distance from the sun, around which they orbit elliptically. It is one of the inner planets, Venus, which has been known for centuries as the morning and evening star, and this planet is about 67 million miles from the sun compared with the Earth's 93 million miles besides being a little smaller than the Earth. Only one side of this planet always faces the sun, whilst the other is in continuous darkness. It's lit up surface is as white as snow with some points and patches brighter than others. It is visible before the other two inner planets, Mercury and Mars, shining brightly in the morning and again in the evening. Alluding to Venus but without naming it, Christ describes Himself to the seer as "the Bright and Morning Star".

The Lord Jesus was not first in adopting this metaphorical title. In the ancient world, Venus was known as Lucifer, meaning 'morning star', 'light-bearer' and 'shining one', and it was worshipped by the Babylonians under the name, Ishtar. In describing the fall of the king of Babylon, Isaiah (14.12a) exclaims, "How art

thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! . . ." the latter part of which may be rendered literally, according to one commentator, 'O bright shining one, son of the dawn!' Such language (like that of verses 12b—15) appears to be symbolic not only of the Babylonian monarch's downfall but descriptive of the fall of Satan (Luke 10.18; cp. Rev. 12.8ff) as several writers suggest.

As Creator of all angels, God did not create Satan as such but, through his fall, he became the Adversary of God and of men. This is borne out in *Studies in Isaiah*, where C. F. Jennings says, "no 'Satan' could or did God make, but a brilliantly shining one, the very 'Star of the Morning', amid the hosts of heaven". When Lucifer said boastfully in his heart, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God (i.e., above other angels) . . . and be like the Most High", then such a proud challenge to his Creator meant his downfall (Isa. 14.13ff). Consequently, he is no longer a 'shining one', but he has become 'the prince of darkness' although he masquerades as 'an angel of light' (2 Cor. 11.14).

Turning now to Messiah's claim to this title, by which Satan was known before his fall, it may help to quote C. F. Jennings again but this time *in extenso*, "the name of the bright and morning star, belonging to him whom we have known as the very antithesis of light and hopefulness, may give rise to a certain sense of resentment, since we know it as justly belonging to Another, who now claims it, and in whom all light and hope for our race is focused — Jesus, He is for us alone, the Bright and Morning Star". Continuing, he says, "that name of the Bright and Morning Star has been dragged into utter ruin by the mighty creature to whom it was first given, but it is lifted therefrom by One who is indeed the true Bright and Morning Star".

In Revelation, this star is mentioned twice, first in a promise to the overcomer in the church at Thyatira: "And he that overcometh, . . . to him . . . I will give the morning star" (2.26,28). It is often assumed that "the morning star" here is a synonym for Christ Himself, but this is questionable because this star is said to be *given* to the overcomer. Therefore, as one writer suggests, there may be the thought of a gift, resembling the morning star, which is promised for the overcomer. In the other reference (22.16), the phrase refers clearly to Christ.

In his *Notes on the New Testament*, Albert Barnes says, "The 'morning star' is that brighter planet — Venus — which at some seasons of the year appears so beautiful in the east, leading on the morning — the harbinger of the day". As this planet is considered to be one of the most beautiful in the stellar heavens, it is a fitting emblem of the One who is "altogether lovely" (S. of S. 5.16). Although His own people, the Jews, saw in Him "no beauty" at His first advent (Isa. 53.2), the day will yet dawn when the veil of unbelief will be removed from their eyes and they will see "the King in His beauty" (Isa. 33.17). In that day, Balaam's prophecy will be fulfilled, "there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24.17), signifying that, as the Star of Jacob, He will exercise supreme authority and, as the Sceptre of Israel, He will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Alluding to the outstanding brightness of Venus, Christ, as the "Morning Star", describes Himself as "bright". In his defence before Agrippa, Paul, recalling his encounter with the glorified Lord on the road to Damascus, says that he saw "at midday . . . a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26.13). This means that the brilliance of the Lord's glory emanating from His Person in heaven outshone the midday oriental sun. Such brightness of His glory is neither derived nor reflected from a source outside of Himself, which is borne out in Hebrews 1.3, where (omitting the italicized pronoun '*his*' in the English Text) He is said to be "the brightness of glory". The word "brightness" (*apaugasma*, Greek), occurring only here, means "a shining forth of a light coming from a luminous body" (W. E. Vine), just as all stars are self-luminous bodies and they, unlike the moon, do not reflect the light of the sun. The glory of Christ is really two-fold, for there is His unseen glory that He *had* before the creation of the world (John 17.5), and there is His manifest glory which God *gave* Him at His resurrection (John 17.24; 1 Peter 1.21). Therefore, His whole Being is radiant with indescribably bright glory.

As the last rays of sunlight are about to disappear below the horizon, so the evening star shines in the night sky. Significantly, the Lord Jesus refrains from identifying Himself as 'the Evening Star'. If He had so described Himself, then He would be seen as the harbinger of the night, which is figurative of the tribulation when "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people"

(Isa. 60.2). This is unthinkable, for His coming to the earth will be as light to dispel that darkness.

At the rising of the evening star, the bridegroom and bride went to their wedding, followed by the wedding-feast starting at midnight. Implicit in this eastern custom, the rising of the evening star, which heralds the dark hours of night, may be seen as the signal when the Lord Himself shall come to meet His bride, the Church, in the air and take her into the Father's house for the marriage feast (1 Thess. 4.16ff; Rev. 19.7-9), because God has not purposed for her to pass through the gross darkness of the tribulation (1 Thess. 1.10; 5.9).

Turning from the bridal chamber to the hills, there is the shepherd who, while the early morning is still dark, watches hopefully for the morning star to appear in the sky. Its bright twinkle assures him that the darkness of night is passing and the first light of day is dawning as the sun rises soon to shine in all its brilliance. This appears to be the underlying imagery of Isaiah 60.1ff where the prophet anticipates Israel's ascendancy after seven long years of tribulation darkness as he commands the nation, "Arise, shine, . . ." and the reason for the command follows, "for thy Light is come, . . ." The word "Light", used here figuratively of Christ, may be rendered literally as 'light-giver' which may be an allusion to Him as the Morning Star emitting His rays of light into a sin-darkened world. Continuing, the prophet calls out, ". . . and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee". As the rising sun in the eastern sky sheds forth its rays of light across the oriental countryside, so "the Glory of the Lord", no longer a symbol in the temple as in years of yore, is the personification of the glorified Messiah whose light of glory will rise and shine upon a regenerate Israel, and so 'His glory shall be seen upon thee', says Isaiah, which, having never been known before, will be unprecedented.

In The Revelation of Jesus Christ, F. W. Grant says so fittingly, ". . . as the Old Testament ends with the promise of the 'Sun of Righteousness', so the New Testament with that of the 'Morning Star'. Christ Himself is both, and in both His coming is intimated, but, as is plain, in very different connections. The sun brings the day, flooding the earth with light, and this is in suited connection with the blessing of an earthly people, whose the Old Testament promises are (Rom. 9.4). The morning star *heralds* the day, but

does not bring it: it rises when the earth is still dark, shining as it were for heaven alone. And this to us speaks of our being with Christ before the blessing for the earth comes".

When the Lord Jesus names Himself as "the Bright and Morning Star", then the Bride, whose heart is touched by the Spirit, responds instantly, "Come"! The one who hears the words of this prophecy is exhorted also to say to the Lord beseechingly, 'Come!'—(*To be continued*).

ISAIAH'S PORTRAITS OF CHRIST

by J. FLANIGAN (Belfast)

9—"THE WARRIOR-KING"

The contrast between Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 63 is like the contrast between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24, and like the contrast between John 19 and Revelation 19. It is the contrast between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

Isaiah 63 opens with a simple (but profound) question — "Who is this?". It is the question which they asked when our Lord was here. It is the question they will ask when He comes again. As He entered the City in lowly meekness, riding on a donkey, they asked, "Who is this?" (Matthew 21.10). When He returns to the City again, the question will be repeated, "Who is this?" (Psalm 24.8-10). It is the question of yesterday and the question of tomorrow. Here, in chapter 63, Isaiah foresees the day of Messiah's triumph and vindication, and cries, "Who is this?"

The Conqueror is returning from Edom and Bozrah. In other parallel passages it will be Megiddo and Olivet. But there is no discrepancy. From Edom in the south; from Megiddo in the relative north; through Olivet, near to the Jerusalem centre, Messiah will travel in triumph. This is in perfect agreement with Revelation 14.20 — "blood to the horse bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs". Sixteen hundred stadia! One hundred and sixty miles! The length of the Land from Dan to Beersheba! From Olivet to Megiddo and back through to Edom He will ride victoriously, and vanquish His enemies. In our present chapter He is returning from Edom.

"Who is this . . . with dyed garments?" We must not be influenced by a much-loved hymn (Redemption Songs 704). Its sentiments are touchingly beautiful and its language unsurpassed. But its interpretation of Isaiah 63 is a travesty. The blood that stains these garments is not the blood of the cross. This is the blood of Armageddon and Edom. It is not His own blood, but the blood of His enemies. The land has become a winepress. The judgement is a vintage. As grapes are trampled in a winepress so will our Lord tread down His enemies when He returns in glory. As the garments of those who tread the grapes in the winepress are stained with the juice of the trodden grapes, so will His garments, (in figure), be stained with the blood of His crushed foes.

His apparel is glorious. All His garments smell of myrrh; always. What garments He has worn. Swaddling bands in His Infancy; a seamless robe during His ministry; a slave's apron on that last evening in the Upper Room; a scarlet robe of mockery on that last morning; linen grave clothes in the Tomb. Now, a vesture dipped in blood, bearing the glorious Name — "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". Glorious in His apparel indeed.

He travels in the greatness of His strength. In what apparent weakness did they once see Him upon the cross. A Carpenter crucified! A Galilean nailed to a Tree! Since that day of dishonour the world has not seen Him. He has been hidden in the heavens. A King rejected. A Sovereign in exile. But now He returns in power. His rejection was callous and cruel. His triumph is righteous. This is vindication. He is "mighty to save". He, to Whom they cried, "Save Thyself and us". He, of Whom they said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save". He comes for the deliverance of His remnant people. He comes to emancipate the land and make it Immanuel's Land indeed (Isaiah 8.8).

Notice the "aloneness" of the Conqueror. "I have trodden the winepress alone". How often He was "alone" when here on earth. He was "alone" in prayer (Matthew 14.23). He was "alone" in service (Mark 4.10). In the uniqueness of His Sonship too, He was "alone" (Luke 9.18,36). And He was "alone" in suffering (John 16.32). Here in Isaiah 63 He is "alone" again. Alone He treads the winepress. Alone He tramples His enemies in righteous anger. Alone He accomplishes the deliverance of His beleaguered people.

The day of vengeance has come. How graciously, at the commencement of His ministry, had our Lord closed the book in Nazareth, when reading from Isaiah 61. He had not then announced the day of vengeance. It was an acceptable year that He was introducing. It was a day of grace. Appropriately, He had closed the book. But in chapter 63 it is all different. It is the day of vengeance now.

The nations are presently being prepared for that day. Morally, Politically, Religiously, and Commercially, the world is being fashioned for the advent of a Man of Sin and for days of tribulation. We do not look for signs, but if signs there be, we may look at them. Morally, conditions are reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah. Politically, the shadows are large. The kingdoms of Europe with the movements in Israel and the Middle East all point to the end times. Religiously, the deep dark shadows are equally large. Ecumenism and the Charismatic confusion make it easy to believe that the day is not far distant. Commercially too, the amalgamations, the giant corporations, and the monopolies of the business world are suitable preparations for the Dictatorship which is to come. A man will accept from the Devil what Jesus refused (Matthew 4.8-9; Revelation 13.2b). The kingdoms of this world will be dominated by a Satanically inspired Superman. Many of Israel will bow the knee to him and receive his mark. Many of the faithful will be martyred. A remnant of Israel will be trapped, and look as though to be destroyed. But the Deliverer will come.

Armageddon appears to be the places where the armies will gather. The armies of the Beast and of the great Northern Confederacy; the Kings from the East and the King of the South, are all assembled. Suddenly, gloriously, the sign of the coming of the Son of Man appears. Those who are enemies of each other become allied with each other in common enmity against the Lamb. The Lord comes! He crushes them all. The Beast and the false Prophet are taken personally and cast alive into the Lake of Fire.

What triumph. What glory. What victory. Well might Isaiah cry, "Who is this . . . with garments dyed . . . glorious in His apparel . . . travelling in the greatness of His strength . . . mighty to save"!

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT.

(54) SUBSTITUTION

Substitution is not a scriptural expression, but has been deducted from the phraseology found there. Substitution means "one man taking the place of another, and answering for him".

The death of the Lord Jesus was not only redemptive (Eph. 1.7) and thus delivering (Rom. 4.25 RV), but reconciling (Col. 1.21,22 RV) and substitutionary (1 Tim. 2.6). Christ died on "BEHALF" of all, making salvation available for all mankind (Heb. 2.9; 2 Cor. 5.15), and for our sins (1 Cor. 15.3; Gal. 1.4). We proclaim this in the Gospel to the unsaved.

We do not proclaim that Christ died "INSTEAD" of all, because this would at once cancel all individual decision and the response of faith. On the two occasions the Lord spoke of the substitutionary aspect of His death it was to His disciples (Matt. 20.28; Mark 10.45). "A ransom FOR many" in both passages, the preposition "ANTI" is used and expresses the idea of substitution. Its meaning is "in exchange for" as the equivalent of "instead of". This can only apply to those who accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour. He is the Substitute of the believer, and becomes the sinners Substitute once He is received as Saviour.

ILLUSTRATIONS. The earliest record is Genesis 22, where Abraham is tested by God and told to offer his only son on Mount Moriah. A ram was provided in his stead. This foreshadowed Calvary (John 8.56). Peter's message contains this truth (1 Pet. 2.24; 3.18). In Exodus 13.13 the firstborn of an ass was redeemed with a lamb.

The Israelites of old were taught the truth of substitution in the Levitical offerings. "It shall be accepted for him" (in his stead); to make an atonement for him". (Lev. 1.4). The offering was accepted for the offerer (v.4). He was accepted in his representative and so are we (Eph. 1.6). The day of atonement (Lev.16) impresses this truth upon us. Two goats were presented before the Lord, the one was Jehovah's but the other was for the people. The goat that was killed and its blood sprinkled upon and before the mercy seat makes propitiation before the eyes of God (v.15). The

transference of the sins to the head of the scapegoat illustrates substitution (v.21,22).

Isaiah ch.53 is one of the clearest portions on substitution where the Lord Jesus is the suffering Substitute (Acts 8.32-35). The language used is very impressive, "wounded, bruised", our iniquities upon Him, silent in suffering, "an offering for sin". "He bare the sin of many", and "numbered with the transgressors".

IMPORTANCE. Substitution in relation to other aspects of the death of Christ holds a prominent place in N.T. teaching. Apostolic teaching stresses this aspect of His death. It is attested in the preaching of Peter and Paul. The glory of the Gospel is that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15.3). He was made sin for us (instead of us) (2 Cor. 5.21).

Philip made clear to the Eunuch the meaning of the death of Christ (Acts 8.32,37). Substitution is the actual bearing of the sins of all who believe (1 Cor. 15.3; Gal. 1.4; Heb. 10.12). Paul taught it was for all (2 Cor. 5.15; 1 Tim. 2.6). The Hebrew letter similarly (ch. 2.9,14,15). He was the substitute for all believers (Rom. 5.8; Gal. 2.20). He bore the judgement due to our sins (Rom. 3.25; 5.9; 1 Cor. 5.7).

Think of some of the many blessings procured for us because He is our Substitute "Justified from all things" (Acts 13.38,39), "redemption" and "the forgiveness of sins" (Eph. 1.7). An eternal redemption and inheritance (Heb. 9.12,15). His priestly work in heaven for us (Heb. 2.17; 4.14-16; 7.26; 8.2; 9.24). We have access to God (Eph. 2.18; Heb. 10.19,20). A living hope and an inheritance (1 Peter 1.3,4).

Thus we preach propitiation to sinners (Rom. 3.25) and TEACH substitution to believers (1 Cor. 15.3; 2Cor. 5.15; Gal. 2.20).

Blest morning! whose first dawning rays
Behold the Son of God
Arise triumphant from the grave,
and leave His dark abode
The great Redeemer lay,
Till the revolving skies had brought
The third, the appointed day.
Hell and the grave combined their force
To hold our Lord, in vain
Sudden the Conqueror arose,
And burst their feeble chain. —Isaac Watts

"THE PROPHECY OF JONAH"

by E. R. Bower.

No. 2 — CHAPTER 1

V.1. "Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah" — a phrase repeated seven times in the book. (1.1; 2.10; 3.1,3; 4.4,9,10) and sufficient to assure us that the book is fact and not fiction; truth and not error; the word of God and not a man composed fable or myth.

V.2. Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness (violence) is come up before Me". Nineveh, on the left bank of the Tigris was the capital of Assyria. We are told that the city was 60 miles in circuit, 20 miles across, and that it was notorious for its violence and its cruelty. Its worship was idolatrous. Later, it would be destroyed, as Nahum, another of the 'minor' prophets not only foretold, but described its fall. God takes note of the wickedness of nations, cities and individuals.

V.3. "But Jonah rose up to flee . . .". One of the great 'buts' of Scripture. V.2. said, "ARISE, go . . . and cry", "but Jonah ROSE up to flee". Why should the prophet run away? He later confesses (4.2), "Therefore I hastened to flee . . . for I KNEW that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest of the evil". (or, 'wickedness' as in v.2). A word used of injurious works of evil — especially to others. See 1.2,7,8; 3.8,10; 4.2. Cf. the opening of Nahum's prophecy. Jonah, who knew the voice and word of God from previous experience, may well have known the purposes of God concerning Assyria as the sword of God to bring judgement upon Israel, and in his view, Ninevah's destruction would be Israel's salvation. Jonah does not appear to be the coward that some would make him. His rebellion against the command of God was the work of a misled hero; willing to disobey in order to save his people, and knowing that his own life might be in danger, or forfeit. Jonah was, and is, not the only one to attempt frustrate or advance the purposes of God. Cf. Abraham and Jacob for instance. The thought creeps in that Jonah used his knowledge of the mercy of God as a comfort for his own disobedience. He was fleeing "from the presence of the Lord" (or, "from the face of Jehovah"), and we remind ourselves that when

Adam fell, he was driven from Eden's garden, and God "placed (or caused to dwell, or tabernacle) . . . Cherubims, and the flaming sword which turned every way to keep (or, preserve) the tree of life". Here was a Tabernacle at which Cain could worship, but "he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod (wandering)". Thus, Jonah. Note the repetition of the phrase and also v.10. Here is an emphasis upon the attitude of Jonah. From a mistaken patriotism (and he sees but his own point of view) he was willing to forsake the presence of God and the place where He was worshipped, as well as the people who were God's people, and perhaps more importantly from a 'Gospel' point of view, he was forsaking those under the threat of judgement.

V.4. "But" — in v.3 it was the 'but' of Jonah — plans of 'mice and men'. Here, it is the 'but' of God who rules in the kingdoms of men. God sent out (or, cast down) a great wind into the sea. "Cast down" occurs four times in this first chapter (vv.4,5,12,15). Cf. the wind of Dan. 7.2. "Great" is one of the key words of this book where we see added to this great wind, a great city (1.2; 3.2,3; 4.11); a great tempest (1.4; (mighty): 1.12); and a great fish (1.17).

V.5. Another 'but' — the 'but' of disregard. "Mariners" — 'salts'. cf modern usage.

V.6. "Call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us" — the captain's recognition of Jonah as a worshipper of "the God" — how hardly are God's men hidden! Is there a note of doubt in the captain's "If . . ."?

V.7. "the lot fell upon Jonah". Men may cast lots, but it is God who determined the issues.

V.9. "I am an Hebrew; and I fear Jehovah the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land". "I am an Hebrew" answers the last three questions of the sailors, and the words, "I fear Jehovah" answers the first two questions. Jonah's words do not give his real reason, his true answer which we see in 4.1-3. In any case the sailors knew (v.10). Jonah was about to experience the works of Him who "made the sea". The wonders of the deep (Ps. 107.23-31) are to be shewn to him!

V.11. Even in the face of a sea "going on and raging" (margin) the sailors sought an answer to their own dilemma. If Jonah was

running away from his God, then let Jonah find and give the answer!

V.12. "Take me up . . . for I know . . .". Open confession is good for the soul. At last he knew the real cost of his journey was far greater than his fare (v.3). Count the cost before going counter to the will of God.

V.13. Human kindness and comradeship is exemplified by the sailors — the art of 'pulling together' as they 'dugged hard' (cf. Eng. 'ploughing the main' for a similar metaphor. These men shewed by their action more kindness than this "man of God". They were willing to save just one man; he was unwilling to aid the thousands of Ninevah when it was in his hands to do just that.

V.14. Human efforts fail. The men forsake their gods (v.5) and cry to Jehovah, — not for themselves, but for Jonah. Cf. the use of the phrase 'innocent blood' — Matt. 27.4 for instance.

V.15. A calm sea; a fear of Jehovah with sacrifices and vows. Cf. Matt. 8.26-27. What a story these men had to tell in later years!

V.17. "Now the Lord had prepared (appointed) a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights". Note the four 'appointed' things of the book. The great fish (1.17); a gourd (4.6); a worm (4.7); and an east wind (4.8). We might give the heading of "Great preparation" to this chapter. The story of Jonah is a short one and it has taxed the credulity of many. The story is also, seemingly, a simple one, yet not as simple as may appear on the surface. It is the story of a man of God who tried running away from God. It is the story of human emotions and traits. One man running away, at his own confession, from the presence of God brought into play some of the Divine resources just as Israel might remember their deliverance from Egypt. We see a ship master leaving his post to seek a sleeping passenger; frightened sailors calling upon their gods; raging elements all combine to make a vivid picture. We see the superstition and the search for a scapegoat; we see the fellowfeeling of men in peril. Behind the picture, the preparations of God, both in the short term and in the long term, whether on behalf of Jonah, the sailors, or Nineveh, or the anticipation of the coming of His Son also with a message to a people threatened with judgement.

In the runaway path of the fleeing man of God, there came at the behest of God, a mighty wind and storm, a great fish, a gourd, a worm and an east wind. From the whale to the worm!

The sign of the prophet Jonah stands out as one of the O.T. signs which God gave to His people — and to a world.

Perhaps it is not entirely irrelevant to call to mind the words of Heb. 10.5, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me" — in itself a variant of Ps. 40.6, the Resurrection Psalm of the Obedient Servant. (*to be continued*).

CHRISTIAN AMBITION

by J. E. TODD

Ambition is the strong desire to achieve a set purpose. On the one hand ambition, being a thing, is of itself neither good nor bad, its morality depends upon the aim of the ambition. But on the other hand a life without ambition drifts aimlessly, it is ambition which gives to a life movement and direction.

Our Lord lived a life of dedicated ambition, "Then said I, "Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God"" (Heb. 10.7). He pursued this ambition with such dedication that, while still young in earthly years, He hung upon a cross atoning for our sins. 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down for myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father' (John 10.17-18).

What should be my ambition as a follower of the Lord? Paul concisely stated the Christian's ambition, 'For to me to live is Christ' (Phil. 1.21).

An ambition consists of three parts. First, the aim, the 'what' of ambition. What is it that I am to achieve? Ambition must have a clearly defined aim. Second, the motive, the 'why' of ambition. We could perhaps achieve many objectives, but these never become ambitions, because we have no desire to achieve them. There must be a compelling reason moving us to take up the aim as a personal ambition. Third, the means, the 'how' of ambition. If we do not possess the means to achieve the ambition it must remain an unfulfilled dream.

In the text we have quoted, 'For to me to live is Christ', we have the aim, the motive and the means of the Christian's ambition contained in one concise statement.

First, the aim of the Christian's ambition, 'For to me to live is Christ', for me the object of living is to be Christlike. Paul said, 'For whom He (God) did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom. 8.29). Peter said, 'Christ . . . leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2.21). John said, 'Because as He (Christ) is, so are we in this world' (1 John 4.17). But what precisely was our Lord Jesus Christ like? 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth' (John 1.14). His unique character was the perfect blend of grace and truth. Truth is the positive righteousness which cannot compromise with sin, it is absolute in its purity, honesty and integrity. But such a righteousness alone could be cold, hard, legalistic, proud and fault-finding with others. But with our Lord that absolute truth, that sinless righteousness, was combined with grace. Graciousness is warm, kind, understanding and sympathetic. This is the character of the Lord, that blending of grace and truth which is goodness. The Christian's ambition is to be good and to do good, 'For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness' (Eph. 5.9).

Second, the motive which moves the Christian towards his ambition, 'For to me to live is Christ', for me the reason for living such a life is the Lord Jesus Christ. 'For the love of Christ constraineth us' (2 Cor. 5.14). It is the greatness of Christ's love for us which moves us to live for Him. Charles Wesley described the greatness of that love :—

'Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!'

Isaac Watts describes the constraining power of that love:—

'Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all'.

When we come to the Lord's table and admire the love of Christ and rejoice in it, that is excellent, but that love has still fallen short of its objective for us. Not until that love moves us to live for Christ does it achieve its purpose. 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in

God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, . . . as He is, so are we in this world . . . We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4.16-19).

Third, the means of achieving the Christian ambition, 'For to me to live is Christ', for me to live such a life requires Christ living in me. 'I in them' (John 17. 23,26), said our Lord Jesus Christ. 'That He (God) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith' (Eph. 3.16-17). Our weak human nature could never live up to the standards of divine righteousness as expressed in the life of Christ. The Lord not only bore away the penalty of our sins in His death, He also rose again. Now He lives in each believer by His Spirit, so that the Christian can now live by faith, not faith in his own weak nature, but faith in the Spirit of Christ. Thus, and only thus, is the Christian able to fulfil the divine standard of love as expressed in the life of Christ. Jesus said, when He addressed His Father, 'That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them' (John 17.26).

It would be a waste of time for a person to spend years of his life training to be an engineer when his ambition was to become a doctor. If a great ambition is to be achieved, all else must take second place, nothing must be allowed to divert from the great goal. As a Christian, do you have a great ambition in life? If so, what is that ambition? Paul, as a Christian, was crystal clear on his part, 'For to me to live is Christ'.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The more love we give away, the more we have.

Counting time is not as important as making time count.

The resurrection assures what Calvary secures.

Feelings are no substitute for facts and faith.

He who forgives ends the quarrel.

There is only one way to avoid criticism; say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.

The harder you work at what you should be, the less you'll try to hide what you are.

—Anthony Orsini.

VITAL VERITIES (1)

by E. W. ROGERS

The Inspiration of Scripture — Part 1

In all matters of interpretation, words are of the utmost importance. A lawyer, in interpreting the document before him, is not guided by what it is suggested the person concerned intended, but by what he actually has written. The words of the document count for everything; all else for nothing.

This is so in interpreting the Scriptures of Truth. Its words, the numbers of the words, whether singular, dual or plural, the tenses, genders and every other detail have to be weighed and considered. Conclusions reached should be deduced from what the Scriptures say, not from what others say of them. Seeing, therefore, that life's real success and security for the eternal future are contingent upon obedient observance of the words of Scripture, it becomes a matter of vital importance to be assured that such words are accurate and dependable, that they are free from all error, and that they really present perfectly the message of God to man.

It is not sufficient to affirm that *the thoughts* are inspired though the words are not, for if the words be faulty the thoughts cannot be accurately conveyed. Nothing short of verbal inspiration will suffice. Plenary inspiration is essential. Precise thought can only be conveyed in precise words.

It needs, however, a *properly adjusted mind* to receive the revelation, for precise thoughts conveyed in precise words to a distorted or darkened mind fail to achieve anything of lasting good. The message can only be discerned by those who have the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2.14).

RELIABLE AND AUTHORITATIVE

To affirm the verbal inspiration of Scripture is to acknowledge that that book *is a reliable and authoritative* source of information pertaining to matters beyond human discovery; it morally binds

the one who holds this doctrine to implicit and total obedience to its precepts; it gives confidence in its promises; it produces fear of its warnings. If the book be verbally inspired by the living God, it is the voice of the living God and cannot be ignored with impunity.

INSPIRATION NOT DICTATION

What then is inspiration? It is that process which resulted in a perfectly accurate and authoritative compilation of literature which everywhere bears the hallmark of divine origin. The process will ever remain a mystery. Certainly it is different from the inspiration of a poet, artist or musician.

Moreover, it is *not mechanical dictation*, for everywhere in Scripture the human element is discernible. As the Lord Jesus, the Word of God, was truly divine and truly human and the two natures were inseparably joined in His One Person, so, too, is the Scripture. The tears and logic of Paul, the zeal of Peter, the mysticism of John and the multitudinous traits of the other penmen of Scripture are manifest in their writings which constitute the book truly human; yet in every part the voice of God is to be heard which shows it to be really divine. Were it mere dictation it would be the word of God minus the characteristics of the human amenuenses, and it would thereby lose much of its value and appeal.

Local circumstances, moreover, gave rise to the writings. Problems and sins in the church at Corinth called for the two letters to it; the fickleness of the Galatians gave rise to their letter (Gal. 1.6); the misunderstanding of the Thessalonians afforded Paul occasion to write to them (2 Thess. 2.2), and so on.

COMMON DIVINE SOURCE

"Men from God spake as they were borne along (as ships are driven by the wind at sea) by the Spirit of God". (2 Pet. 1.21). Their writings were *not the result of an independent decision* to compose an essay or write a letter. They did not spring from the "will of man". They all had a common divine source, and, in consequence, each becomes an integral part of the whole. No penman could, therefore, claim an exclusive monopoly to interpret or explain his own writing, for, as a matter of fact, some of them failed to understand what they had written and had to search and

investigate the meaning thereof. They wrote as reporters, yet also as pupils, and afterwards studied what they had written.

It was the Spirit of Christ who caused each of them to write (1 Peter 1.11). As a result thereof *each part is interdependent* upon the other and is explained by it. It is, therefore, the Spirit, not human authorship, Who gives the capacity to interpret Scripture, which capacity every child of God possesses. (1 John 2.27).

'All Scripture is *God breathed*' and is necessarily 'profitable'. (2 Tim. 3.16). Not merely was it God-breathed originally, but it always retains that living quality. It is, as another has said, still warm with the breath of God. Old and New Testaments are alike in this, for the phrase used by Paul covers the whole volume. The writers *were* inspired; the Scriptures *are* inspired. Paul in 1 Cor. 2. vv.9-16 discusses the general question of the origin of his writings and what he there says concerning them is true of the whole book. The subject matter was revealed by the Spirit of God in the first instance; it did not spring from sight, hear-say or imagination. The words, too, in which it was communicated were given equally by the Spirit, 'communicating spiritual things by spiritual means'; and the interpretation thereof is by the same Spirit: 'they are spiritually discerned'. Revelation, communication and explanation each has its source in Him.

REVELATION FROM GOD

The Scriptures contain information concerning much which, in the nature of the case, man could never discover. *Revelation*, therefore, is the basis of God's communication to man. It is this which the rationalist emphatically denies, for he knows that to admit it is to admit the authority and validity of Holy Scriptures. Behind God's revealing Himself in the Scriptures to man is His great love for fallen man and His longing desire for his recovery. The Scriptures then spring from the heart of God.

The very existence of the Scriptures themselves, as well as their survival despite all the endeavours made to destroy them, is further proof of their superhuman origin and character. They are a homogeneous whole, replete with Divine life which cannot be smothered or destroyed.

Despite variety of date and authorship, circumstances of writing and location of the penmen and many other differences, *their*

unity is, indeed, remarkable. This itself testifies to their divine origin. The absence of any contradiction, notwithstanding the fact that there was no collusion on the part of any of the writers, attests the same.

Yet another evidence is the *effect of the Scriptures upon human lives* and their general good effect on communities wheresoever they are acknowledged. This declares indubitably that over the whole book may be inscribed the words "Thus saith the Lord" (see 1 Peter 1.23). It has turned savages into saints. (*To be continued*).

THE MEAL OFFERING AND THE DRINK OFFERING CUT OFF FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

by **JOHN HEADING, Aberystwyth**

The history of the house of the Lord in the Old Testament can so easily be neglected. If part of the Word of God is neglected, then one's spiritual life may suffer. And this may further lead to weakness in assembly life and service, but it is only by the Scriptures that we can know this. A vicious circle thus sets in, leading to further weakness. Some local assemblies have lost their spiritual freshness because the Scriptures are not appreciated in their fullness.

In the Old Testament, weakness pertaining to the house of the Lord was quite commonplace. There was only real spiritual prosperity in the days of men such as David, Solomon, Jehoiada the priest, Hezekiah and Josiah. Why was this? Because here were men who were desirous to go back to the beginning, to be followers of Moses and David (2 Chron. 35.4-6). The same may be said of spiritual men today who lead the assemblies in keeping with the truth revealed long ago in New Testament times, avoiding more recent innovations which prove to be so attractive to the flesh.

The prophecy of Joel is essentially prophetic of the last days. But where the house of the Lord is mentioned, we may see a certain correspondence with the local assembly, enabling a typical interpretation to be made, and this is so helpful for spiritual freshness. It is not possible to decide exactly when Joel prophesied, so we cannot fix any definite circumstances in 2 Kings and 2 Chron-

icles that refer to Joel's prophecy. Suggestions have been made, but the lack of certainty leads to a more general applicability today of the principles contained in the prophecy.

There were things that were lacking in the house, and since this was God's portion that was missing, He took notice; things had to be restored. Likewise in Paul's day; he knew that there were things that were wanting in Crete, and he sent Titus to rectify matters (Titus 1.5). Today, when spirituality wanes, it is always God's portion in Christ that is the first thing to be lost sight of. To those who are spiritually sensitive of heart, in an assembly that is pursuing a downward pathway, the ceaseless round of activity cannot hide the lack of positive adherence to the principles of Acts 2.42, where they "continued stedfastly". For true ministry saintward for edification leads to prayer and worship in the breaking of bread Godward.

This is a characteristic of Old Testament weakness. In Neh. 13.10,11 the tithes had not been brought for the Levites, so they forsook the house of God to return to their own fields to engage in agricultural pursuits.

What was lacking in Joel's day? "The meat (meal) offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord" (Joel 1.9). The source of these offerings had been spoiled by the invasion of insects (v.4); the harvest had perished (v.11); the vine had dried up (v.12). There was therefore a great shortage of ingredients for the offerings that would bring pleasure to God. Note that these were not blood sacrifices, as was the burnt offering.

Lev. 2 describes the meat (meal) offering, and the various degrees of burning on the altar, in the oven, the pan and the frying pan. The perfect flour was offered first to God, and then there was a portion to satisfy the priests (v.3). This speaks of the perfect character and life of Christ, tested on earth during the period of His humanity amongst men, and always found perfect, first as a sweet savour to His Father who always watched His Son walking and working here below, and then as a sweet portion for His people throughout the subsequent centuries. In John 4, He experienced physical weakness, yet the Father's will was fully done. He experienced sorrow on account of the sorrow of others, whether for the two sisters of Lazarus or for the city of Jerusalem over which He

wept. He experienced the exceeding sorrow and agony in the garden of Gethsemane, when His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Thus we find in such incidents His infinite capacity to be the only worthy sacrifice when He died on the cross at the end of this period of testing, testing that manifested His perfection.

Thus when a meat (meal) offering was offered in the Old Testament, it was Christ who was before the heart of God, not the mere ritual which *by itself* could mean nothing. So when the meat (meal) offering was missing from the house of the Lord in Joel's day, this meant that a portion of Christ was not being reflected to God. Only His Son could satisfy the heart of God, and it is the same today. Ritual, formality and even idolatry imply that those who adhere to such things are not holding the Head, the Son of God. There is nothing for God in such practices. The true offering has been cut off by means of these practices, and it is tragic if any believers are involved. Rather true believers should always realise what the meat offering means, and they should have a ready supply in worship and praise, for there is no lack when the heart is taken up with the Son of God.

As far as the drink offering is concerned, there is no separate description of it given in the Old Testament, as there is of the other offerings. So its significance must be found from the times in which it occurs. In Gen. 35.14, when God promised an extensive seed to Jacob, he poured a drink offering on the pillar of stone which he set up, the place being Bethel, the house of God. This is the only occurrence where the drink offering is not associated with sacrifice. Exodus 29.40 contains the first instruction to the priests; the continual burnt offering was associated with a meal offering and a drink offering at the door of the tabernacle before the Lord, and Num. 28.7 informs us that the drink offering was poured out "in the holy place". Taken together, this means that the place of pouring was just inside the holy place at its entrance. But Exod. 30.9 informs us that no drink offering was to be poured out upon the altar of incense further in the holy place before the vail. The first evidently refers to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus when on earth, while the latter refers to His present work in heaven in the Father's presence.

It is remarkable that the Gentile king Artaxerxes knew about

the meat (meal) offerings and the drink offerings offered "upon the altar of the house of your God which is in Jerusalem" in a letter given to Ezra the priest (Ezra 7.17).

The interpretation is now obvious. The antitype of the drink offering is something associated with, but distinct from, the burnt offering aspect of the death of Christ. The burnt offering refers to what was offered, the drink offering to the manner in which the sacrifice was offered, and the meat (meal) offering to the proven worth of the sacrifice. In John 18.4, we read, "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, *went forth*", showing the voluntary nature of His submission to the divine will. Paul writes in Phil. 2.7 that He took upon Himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; the outworking of this corresponds to the meat (meal) offering, for He was the corn of wheat. But v.8 goes further; "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". This corresponds to the drink offering, the voluntary pouring out of His life on the altar in keeping with His words, "I lay down my life . . . I lay it down of myself" (John 10.15-18). As the prophet said, "He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53.12).

If this is cut off from the house of the Lord, what is there left of Christ in true worship? Thus God looks down to see what exists or what does not exist in each believer's heart, in each local assembly, and in each denominationalistic church established by men.

—(*To be concluded*).

ANNOUNCEMENTS (D.V.)

The next issue (March/ April) will carry the last of the popular series 'Hymns and their Writers' by Jack Strahan. It is purposed to publish these articles in book form, details of which will be published in due course.

We hope to commence, in the May/June issue, a new series by servants of the Lord, entitled 'My Conversion and Call.'

THOUGHTS OF CHRIST

(for the busy Housewife) No. 9

BY ERIC G. PARMENTER, BASINGSTOKE

It must have been a moment of deep sorrow to John's disciples when their master had fallen by the sword of Herod. The one on whom they had been accustomed to lean; had been taken from them and it became a moment of gloom and desolation for them. But there was one to whom they could come in their sorrow, into whose ear they could pour their grief — "They came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus" (Matthew 14.12). There was not another heart on earth in which they could have found a response of love and sympathy as the heart of the Lord Jesus. He knew all about their sorrow, their loss, how they were feeling it. His ear was ever open, His heart ever ready to soothe and sympathise. "They went and told Jesus".

What tremendous value it is to have one who can really make our joys and sorrows His own. Although we cannot see Him with the natural eye, yet in the simplicity of faith we can go to Him, in all the preciousness and power of His perfect sympathy, and pour out the anguish of a desolate heart, knowing He will dry the tears, soothe the sorrow, heal the wound, fill the empty place. Jesus the perfect Man and sympathising Saviour has room for each and all, no matter when, how, or with what we come, His heart is always open, He will never fail, never disappoint, 'Come and tell Jesus'.

Committee Notes

At this time we often reflect on the faithfulness of God. This is however a two-edged sword. As we look back we can exclaim 'God is faithful', and as we look forward we know that we can expect Him to continue to be so, as long as we remain faithful. If we chose a path of disobedience we should remember that 2 Tim. 2.13 is a warning and not an encouragement to loose living.

The same was true in the Old Testament. Deut. 7.9 reads 'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep the commandments.' In this chapter it can easily be seen that the Lord expected His people to be separate and distinct from the nations around and from their idolatrous worship.

In days of ecumenicity and compromise it behoves us still to tread a path of separation unto Him in order to experience the positive side of His faithfulness. To those who wish to escape every snare that would lead to rejection and loss at the judgement seat of Christ, He proves Himself faithful—1 Cor. 10.13.

With respect to the work of this magazine we can proclaim His faithfulness. The circulation continues in the region of 16,000 copies per issue and even in days of inflation the Lord, through His people, meets every need. We see His faithfulness in the labours of our editor (who has made a good recovery, for which we are thankful); his assistant; our secretary; the accountant and others too numerous to mention. Without the free, gratuitous and willing help of these brethren the publication would not be possible. It is surely of His faithfulness that gifted brethren take time to write articles for the encouragement and upbuilding of the saints. This is often a thankless task in a day when critics abound but we know their labours are appreciated in heaven—Heb. 6.10.

Finally we thank all our readers who take time to write their kind words of appreciation. Brethren pray for us, that our labours for the Lord will continue faithfully 'till He come'.

HYMNS AND THEIR WRITERS (49) by Jack Strahan, Enniskillen

"COME, THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING"

ROBERT ROBINSON (1735—1790)

One day, towards the close of the 18th century, a gentleman and lady sat side by side in a stage-coach as it rumbled its way through the English countryside. The lady appeared to be occupied with the content of the book in her hand, at times reading from its

open page, at times meditating on what she had just read. She was obviously enjoying her musings, the words of a lovely hymn,

"Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious measure,
Sung all flaming tongues above:
O the vast, the boundless treasure
Of my Lord's unchanging love!
Here I raise mine Ebenezer;
Hither, by Thy help, I'm come;
And I hope by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God:
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.
O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love:
Take my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above".

She turned to the gentleman, to her a stranger, and sought to interest him in what was obviously delighting her heart. Holding before him the open page she enquired if he knew the hymn. At first he appeared embarrassed, even a little agitated; then he tried to parry her question but she persisted, telling him of the blessing that the words had brought to her own heart. After a period of silence, he burst into tears. "Madam" he said, "I am the poor, unhappy man who composed that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feeling I had then". The gentleman on the stage-coach was Robert Robinson; the hymn was the product of his pen some thirty years previously.

Robert Robinson was born of lowly parents at Swaffham, Norfolk on September 27th, 1735. In his native town he had been a pupil at the "Latin School" and then later in Mildenhall at its Endowed Grammar School where his master pronounced him, "a

youth of large capacity, uncommon genius and refined taste". Robert had lost his father when he was eight and thereafter received the devoted care of his widowed mother whose one ambition for her boy was that he might one day become a clergyman in the Church of England. The circumstance of poverty, however, forbade such a pursuit.

As a youth of 14, Robert was apprenticed to a hairdresser in London but this work failed to interest him. He spent most of his time reading books; he was by nature a thoughtful and studious lad. He was besides a wild lad and early in his London days got linked up with a group of ungodly young men who habitually led him into trouble. Indeed, the time came when his deeds so shamed his own family that they refused to be responsible for his liabilities.

Then, at the age of 17, an incident happened which completely changed Robert's whole life. The eventful day was May 24th, 1752, when his companions and he joined together to make sport of an old drunken fortune-teller; they wanted to laugh at her predictions. The old lady told Robinson of his future, that he would live to be a very old man and that he would see many generations of descendants. This prediction so impressed Robinson that he reasoned with himself, "and so, I am to see children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I will then, during my youth, endeavour to store my mind with all kinds of knowledge. I will see and hear and note down everything that is rare and wonderful, that I may sit, when incapable of other employments, and entertain my descendants. Then shall my company be rendered pleasant and I shall be respected, rather than neglected, in old age. Let me see, what can I acquire first? Oh, here is the famous Methodist preacher, Whitefield; he is to preach here, they say tonight; I will go and hear him".

Robinson went the same evening to the Tabernacle to hear Whitefield who, for that meeting, took as his text Matt. 3.7, "But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, 'O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'. Mr. Whitefield got to work on his text. He portrayed the Sadducees but his words failed to touch Robinson's heart for he felt himself to be as good as any other. Then Mr. Whitefield described the Pharisees — ostentatious, seemingly righteous but within their hearts was the poisonous venom of the viper. That description fitted his own condition exactly and the word came as an arrow from God, penetrating deep into his heart. He shuddered. The preacher paused and, lifting up his hand to heaven and with tears flowing down his

face, cried as only Mr. Whitefield could, "Oh, my hearers, the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" "Those words", Robinson later recounted to a friend, "sunk into my heart like lead in the water: I wept, and when the sermon was ended retired alone. For days and weeks I could think of little else. Those awful words would follow me wherever I went". Then some three years later, on December 10th, 1755, he "found full and free forgiveness through the precious blood of Jesus Christ". Robinson was then about 20 years of age.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God:
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood".

After conversion, Robinson took a deep interest in spiritual things. His heart hungered and thirsted for the word of God and for about three years he attended whatever meetings he could in the London area. The ministry of Gill and Wesley he found to be particularly satisfying. Robinson then became a minister of the gospel, first in his native Norfolk with the Calvinistic Methodists at Mildenhall, then for a short period with an Independent congregation at Norwich and in 1759, he moved to the Baptist Church in Cambridge. The latter was Robinson's most notable ministry.

By 1790, Robinson was worn out and he retired to Birmingham where he passed away June 9th, 1790, at the age of 55. He was found dead in bed. Earlier he had expressed the wish that he might die, "softly, suddenly and alone"; his wish had been granted to him.

Robinson was an interesting personality; his characteristics were very diverse — sincere but unstable as water, able but most impulsive, eccentric though all the while a genius. As a preacher he had extraordinary talent; audiences were held spellbound under his ministry. As a writer he exhibited considerable ability, an able theologian with upwards of thirty publications coming from his pen; his works on the Person of Christ, of His divinity and His death, merited and received the highest acclaim. As a hymnwriter, Robinson wrote some good hymns, a number of them for children; his compositions on the whole were well wrought and judged by critics as, "terse yet melodious, evangelical but not sentimental".

"Come, Thou fount of every blessing" is Robinson's best known hymn. It was written early in his Christian experience, around the year 1758. He was then about 23 years of age. At that time, he was a young minister in his native Norfolk but in heart was away from the Lord. What was he to do? Should he continue or, in all honesty,

should he abandon the Christian ministry? He decided on the latter. Then the words of Psalm 116.7 were directed to his heart, "Return onto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee". An inner struggle ensued and raged until at last his soul "returned to its rest" and he consecrated himself fresh to the Lord. Afterwards, feeling that a record of his experience might be of help to others, he wrote the lines of this hymn. Subsequent history, however, reveals that in later years he again wandered away from the heart of the Lord. He was "prone to wander"; he was "prone to leave". The record tells us though that in life's eventide, he experienced, as aforetime, the restoring grace of God.

We are all "prone to wander", "prone to leave" the God we love. The bent of the human heart is ever to stray from the pathway of fellowship with God, but over against every human departure and every human wandering there is corresponding and sufficient restoring grace; of that divine grace we all, like Robert Robinson, stand in daily need and to that same grace, we all are daily debtors.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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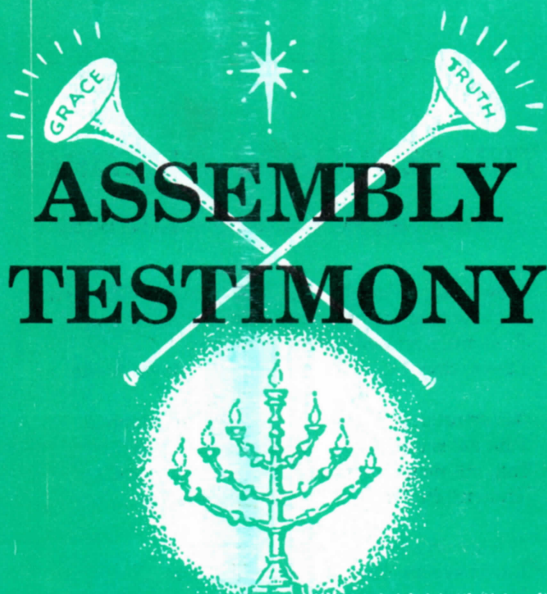
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THE REPROACH OF CHRIST

Tune : Abide with Me — 10.10.10.10

How shall we love thee LORD, how show Thy worth,
For that tremendous stoop from heaven to earth?
Rank after rank of angels passing by,
Down, down to dwell with sinners, down to die.

We stand in awe at what Thy love has planned
Who takes not hold of angels by the hand,
But, oh! the marvels of Thy matchless grace,
Thou art the hope of Adam's helpless race.

O what an advent, in a manger born,
Lowly we see Thee in a servant's form.
Thou, whom the Heaven of Heavens could not contain,
Taken by wicked hands, and mocked and slain.

But faith's bright eye still rests upon Thee now,
Beholds that crown of glory on Thy brow
And hope with ardent longing lifts her head
To yonder glorious Man, out from the dead.

O Blessed Hope, how sweet the prospect lies
Within each heart and points us to the skies,
For Thou shalt yet descend in triumph where
Thy ransomed Ones shall meet Thee in the air.

How shall we love Thee LORD, how show Thy worth?
Our brightest praise is dim with dust of earth,
But when around Thy radiant Throne we meet,
Untarnished crowns we'll cast before Thy feet.

—J.M. Jones (*Toowoomba*)

CHRIST IN THE APOCALYPSE (28)

by JOHN B. D. PAGE

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST (6)

Reading : Revelation 22.20f.

LORD JESUS

John had already heard the Lord burst forth with the glorious promise, "Behold, I come quickly", not once but twice (22.7,12), which may have prompted him to cast his mind back some sixty years to the upper room when he and the other ten disciples, saddened by learning that their Master was about to leave them, were comforted by His promise, "I will come again" (John 14.3). Soon, and for the last time, the Lord speaks audibly again to him saying, "Surely I come quickly" (v.20). Significantly, in His third utterance, the divine Speaker changes the introductory word of His promise from "Behold" to "Surely" in order to affirm categorically the absolute certainty of His coming again. The centuries have come and gone, and the Lord has not come again, but "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" and so "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness" (2 Peter 3.8ff). The day will definitely dawn when, in fulfilment of His promise to all believers of this Church age, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with an audible and commanding shout to gather both the resurrected and the living saints unto Himself.

Voicing the hope of the expectant Church, John responds, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus". Spontaneously, the seer expresses the deep-seated yearning of his soul. Are we longing for the Lord to come again?

A little earlier, John had heard the words "I Jesus . . ." from the lips of his Lord, whom God had highly exalted and he himself greatly revered. Several decades earlier, Saul of Tarsus, full of murderous hostility towards Christians, was travelling to Damascus when he was overwhelmed by an exceptionally bright light from heaven and he heard a voice saying, "I am Jesus . . .". This is the only other time when Christ uses His personal name "Jesus" for speaking to some one, and on both occasions He spoke from heaven. What a contrast between the two persons addressed —

Saul, a bitter opponent of Christ; John, a devoted disciple of Christ! How did each respond? Trembling and astonished, Saul said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9.5ff). In his reply, which took the form of a question, he did not use the name "Jesus" as may have been expected, but he addressed the Christ of heaven as "Lord", signifying surely that he was then saved instantly in view of Romans 10.9. Returning to John, being the disciple whom Jesus loved, there would appear a good reason for him, upon hearing those affectionate words, "I Jesus . . .", to answer with the single name "Jesus". But in his plea responding to His Lord's promise to come quickly, the seer made no attempt to assume a position of equality or to adopt an attitude of familiarity by using the single and personal name "Jesus". Undoubtedly, he remembered the commendatory remark from those divine lips at the last supper in the upper room addressed to the twelve disciples sitting around Him, "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye shall say well; for so I am" (John 13.13), meaning that it was right and proper for Him to be so addressed because such titles indicate unmistakably what He is essentially in Person and what the relationship is with His followers.

Sadly, there is a tendency today among some Christians to be familiar with their Saviour by speaking of, and addressing, Him as 'Jesus'. It denotes a lack of reverence for His Person and a denial of His exaltation as 'Lord' (Acts 2.36). There is no record in the Scriptures of His disciples addressing Him by His personal name which demons and His adversaries did (Matthew 8.29; 27; 22; etc.).

"Lord Jesus", said the seer. This last mention of the title, connected with His second coming, causes us to look at its first occurrence, for which we go back to that memorable resurrection morn when some women from Galilee, having prepared spices and ointments for embalming the Lord's dead body in accordance with Jewish custom, found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre and so they went inside but they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus", says the inspired writer (Luke 24.3). This seemingly insignificant first mention of the title, associated with His resurrection, is the prelude to some forty occurrences, found only in the Acts and the Pauline Epistles including Hebrews. Where the occasion arises for recalling facts of gospel history, such as referring to

the Lord's itinerant ministry, quoting what He actually said, or mentioning His betrayal and death, the apostles were careful to name Him as "Lord Jesus" (see Acts 1.21ff; 20.35; 1 Corinthians 11.23; 1 Thessalonians 2.14ff). When we speak or write of Him, we should emulate their example.

In considering this last mention and the only occurrence of "Lord Jesus" in the Apocalypse, it is interesting to go back to man's first recorded words addressed to God. It was, of course, Adam who, feeling self-condemned and hiding among the trees of Eden, said shamefully to Him, "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid" (Genesis 3.10). They were words of a man ruined by sin and fearful of seeing God. Turning the pages of Scripture, which cover many centuries, the divine drama of redemption is gradually unfolded until we come to man's last recorded words addressed to God in Christ, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus". Oh, the contrast! These are the words of man who, having been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, has remained faithful to his Lord despite the adversity of exile on a storm-swept rugged isle and, still undaunted, he expresses prayerfully and expectantly the hope of his Lord's return. For him, it was a living hope, engendering his expectation to see the Lord face to face. As the days become darker, the blessed hope of the Lord's coming again should become brighter, and we, like John, should be able to say, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus".

LORD JESUS CHRIST

Whilst a threatened curse brings the Old Testament to a close, the New Testament ends with a blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all". Grace, having its source in the Lord Jesus Christ, will never fail to sustain all the saints until He comes again to receive them unto Himself in the Father's house.

This benediction is not John's style for ending his earlier writings. For concluding his Gospel, he expresses the opinion that there would be an infinitude of books that could be written about the other works of the Lord Jesus, and he does not use a benedictory grace for ending his three Epistles. When John wrote the Revelation, Paul's Epistles, most of which end with this benediction, had been in circulation for thirty or more years, and so the seer may have seen fit to close his book with this pronouncement

of divine grace. Although this blessing may seem to be an unusual ending for a prophetic book, it is surely an appropriate conclusion to the canon of Scripture.

This title, "Lord Jesus Christ", occurring only here in the Revelation and not in the Johannine Epistles, is found first in the Acts and features in most of the Pauline Epistles. It is worthy of brief consideration.

Lord: This word *kurios* (Greek), occurring frequently in the New Testament, had no religious association amongst orientals, except for its adoption in the Septuagint for rendering the three primary Hebrew names of Deity.

In everyday life, the word was used widely. It is translated either as "lord" or "sir" when a stranger was addressed (e.g. John 4.11, 15, 19, 49; Matthew 8.2, 6), and the disciples were no less courteous when speaking to their divine Master (e.g. Matthew 8.25; 13.51). For expressing a superior relationship, this title was used in an eastern home where the wife addressed her husband as "lord" (1 Peter 3.6), and a son called his father "sir" (Matthew 21.30). Ownership is another shade of its meaning, because the word in its plural form is used for the "owners" of a colt (Luke 19.33).

After Christ had been raised from the dead, Peter gave a higher meaning to the word at the end of his sermon on the day of Pentecost by declaring "God hath made Him — Lord" (Acts 2.36). Therefore, this superior significance of the word rests upon the historical fact of His resurrection.

The connotations from the secular usage of the word may be applied to the One who is now "Lord" in its supreme sense. For us as believers, the title not only denotes His superior relationship and a recognition that we are not our own because "we are the Lord's", that is, we are His personal possession, having been "bought with a price" (Romans 14.8; 1 Corinthians 6.19ff), but it also demands our acknowledgement of His authority over our lives by setting Him apart as Lord in our hearts (1 Peter 3.15; R.V.).

Jesus: This is the English form of the Greek *Iesous*, being a transliteration of the Hebrew for Joshua. It was the personal name given to the Incarnate Son of God. By this single name, He is

called frequently in the four Gospels, but sparingly elsewhere in the New Testament, and so it is clearly the name connected with His humanity and His life on earth.

The name "Jesus" means 'Jehovah is salvation', that is, 'the Saviour', which may be illustrated by several Scriptures. With the infant Jesus in his arms, the aged Simeon blessed God and said, ". . . mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2.30), alluding to Isaiah 62.11, by which he meant that he saw the Babe as a personification of the salvation of God. Years later, the Lord Jesus Himself personalized the word when He said to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house . . .", whilst it also means that Zacchaeus through faith had become a spiritual son of Abraham (Luke 19.9). Salvation is Christ!

Based upon the promises to Abraham (Genesis 12.3), the Lord Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4.22). Of course, this divinely chosen nation was the vehicle for Christ to come into the world (Romans 9.5), and it was "to the Jew first" that the gospel was preached (Romans 1.16). Seemingly, in anticipation that salvation would be not always exclusively for the Jews, many Samaritan converts told the woman that this Man is indeed "the Saviour of the world" (John 4.42). This broad, or rather global, aspect of the Lord's Saviourhood was affirmed decades later by John, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4.14).

Christ: The Greek word is *Christos* for the Hebrew equivalent of "Messiah" (John 1.41), which means 'the Anointed One'.

The thought behind the word is the anointing with oil of a person to hold the office of priest or king, as practised in Israel (Leviticus 4.3; 1 Samuel 16.12ff, etc.).

In spite of the angel's announcement to the shepherds that the newly-born Babe was "Christ the Lord", that is, 'Jehovah's Anointed One' (Luke 2.11), the Lord Jesus warned His disciples years later to refrain from making it widely known that He was "the Christ" (Matthew 16.20). The reason appears to be that His Messiahship is related not to His sufferings but primarily to His sovereignty. Consequently, He is referred to as 'Christ' only a few times in the Gospels but, when He had been raised from the dead, and exalted, Peter rightly declared that "God hath made Him —

Christ" (Acts 2.36), by which He is often called in the Acts and the Epistles.

In Revelation, this official appellation is applied to the Lord Jesus four times, that is, twice as "His Christ" and twice as "Christ". We shall look at the former first.

For the title, "His Christ" or 'His Anointed' (lit.), the seer may be alluding to the second Psalm where the psalmist foresaw wicked kings and rulers conspiring against "the LORD" (lit. Jehovah) and "His Anointed" who would one day crush His foes and reign as King in Zion (Psalm 2.2, 6, 9).

Turning now to Revelation, chapter 11, John heard, as the angel sounded the last of seven trumpets, great voices in heaven declare that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of "our Lord", which refers to none other than Jehovah, and of "His Christ" (11.15). This will be realised by the Messiah after His victory in battle.

The conflict will not be confined to the earth, because John saw war in the atmospheric heaven when the mighty forces under the leadership of Michael, the archangel, fought against, and triumphed over, Satan and his evil angels, which was followed by Satan's expulsion from heaven to the earth. At this, a victorious shout arose in the highest of heavens rejoicing anticipatively in the overthrow of evil and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth where "His Christ" will exercise His power and authority (12.10).

This brings us to the other two references in Revelation. After the binding of Satan and his incarceration in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, John was given a brief glimpse of the millennial earth. Martyrs, who had refused to submit to the demands of the Beast, will be raised from the dead at what is said to be the first resurrection, and they will reign with "Christ" for a thousand years (20.4). Therefore, they will function as king-priests in subjection to Christ who, as a priest upon His throne (Zechariah 6.13), will be the one and only King-Priest after the order of Melchisedec (Psalm 110.4).

Interestingly, these four references to the Lord Jesus as "His Christ" and "Christ", His Messiahship is connected with His earthly kingdom and His Kingship, for which He was anointed by God in eternal ages past.

To sum up: "Lord" is the title that sets forth the dignity of His exalted Person, conveying the thought of His authority over believers individually and collectively as a local church during this age of grace and, still future, over all powers and potentates in the coming millennial age of righteousness. "Jesus", which is His personal name as Man, is related to His path of sufferings for righteousness' sake which believers should share, culminating in His vicarious sufferings at Calvary, which could be borne by Him alone, for sinful man's redemption. "Christ", His official appellation, refers to His present priestly position in heaven and His future kingly authority on earth whilst, in the age to come, He will be Israel's King-Priest.

Of our glorious Lord portrayed by the Apocalyptic seer in this last book of the Bible, we may say in conclusion, as the Shulamite maid did of her shepherd-lover to the ladies in Solomon's court, "He is the chiefest of ten thousand; . . . yea, He is altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5.10, 16). (*concluded*)

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

by J. B. HEWITT, CHESTERFIELD

(55) SANCTIFICATION

Well might we ask the question, What is sanctification? The first mention in the O.T. is Gen. 2.3, and means "being set apart"; "to separate from a common, ordinary purpose, to some higher use, or other purpose". It is used of both persons or things. A sanctified day (Gen. 2.3); of people (Exod. 13.2); the altar (Exod. 40.10); of a person (Lev. 8.30); of the Levites (Num. 8.14). The same is true in the N.T.; the unbelieving husband is set apart by a believing wife (1 Cor. 7.14,15). The gold is sanctified by the temple and the gift is sanctified by the altar (Matt. 23.17,19).

INTRODUCTION. We are sanctified prospectively by God the Father (Jude 1). Positionally in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1.2); positively by the offering of Christ (Heb. 10.10), meritoriously by the blood of Christ (Heb. 13.12). Powerfully by the Holy Spirit, He is the agent (1 Cor. 6.11; 2 Thess. 2.13; 1 Pet. 1.2) and progressively by obedience (2 Tim. 2.21).

SPURIOUS TEACHING. Some holiness movements teach sinless perfection, — the eradication of the old and fallen nature when we are born again. Sin does not die within the believer, he dies to sin (Rom. 6.11,12). In claiming sinlessness "we deceive ourselves" — but no one else (1 John 1.8). The new nature implanted in the soul is holy; it cannot sin because it is the divine nature of God (1 John 3.9). The old nature will remain with us until death or until the Lord's return to the air for His saints.

Sanctimoniousness is not sanctification, neither is it a moral virtue or mere religious practice. It is not the condition of our souls. It is a work wrought by the Holy Spirit within our souls by which we are made partakers of the divine nature and set apart to God. Others teach it is a gradual improvement of the old nature in the believer, bringing him into full harmony with God. The old nature cannot be improved (John 3.7; Rom. 7.14—16), it must be crucified (Rom. 6.6; Gal. 5.24).

POSITIONAL OR PERFECT SANCTIFICATION. This is the divine provision, the act of God in setting us apart for Himself (2 Thess. 2.13; 1 Pet. 1.2). True of Israel in the O.T. of Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8.30), and the nation (Lev. 20.8).

True of every believer in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 6.11). It is a once-for-all act on the part of God. This is absolute and complete. Without this we have no standing before God, or relationship with God (Heb. 10.10).

PURPOSED IN THE WILL OF GOD. Heb. 10.10. God of His own sovereign will has sanctified, set apart to Himself through the sacrifice of His Son, every believer in Christ. Believers are called saints and holy, regardless of the their moral or spiritual condition or walk (1 Cor. 1.2; Heb. 3.1). This is an abiding work.

PROCURED BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST. Heb. 9.14; 10.10; 13.12. We are made holy as to our standing before God in Christ. Our standing in holiness is perfect, as perfect as the sacrifice of Christ, as perfect as Christ is, "as He is so are we" (1 John 4.17). Christ is made unto us sanctification (1 Cor. 1.30 R.V.).

We have perfect union with Christ (Heb. 13.10). He died for our sanctification (Titus 2.14).

POWERFUL BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. 1 Pet. 1.2; Rom. 15.16; 1 Cor. 6.11. This is a supernatural work of which Christ is the MEDIUM and the Holy Spirit is the active AGENT. (2 Thess. 2.13). God chose us in His sovereignty and the Holy Spirit sanctified us and separated us to believe the truth. A divinely provided sanctification covers our whole being (1 Thess. 5.23). This is a permanent work, there can be no improvement or progress (1 Cor. 6.11). It takes place by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

PRACTICAL OR PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION. 1 Thess. 4.3,7. It is the will of God that every believer sanctify himself. This work is taken up by the Spirit, through the Word of God (John 17.17). Our Lord set Himself apart for the work of salvation and prayed that we by the word of God, set ourselves apart from evil. The Scriptures enlighten the mind and cleanse the heart (Ps. 119.9).

The word of God convicts us (Heb. 4.12); converts us (Ps. 19.7); cleanses us (Ps. 119.9); and completes us (2 Tim. 3.16,17). The Scriptures function as a mirror and a laver (Jas. 1.23; 24; Eph. 5.26). We are to cleanse ourselves "from all filthiness of the flesh" (2 Cor. 7.1), and pursue holiness daily in order to be like Christ. (Heb. 12.14). Thus we grow in grace and knowledge and are sanctified unto obedience and holiness (1 Pet. 1.15,16). We must allow the word of God to search us, and give heed to it (Rom. 8.5; Gal. 5.16). Meditate much on the areas of practical sanctification in 1 Thess. 4.1-12. The teaching is solemn and searching and vitally important in these days of lax morals.

Chastening is another means God uses for sanctification, help to fashion us into His image (Heb. 12.7,10). Practical sanctification involves separation from all evil (2 Cor. 6.14-18). There must be separation from false teachers and their doctrines (2 Tim. 2.21). "A great house" is not a local Assembly. It is merely an illustration of the great houses having various vessels for a particular use. The instruction is not dealing with keeping communions pure, but describes the Sovereign Lord making choice of suitable vessels for His service. Both aspects of sanctification are seen in v.19. The vessel to honour is to be separated from uncleanness and sanctified to God. The stress is on moral purity, for it is character that makes us useful, serviceable and honourable in

the Master's field. The application is to the false teachers with their vain babblings, vessels of dishonour (v.17,18). We must not only leave sin, but LOATHE it (Ps. 119.104). The fruit of yielding ourselves wholly to God is practical holiness (Rom. 6.11-13; 12.1).

We must not interpret the Scriptures by our experience, BUT interpret our experience by the Scriptures.

We must be imitators of the Lord and follow in His footsteps (1 Pet. 2.21).

Obedience to the word of God is the key to practical sanctification (2 Cor. 7.1; 1 Pet. 1.22).

ISAIAH'S PORTRAITS OF CHRIST

by J. FLANIGAN (Belfast)

10—"THE PRINCE OF PEACE"

We have seen, in our meditations, that Isaiah's prophecy is indeed as a gallery of portraits of the Messiah. He is portrayed to us in a variety of glories. There are portraits of Christ as the Son, as the Saviour, and as the Shepherd. We have seen Him as the Servant, as the Stone, and as the Suffering Sin-Bearer. He is the Singer, the Scholar, and the Soldier. There are several views of Him as the Sovereign, and in ch.65 it is indeed as Prince of Peace that He is being portrayed.

Here, and in the parallel passage in ch.11, is described something of the bliss of the coming Kingdom. We have arrived at Millennial Glory. It is, as another has beautifully said, "the harmony of Eden renewed once more, and the wild fierce creatures of the jungle graze in the company of the fearless flocks of the farm". Psalm 24, Isaiah 63, Revelation 19, all synchronise here. The King has returned in triumph. Over the earth that once cast Him out He will now reign in glory.

The basis of that Kingdom is righteousness. The Sun of Righteousness will usher in that new day, spreading golden wings over the earth in warmth and healing (Malachi 4). The King is the King of Righteousness (Hebrews 7). His Name is Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23). Only the Righteous will

enter His Kingdom (Matthew 25). Zion, the capital city, is called The City of Righteousness (Isaiah 1). In His days shall the righteous flourish; and the poor will be judged with righteousness and equity (Psalm 72). Righteousness will reign, and the King will hold a sceptre of righteousness (Hebrews 1. Psalm 45). How many of earth's Kings and Kingdoms have been corrupt, corruptible, and corrupting. This King and Kingdom are all righteousness. It is the basis of His reign.

It will be a kingdom of unbounded dominion. Even the glorious kingdom of Solomon had its boundaries. North to the Syrian Hills and the Lebanon. South to the Wilderness, the Negev. East to the Desert, and West to the Mediterranean. But Emmanuel shall have dominion from Sea to Sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. From the Euphrates to the Nile; from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Kings and Islands; East and West; Nations and Continents all. They of the wilderness, the proud Bedouin, will bow before Him. The Kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11).

There will be, in that day, unlimited prosperity. An handful of corn on the mountain top! (Psalm 72). Every man will rest securely under his own vine (Zechariah 3). There will be rain in season and no drought. There will be no need anymore for Military Forces, for Police, or for the Judiciary. Therefore there will be no wasting of manpower because of sin, as is necessary today in our sinful world. A rod of iron will suppress sin, and maintain the peace and the security of that millennial day.

What unparalleled bliss will then prevail in every realm of life. In the human kingdom civil harmony, and no more lusting for power. Swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. (Is this reminiscent of Melchisidek's bread and wine?). The strength of that Kingdom is measured, not by any stockpile of armaments and weaponry, but by the safety of boys and girls playing in the streets (Zechariah 3). In the animal realm too, what bliss is envisaged here in Isaiah 65. The fierce wolf will feed with the gentle lamb. The lion and the oxen will feed together too. There will be no hurt nor injury in all that Holy Mountain. (Though the serpent will still creep in the dust). Man will be at peace with man. The beast will be at peace with the beast. The beast will be at peace with the man.

Even the very solar system will be affected when Jesus reigns. The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days (Isaiah 30). The glory is unprecedented. It is Eden indeed, on a universal scale.

When this millennial day arrives, it will be the answer to the prayers, and the fulfilment of the desires, of Israel and her prophets and psalmists. David says, "Amen, and Amen" (Psalm 72). The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended when Messiah sits upon His throne, and the whole earth is filled with His glory. David has nothing more to ask. It is the realisation of Israel's hopes and longing. There is nothing more to pray for.

May we, while we wait for Him, be able, even now, to pray intelligently, "Thy Kingdom come".

Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun;
He comes to break oppression,
To set the prisoner free;
To take away transgression
And rule in equity.

Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing:
For He shall have dominion
O'er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar. —(*series concluded*).

There is no more important office; none that bears greater responsibility, involves more love, demands more understanding of scripture or a deeper spiritual vision: — and yet, with faithful fulfilment, anticipates a more glorious reward, than that of an elder in the local church.

—*Anonymous.*

**'THE DESIRE OF OUR SOUL IS TO THY NAME
AND TO THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEE'.**

— **Isaiah 26.8.**

Our Father, bless'd before Thee, we call to mind Thy Son,
His all-exceeding glory, the great things He has done,
And He who left the splendour — far, far beyond our thought,
That to earth's poor and lowly, salvation should be brought.

So holy was His coming, from virgin's womb brought forth,
So perfect was His childhood, Thou only knew His worth.
Baptized of John in Jordan, the Spirit found repose,
And Thou declaredst Thy pleasure, as from the flood He rose.

When to the desert driven, by Satan sorely tried,
Thy sinless Son victorious, on Thy pure word relied.
O Witness true and faithful! O mercy full and free!
Both light and love eternal displayed in Him we see.

Gethsemane! O Father, that holy Son of Thine —
Prostrate we see Him praying, "Thy will be done not Mine".
'Twould please the LORD to bruise Him, He offered up must be,
Thy chosen One would suffer for us on Calvary's tree.

Golgotha, we remember, "they pierced His hands and feet,"
But His the shout of victory — His death is death's defeat!
"'Tis finished," Hallelujah! The grave now has no might,
"He liveth!," men and angels are gladdened at the sight.

And Father, as we thank Thee and worship in His name,
Thy Son's enthroned beside Thee, all heaven declares His fame.
And soon He'll come to rapture the church, for which He died,
To see and share His glory, forever by His side.

— *By Terry Blackman, Brazil.*

"THE PROPHECY OF JONAH"

by E. R. Bower.

No. 3 — CHAPTER 2

Vv.1-2, "And Jonah prayed unto Jehovah HIS God . . . and said, "I cried out of mine affliction, unto Jehovah, and He gavest heed to me; out of the belly of Sheol cried I and Thou heardest my voice". Cf. Ps.18.4-6, "The sorrow of Sheol compassed me about: the snare of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon Jehovah and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of His palace, and my cry came before Him, even unto His ears". Cf. also Jon.1.2; Pss.22.21; 116.3-4; 120.1; 130.1; "Sheol" — the grave; the state of death, as distinct from a grave or burial place. Note the 'cries' of the book. (1) To cry aloud as in 1.2,6,14; 2.2; 3.2 (preach); 3.4,5 (proclaimed); (2) To cry in prayer (1.5) and (3) To cry for help in distress (2.2).

V.3. "For Thou didst cast me into the deep, in the midst (heart) of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me". Cf. Ps.42.7, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me". See also Ps.88.6-7. Cf. the use of 'casting' — (1) To cast down (1.4; the wind) 1.5; the wares, and 1.12,15, Jonah into the sea. (2) To cause to fall (1.7, the lots); (3) To cause to go (2.3, Jonah into the sea) and (4) To cast out (2.4).

V.4. "Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet will I look again toward Thy holy temple". See Ps.31.22; 1 Kin.8.38; Ps.18.6. Jonah is now looking toward the place that he had forsaken (1.3). Cf. Ps.5.7.

V.5. "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head". Cf. Ps.69.1-2. "Even to my soul" — threaten my life — as in Ps.69.1.

V.6. "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains (the 'cuttings off' or 'roots') the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption (pit, or grave), O Jehovah my God". See Ps.16.10.

V.7. "When my soul (life) fainted within me, I remembered the Lord (Jehovah): and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple". (as v.4). See Ps.77.3. "My prayer came in unto Thee". Cf. 1.2, "Their wickedness is come before Me". See Ps.18.6. Cf. Pss.16.10; 30.3.

V.8. "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy (or, do not heed their chastisement" or "forfeit their own share of covenant grace"). See Ps.31.6.

V.9. "But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is (belongs to) of Jehovah". See Ps.3.8.

V.10. "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomitted out Jonah upon the dry land". A difference between the fish and Jonah — the fish obeyed!

It is obvious that the prayer of Jonah consists of a series of quotations from the psalms (some writers say that some of the psalms quoted — and there are more possible quotations that shown above — are of a later date than Jonah) which under the circumstances is perfectly natural for someone who knows the Scriptures. We hear very much the same thing in our own day. It will also be noticed that the quotations appear to be from the Messianic psalms and thus in keeping with the sign, not perhaps for Jonah's day, but for the day which was to come when there would be those who would search the Scriptures. The prayer of Jonah is in the past tense. Jonah prayed. The Lord spoke. The period of time spent in the fish must have been one of extreme mental and intensive spiritual agony, as well as of great physical suffering. Was Jonah ever aware that as he was "three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" (Matt.12.40)? Did he ever have an inkling as he prayed and quoted (knowingly or unknowingly) from some of the Messianic psalms that he was expressing not only his own soul's experience, but the soul experience of Him who was to come, the Obedient Servant of Jehovah? Was he aware that he was a sign of the Man of Sorrows, (not a 'type', but a 'sign')? Did those who heard our Lord's words concerning the sign go home and read Jonah's little book? Did they search the Scriptures, as did the noble Bereans? Did they seek out for

themselves the reference to the psalms which even in those days were considered to be Messianic? As they, at the Cross, took up our Lord's own cry of "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps.22.1) did they connect the sufferings and the resurrection promise spoken of by the psalmist, with the One whom they now saw upon the Cross?

"Let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" (Matt.27.43). "I cried . . . He heard me . . . cried I, and Thou heardest my voice". God's answer to His Anointed is seen in the psalms that Jonah quoted. Each psalm is a cry from the heart and born out of deepest suffering; suffering caused by others; suffering for others; suffering by reason of the overwhelming thought that God had forgotten. Yet over all is the comforting knowledge — born of faith — that God is there as the ever present Help; that ultimate salvation belongs to Him and is in His hands. Cf. Jacob (Gen.49.18).

All the powers of darkness on earth are about the afflicted; all the forces of hell confront him. This is how Jonah records his experience during the three days and three nights. Read this chapter again; turn to the psalms; then read 1 Pet.1.7-12.

Into the hearts of the earth — the kingdom of death, as one writer puts it — to lead captivity captive. (Ps.68.18; Ephes.4.8).

(to be continued).

The Reproach of Christ — Hebrews 13

The priviledge of each pilgrim here below,
Outside the camp from Babylonish show,
Outside the camp in Christ's rejection share,
The stigma of the Cross with Him to bear.

A priviledge we shall never have on high,
When to this Godless world we say 'good-bye',
Up there, reproach for Christ is wiped away,
May we not shun it in this evil day.

Reproach for Christ has been the treasured lot,
By those who could have earthly honours got,
Egyptian palace and its fame was spurned,
When Moses from his foster mother turned.

Think of the Saviour who from Heaven came,
Stooping to earth; stooping to Calvary's shame
The true example; He the God sent One,
Refusing honours from a world undone.

Think of a Paul who could have made a name
Who could have climbed the ladder of earth's fame,
Counting all his achievements dung and dross,
And finding all his glory in the Cross.

Did Peter or th' Apostles make such claims?
As adding Reverend to their earthly names!
What would they think if they were today
To see professors such high claims display?

Reproach of Christ to them was richer far,
Than man's applause, and titles that would mar
Christ's likeness in their mortal bodies here,
One reverend Name alone they did revere.

Such God sent ones, one object kept in view,
Their aim to set forth Christ in language true,
No worldly innovations; just the Word
Was used to bring lost sinners to the Lord.

No entertainment then for guilty men,
The Gospel was the power by tongue or pen,
God's dynamite to blast the rocky heart,
A labour in which lightness played no part.

God's sent ones are entirely cast on God,
They seek the way their lonely Master trod,
Trusting the Spirit's power to bring forth fruit,
Resorting not to any substitute.

Can man improve on God's appointed way?
Does modern means produce real fruit today?
Sent labourers still will work to God's own plan,
Not catering to the taste of fallen man.

Then as the day is drawing to a close,
Reproach then ever gone, no frown from foes,
Sweet will it be to hear our Lord's well done,
And sweeter far to see God's lovely Son.

—*R. Hull (Belfast)*

VITAL VERITIES (2)

by E. W. ROGERS

The Inspiration of Scripture — Part 2

EXTENT OF INSPIRATION

To *what extent are they inspired?* As was said earlier, nothing short of verbal inspiration will satisfy the case. Inspiration of ideas but not of words will never give assurance to a reader that the book is accurate. Doubtless there was divine wisdom in using *languages* which are now dead in the composition of the Scriptures. Being dead they are static; the meaning of their words does not change with the passing of time. The Lord Jesus declared that not one jot or one tittle (peculiarities of Hebrew letters) will pass away, by which we may infer that He taught the inspiration of the words, which, of course, are made up of letters. He pointed out that the Scriptures spake of God thus: 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' and, emphasizing the present tense, He drew from it the conclusion that 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living: for all live unto Him!' So that He taught that *the tenses* also are inspired.

Let the reader examine *the citations* from the Old Testament in the New and especially the emphasis which the writer of the Hebrews lays on particular words (e.g. the words 'once more' (12.27) and the word 'new' (8.13)) and also the quotation in Rom.10.6-12, and he will find that he cannot escape the conclusion that the Scriptures are verbally inspired. Observe, too, that Paul extracts an important doctrine from the word 'seed' used in Genesis, noting the fact that the word is singular not plural, and refers to Christ (Gal.3.16).

The New Testament is in no way inferior to the Old. It was to be read publicly in the churches (1 Thess.5.27 and Col.4.16) as the Old Testament had been in the synagogues. Paul's writings are ranked with 'other scripture' (2 Peter 3.16) and the words of the gospel of Luke are cited as Scripture by Paul in 1 Tim.5.18.

MISTAKES

It has, however, been seriously asserted by some that *mistakes* are to be found in the Scriptures. This assertion emanates not merely from those who are hostile to the book but also from those who read it devoutly and more than superficially. Whatsoever admissions may be made concerning the few apparent discrepancies which exist, they do not affect the general teaching of verbal inspiration, or the reliability of the book as a whole.

Mistakes in translations there have been, of course. Inspiration is not claimed for translations, though translators have in many cases been given divine help in their work. Inspiration is claimed for the original writings only.

Mistakes of copyists do not adversely effect it: they are so very few and unimportant that only the most obstinate would make capital out of them. The remarkable thing is that they are not more numerous. Why, it may be asked, has God been pleased to preserve the book as a whole and yet failed to preserve the original writings so that the matter of copyists' errors could not have arisen? 'His ways are past finding out,' but is it not more than likely that man would have done with the originals what he did with the Brazen Serpent? Would he not have been likely to make them an object of worship, or superstition, or what not?

Alleged *scientific mistakes* have been dealt with by competent scientific men. He who is not versed in scientific matters is not well advised to attempt to deal with the alleged scientific inaccuracies. Let all such objectors be sure, however, that they discriminate carefully between theory and fact; and let them see that they do not base their objections on manners of speech and commonly understood phrases which actually define phenomena although they do not define scientific process.

Most alleged historical errors vanish on closer investigation. Matthew Henry was correct when, dealing with the alleged discrepancies in the records of the miracles of the Lord Jesus, he observed that "if there were two men there must have been one." No one quarrels with the photographer who produces a profile photograph showing one eye and a full-faced view showing two. Which is correct? Moreover, the inspired evangelists wrote on a principle of selection. They mentioned things which were perti-

nent to their aim. The Spirit of God through Moses omitted certain details concerning the person of Melchizedek to make his recorded history an apt type of the Lord Jesus, as to Whom the omissions were actual matters of fact (Heb. 7.1-4). Adolph Saphir has said that "The silences of Scripture are like the music: they add to its harmony." What destruction of harmony is effected by attempting to harmonize the four gospels! How much sweet music is lost if the blanks are filled up by careless hands! He whose heart is opposed to God, looks for mistakes; he will find plenty of what he regards as such; but such supposed errors are, in many cases, evidences to the illumined mind of the superintending control of God which adds lustre to the written text.

AVOID RASH CONCLUSIONS

As to the small residue of unresolved alleged errors we may safely await more information. In the absence of all the data rash conclusions should be avoided. The writer arrived home early recently though the train was late! Here is an apparent contradiction, but the facts of the case were that he was able to catch an earlier train which itself was late instead of the one after it. Consequently coming by the train that was late he arrived home earlier than he would have done had he caught his usual train which was on time. But the statement "The train was late, although I am home early" seems, in the absence of more details to be contradictory and stupid.

Capital has been made out of the fact that the New Testament passages *quote citations differently from the original text*. But the objection is ill-founded. The word of God is so full that often the quotation in the New Testament brings into prominence a hidden meaning latent in the passage but not apparent in its Old Testament setting. Sometimes God puts His seal of approval on a Greek mistranslation of the Hebrew text with which the Septuagint abounds, and uses such erroneous reading to good purpose (cf. e.g. Gen. 5.22 and Heb. 11.5). (Also Psa. 40.6-8 and Heb. 10.5-8).

Moreover, it is the moral right of any author to cite his own former writings in a subsequent writing; he does no wrong if he

misquotes, amplifies or uses to another purpose what he has hitherto written. It is his own writing; he may do what he will. But may Paul so use what Isaiah wrote? When it is apprehended that all scripture is that of the Holy Spirit and not of mere human origin, it will become plain that the Holy Spirit infringes no moral right when He cites differently one of His own earlier writings. It is the Spirit Who wrote: it is the Spirit who cites. It is not the blunder of a subsequent human writer.

A COMPLETED BOOK

The matter of the *Canon of Scripture* is far too large a subject to be dealt with adequately in this paper. At this late date we may rest content that in our Bible we have all the word of God: no volume outside of that book can seriously claim a place within it. The Lord Jesus in His day had the Old Testament as we have it today: its divisions then into the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, being the divisions which are found current among the Jews today. Deut. 31.24 gives assurance as to the completeness of the Pentateuch. Col. 1.25 gives assurance as to the completeness of Paul's revelation and Rev. 22.6 forms a most suitable conclusion of the whole volume. The word of God is 'faithful'—it can be relied upon. It is 'true' in all material matters of facts. It is authoritative for the 'Lord God of the Holy Prophets' is the speaker; and its foreshadowings are inevitable—they 'must come to pass.' Woe to him who adds to them or who takes from them! They are not deficient; they are not in any part redundant. They are 'perfect and entire, wanting nothing.'

Though written by men it is *free from human infirmity*. John in his advanced years was not hindered by the common infirmities of old age, viz. mental feebleness and defective memory. The Spirit of God, in accordance with the promise of the Lord Jesus, 'brought all things to remembrance' and, as with all others, assured to us an accurate written statement of God's revelation of the past, operations in the present and purposes for the future.

It behoves us all to "give attendance to reading" (1 Tim. 4.13), to "search the scriptures" (John 5.39) and to "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest we should slip by them." (Heb. 2.1).

HE'S EVERYTHING TO ME

There is a story, old but true
Of boundless love outpoured
To sinners all, not just a few,
By Jesus Christ, my gracious Lord:
He's everything to me!

Because the world He loved so much
He couldn't stand idly by
Sinners to watch in Satan's clutch
Go on their way in sin to die :
He's everything to me!

Lonely the hill that distant day
He gave Himself, His all,
And shed His blood to wash away
My sins, each one, beyond recall:
He's everything to me!

I'll never know just what it cost,
The pain that bowed His head.
Sin He became, for I was lost,
To save me stood He in my stead:
He's everything to me!

Beyond all measure was His love
For He held nothing back.
His gift I'll treasure all above
For no good thing I e'er will lack:
He's everything to me!

He'll give me strength to serve Him well
If I would faithful be.
He'll lead me forth, where I can't tell—
But He'll be there ahead of me!
He's everything to me!

—*David Ward (Southsea)*

Suggested Hymn Tune : Newcastle.

THE MEAT OFFERING AND THE DRINK OFFERING CUT OFF FROM THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

by JOHN HEADING, Aberystwyth

In the previous article, we explained the antitypes of the meat (meal) offering and the drink offering as associated with the continual burnt offering. To God, they referred to the forthcoming life and death of the Lord Jesus; to believers today they recall this precious life and death. But in Joel's day, the corn had wasted in the field, and the vine had dried up, with the result that "the meat (meal) offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord" (Joel 1.9-12). In other words, the sweet savour of Christ, foretold by these ingredients, could not and did not rise up to God.

Today, some local assemblies may be in this tragic state. Nothing of spiritual depth regarding Christ is offered to God. Truth that had once been known and appreciated may have been eaten by the worms and locusts (Joel 1.4). The fowls of the air may have come to devour what seed had been sown (Matt. 13.4). Other things may enter the lives of believers that take the place of the knowledge of Christ, causing John to write, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5.21). Much activity cannot hide this loss, and the true and fundamental business of the assembly may tend to be regarded as of no real importance. At least in Joel's day there were priests who mourned the lack of the meal and drink offerings (Joel 1.9), corresponding to the spiritual grief in the hearts of elderly brethren and sisters who have known better days in the past. If the sweet savour of Christ in worship and in the knowledge of the Word is lacking, then this loss is not supplied by all the secondary activity that may be taking place.

However, we can be thankful that restoration is found in the book of Joel. There was to be humility and repentance in the house of God. The priests and ministers of the altar had to come and lie all night in sackcloth (1.13) in order to own the loss in the house. The people had to come to the house of the Lord in order to cry unto Him (v.14). Today, no local assembly is perfect, so it is good to cry unto the Lord that He would reveal the weaknesses, as in Rev. chs.2—3. Too many prayer meetings may never touch upon the more intimate matters of assembly weaknesses. Individuals may say in their hearts

like David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there by any wicked way in me" (Psa. 139.23—24). But there should be an assembly side to this confession as well.

This subject is continued in Joel 2.12—17. "Rend your heart, and not your garments" (v.13) implies that there had to be a reality about their fasting and weeping. In Old Testament times, it was so easy to adopt spurious outward manifestations rather than inward reality, and the Lord Jesus condemned such a practice (Matt. 6.16—18). Today, it is easy to talk about weakness, but this is not repentance; the Lord requires assemblies to repent and do the first works (Rev. 2.5). Paul wrote that he would "bemoan many which have sinned already, and have not repented" (2 Cor. 12.21). A restored spiritual prosperity will come only upon repentance, for He gives grace to the humble, whom He will lift up (James 4.6,10). Certainly repentance and humility before God will bring anticipation of blessing, for "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat (meal) offering and a drink offering unto the Lord?" (Joel 2.14). The abundance of Christ in the hearts of the saints is brought to the assembly by the Holy Spirit using the living freshness of the Word of God appreciated and taken in under these conditions of restoration.

Joel 2.19 goes further: "I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith". It is the same today. Christ is given as the Bread of life, and the Lord's people should be satisfied with Him. Some need unspiritual activity to satisfy them, as if they are bored with truly spiritual things. This may occur when an assembly is clearly subdivided into younger ones and older ones; elders should ensure that younger ones are satisfied when Christ, as the meal and drink offering, can be presented unto God.

The reason for all the trouble in Joel's day was the incursion of "the northern army" (2.20). They caused the people to transgress, bringing the judgment of the locusts upon them. But now these were driven out, ensuring the supply of corn and wine once again. In other words, men's ideas must be driven out of an assembly, for these can give no satisfaction when Christ fills the heart. As for Paul, he would cast down "imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10.5).

The promise of God went even further: "the floors shall be full of wheat, and . . . with wine and oil. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2.24—25). It is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3.6—7), and it was He who restored the Corinthians from their deep unspiritual state, enabling Paul to rejoice (2 Cor. 7.9—10).

Not only would there be corn and wine for the offerings, but the people in Jerusalem "shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied" (Joel 2.26). Here is Christ being brought into an assembly that has lost its first love. Those in Jerusalem would "praise the name of the Lord"; He has His portion in any restoration, and this is the same today.

It is not surprising that there was given the promise of the pouring out of the Spirit in Joel 2.28. For the Spirit is the One who makes Christ real as the meal and drink offerings. For both by life and by life, the restored saints are guided by the Spirit into all truth.

It is not therefore remarkable that there will be another famine of corn and wine in Rev. 6.6 when the third seal is broken. This shows that there will be largely nothing for God from this earth after the rapture, except from the suffering remnant, who will worship God independently of any ritual. He will make a distinction in that future time of judgment when "the harvest is ripe . . . the press is full" (Joel 3.13), for the harvest of the earth will be ripe for the sickle (Rev. 14.15—16) (the remnant for God in that future day), and the vine of the earth will come under the wrath of God (vv.18—20) (referring to the ungodly in that day). We can be thankful that the church will not pass through these testing times of the future. So in the meantime prior to the return of the Lord Jesus, believers must assess themselves to see how much of this typical teaching fits their own case, individually and collectively, seeking either God's way of restoration, or the means of grace to continue in service as He would desire.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We are saved by God's mercy — not by our merit; by Christ's dying
— not by our doing.

We really live when we live to give.

Those who truly fear God need not fear death.

God's resources are always equal to our requirements.

—Anthony Orsini, U.S.A.

THOUGHTS OF CHRIST

(for the busy Housewife) No. 10

BY ERIC G. PARMENTER, BASINGSTOKE

The quiet contemplation of Christ on the cross, outside the city, stripped of those sacred garments which had brought instant healing to the reverent touch of faith. His nail pierced hands that freely handled the leper in Galilee and anointed the eyes of the blind. That compassionate heart going out to His mother in her deep grief as the sword pierced her soul. The mysterious, supernatural darkness shrouding the last hours of Jesus ere He died: His orphan cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" As He was made sin for us, bows the believing heart in worship before Him.

What delight to have the Lord filling our souls vision — lifted up in shame, yet forgiving His enemies: Providing a safe refuge for His mother: Opening Paradise to the dying thief: Sacrificing His own sinless life in order that He might associate us with Himself in the joy of His love.

Raised up in power and now gone up in glory to be a hiding place from the hosts of spiritual enemies which surround us; and from that throne to hear Him say, when perplexity and confusion marks our pathway here and we are at a loss as to which way — "I will guide thee with mine eye" and our path becomes clear and safe. How precious to recall, the conversation of God-fearing hearts is heard in Heaven, and a book of remembrance is kept by Him upon the throne. Praise His name.

“HOW GOOD IS THE GOD WE ADORE”

JOSEPH HART (1712—1768))

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangable Friend!
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end!

'Tis Jesus, the First and Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come.

These lines were written by Joseph Hart. They are, in fact, but a single stanza taken from a lengthy poem, "No prophet, nor dreamer of dreams", based on the opening verses of Deut. 13. The form of the first line, as originally written by Hart was, "This God is the God we adore"; in some collections it is found as, "This, this is the God we adore".

Joseph Hart lived in the 18th century. He was "born of believing parents" in the city of London in 1712. Educationally he received a good start in life and later became a teacher of "the learned languages". Spiritually, however, things were very different, Julian describing his early life as, "a curious mixture of loose conduct, serious conviction of sin and endeavours after *amendment of life*". For many years his experience appears to have alternated between periods of conviction of sin and periods of gross indulgences. But let Hart himself tell of his spiritual experience in his own words.

"On entering manhood, I advanced to dreadful heights of libertinism, and ran to such dangerous lengths of carnal and spiritual wickedness that I even outwent professed infidels and shocked the irreligious and profane with my blasphemies . . . In this abominable state I continued a bold-faced rebel for nine years, not only committing acts of lewdness myself, but infecting others with all the poison of my delusions . . . After a time I fell into a deep despondency of mind, and, shunning all company, I went about bewailing my sad and dark condition".

"In this sad state I went moping about till Whit Sunday, 1757, when I happened to go in the afternoon to the Moravian Chapel in Fetter Lane. The minister preached from Rev. 3.10. I was much impressed".

"I was hardly got home, when I felt myself melting away into a strange softness of affection which made me fling myself on my knees before God. My horrors were immediately expelled, and such comfort flowed into my heart as no words can paint . . . I cried out, 'What, me, Lord?' His Spirit answered in me, 'Yes, thee!' I objected, 'But I have been so unspeakably evil and wicked!' The answer was, 'I pardon thee freely and fully!' The alteration I then felt in my soul was as sudden and palpable as that which is experienced by a person staggering and almost sinking under a burden, when it is immediately taken from his shoulders. Tears ran in streams from my eyes for a considerable while, and I was so swallowed up in joy and thankfulness that I hardly knew where I was. I threw myself willingly into my Saviour's hands, lay weeping at His feet . . ." Hart at that time was forty-five years of age.

Conversion's experience brought tremendous changes. Though there were many temptations, Hart walked humbly with God and applied himself in earnest to the preaching of the gospel and to the writing of hymns and poems. These were published in 1759 as, "Hymns composed on Various Subjects"; in the preface of this volume there is a brief account of the author's spiritual experience.

In 1760, Hart became minister of an Independent Chapel in London, the "Old Wooden Meeting-House in Jewin Street" built nearly a century before by William Jenkyn. There he ministered regularly, faithfully and fruitfully to a large congregation who looked on him as an "earnest, eloquent and much-loved" minister of the gospel.

Hart's ministry in Jewin Street continued for eight years, right up to the close of his life. He died on May 24th, 1768, at the early age of fifty-six and was buried in Bunhill Fields. There, a large crowd of some twenty thousand people gathered to pay their last respects to a much-loved minister of the gospel and at his funeral service it was said, "He was like the laborious ox that dies with the yoke on his neck; so died he with the yoke of Christ on his neck; neither

would he suffer it to be taken off; for ye are his witnesses that he preached Christ to you, with the arrows of death sticking in him". So revered was the memory of Joseph Hart that more than a century later (in 1875) an obelisk was erected over his grave in Bunhill Fields.

In the few years from conversion to the close of life, Joseph Hart wrote a considerable number of hymns but apart from a very few, most of these have now disappeared from common usage. His hymns have a spiritual quality of their own and most are based on his own experience, "all the emotions of a soul 'ready to halt', but knowing where to look for strength, are plentifully and feelingly represented".

Hart's hymns, "Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched" is well known to many; it is much used in gospel work and its lines have often brought timely help to troubled souls.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him:
This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

His hymn on Gethsemane, "Come, all ye chosen saints of God", was born out of an unforgettable personal spiritual experience — a contemplation of the agony of the Saviour in the Garden. It was written in two parts and contained twenty-four stanzas. Two of its lines, full of mystery, majesty and meaning still live on,

Gethsemane, the Olive-Press!
And why so call'd, let angels* guess.

Hart's poem on the word of God is worthy of mention, though not so widely known. Its lines are pithy and penetrating.

Revere the sacred page,
To injure any part
Betrays, with blind and feeble rage,
A hard and haughty heart.

* (*'Christians' in original*)

The Scriptures and the Lord
Bear one tremendous Name:
The written, and th' Incarnate Word
In all things are the same.

"How good is the God we adore" is, however, the best known of all Hart's compositions and through the years has often been sung at gatherings of the Lord's people as a fitting expression of deep gratitude to God.

Its words depict the pilgrim on the pathway of pilgrimage. He halts and reflects, "God has been good and faithful; love has ever been the expression of His heart, constancy the hallmark of His friendship. In addition the Lord Jesus in the plenitude of His person and the gracious guiding Spirit of God have been unfailing escorts through all the way". He feels that he has been truly blessed. He raises his "Ebenezer", then steps out into the unknown future, assured that what his Divine Companions have been in the past, so They will be to the end of the road — enough for all the journey.

(Series concluded)

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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Our God we think of Calvary
Our Saviour suffering there,
Condemned by those that gathered
All their reproach did bear.
No words against transgressors
Who cursed the Lord that bled,
The crowd expressed their hatred
Against One they wanted dead.

The scorn of men deriding
Had long since reached its peak,
When contrary to nature
Created orbs are bleak.
Those wicked men at Calvary
Are silenced as He dies
And the heavens remain darkened
As heavenward He cries.

In His life the Heavens opened
God's gracious voice we hear
Declaring all His wonders
And to His heart how dear.
Some men received Him gladly,
And some His worth extolled
Now what God does in judgement
No mortal eyes behold.

Affliction came to Israel
As punishment for sin
Their glory stripped, men wondered
Why God's fierce wrath was seen
"Forsook their God" the answer
For Israel's lonely day
"No comfort and no mercy"
We hear the heathen say.

On Calvary the Lord was suffering
God's anger against sin
Yet His holy life revealing
That no sin belonged to Him.
Then why were heavens darkened?
And why the silence cold?
God hath the Christ forsaken
Those lonely three hours told.

Our God we do adore Thee
He sustained in full — our load
The curse for sin — He bore it
As it had been foretold
And yet the more we praise Thee
That in His lonely hour
Those who did well esteem Him
Allowed Him sin to bear.

— J. Whitmarsh

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

An Introduction — *THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH*

As it is becoming every day more manifest that we are in the midst of perilous times (2 Tim. 3) it behoves the Lord's people to be increasingly occupied with the expectation of His return.

It is now very many years since the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." (Matt. 25.6). Up till that time the Church had fallen into profound slumber, drugged by the influence of the world, so that the doctrine of the Lord's return for His saints was forgotten, ignored, or denied. We are in a similar condition now in 1987. But when, through the action of the Spirit of God, this cry went forth, thousands were startled from their sleep, and, trimming their lamps, went forth once again to meet the Bridegroom. For a season they lived daily in the hope of His return; and so mightily did this hope act upon their lives and hearts that it detached them from everything — every association, habit and practice — unsuitable to Him for whom they waited, and kept their loins girt, and their lights burning, as those who were waiting for their Lord. (Luke 12.35,36). But time went on; and while the doctrine of the Second Advent has been apprehended and taught by increasing numbers, and while the truth has been undoubtedly the support and consolation of many godly souls, it is yet a question if large numbers of the saints of God have not lost its freshness and power. For the following is patent to all observers — (i) the standard of separation is becoming lower and lower, (ii) worldliness is on the increase, (iii) saints are permitting themselves associations out of which they have professedly come. Many of us, therefore, are in danger once more of falling asleep, even when the doctrine of the hope is upon our lips.

If this be so — and it is the subject of common remark — the time has come when the truth on this subject needs to be pressed home again upon the hearts and consciences of believers. For the Lord is at hand, and He desires that His people should be on the watch-tower, longing and eagerly waiting of His return. Surely therefore it is high time to awake out of sleep, knowing that our

salvation is nearer than when we believed, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10.37). And He Himself has said "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: truly I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." (Luke 12.37). In the previous remarks it has been assumed, and now we proceed to prove from the scriptures, that the coming of the Lord Jesus IS THE DISTINCTIVE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. This might be done from almost every book of the New Testament. We shall cite enough to place the subject beyond a doubt.

First, our Lord Himself prepared His disciples to maintain, after His departure, the expectation of His return. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom His Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when HE cometh, shall find so doing. Truly I say unto you, that He shall make him ruler over all His goods." (Matt. 24.45-47). He then proceeds to characterize the evil servant as one who should say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," etc. (v.48), and indicates the punishment into which such a one should fall. The next two parables — that of the virgins, to which reference has been made, and that of the talents — teach distinctly the same lesson, and the more forcibly from the fact that the virgins who fell asleep, and the servants who received the talents, are the same who are dealt with respectively on the Lord's return.

The same instruction is found in Mark's gospel. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. (For the Son of man is) as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." (Mark 13.33-37). In the gospel of Luke the same truth is repeated again and again. We have quoted one striking passage. (Luke 12.35-37). Another may be added: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them Occupy till I come." (Luke 19.12,13). Then as

in Matthew, we find him coming and examining the servants as to their use of the money entrusted to them. (v.15).

One scripture from John's gospel will suffice. The disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of their Lord's departure from them. How does He meet their soul's need? He says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Fathers house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you. I WILL COME AGAIN, AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF: that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14.1-3). The four gospels therefore unite in distinct testimony to the return of the Lord for His people, the proclamation of this event constitutes their hope during His absence. We pass now to the Acts and the epistles.

Turning first of all to the Acts, what do we find? After His resurrection, the Lord had appeared to His disciples, "being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (1.3). The time having come for His ascension, He led them out as far as Bethany (Luke 24.50) and when He had ended His instructions, "while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall SO COME in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1.9-11). Could any language be more precise? or, construed by the circumstances, be more significant? or we may add, less likely to be misunderstood? They had seen their Lord depart from them. He was taken up, and they watched His receding form until a cloud intercepted Him from their gaze; and while they behold in silent amazement, they receive the message that the One they had seen depart should return in like manner (and therefore) in Person as they had seen Him go into heaven. The wonder is, that with these distinct words the Church could ever have lost the hope of the Lord's return. The evidence of the epistles is no less clear and decided. For additional evidence, look up the following references :— 1 Corinthians. 1.7; Phil. 3.20; 1 Thessalonians. 1.9,10; 2.19; 3.13; 4.15-18; 2 Thessalonians. 1.7; 2.1; 3.5; Titus 2.13; Hebrews 9.28; James 5.7,8; 1 Peter

1.7,13; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 3.2; Revelation 3.11; 22.7,12,20.

Although these are only some of the scriptures which might be used as examples, it will at once be seen how extensively the subject is dealt with in the word of God; on examination it will be discovered that this is because it is bound up, interwoven, with the very essence of Christianity. Take away the hope of the Lord's return, and you at once rob Christianity of its true character. It cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is not a doctrine to be accepted or rejected at pleasure, but that it is part and parcel of the truth itself, connected with the calling and place of the believer, their relationship to Christ, and their future blessedness.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; and every believer is born again for the same reason. To be without this hope and expectation, therefore, is to be ignorant of the believers portion in Christ.

It follows from this that the normal attitude of every believer is that of waiting for Christ. No, more, everyone brought upon Christian ground has this characteristic, though they may be all unconscious of it; for the Word says that the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Their profession therefore — even though they had no oil — was that they were waiting for Christ. Is this then the attitude of the reader? Are YOU waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus? Is this the one blessed hope that cheers your soul along your pilgrim path? Are your eyes ever fixed upon the Bright and Morning Star? Or are you absorbed in present things that, like the five foolish virgins, you have grown heavy and fallen asleep? If, alas! it be so, let the words, "Behold, I come Quickly", "Behold the Bridegroom", rouse you from your slumbers, even while there is delay, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. Or perhaps you know the truth of His coming. BUT the question, beloved reader is, Are you WAITING FOR Christ? To know the doctrine is one thing; but it is quite another to be living hourly and daily in the hope of the Lord's return. If you are waiting, your affections are all concentrated on Him whom you expect; you are apart from everything which is not according to His mind and will; you are free from all that nature holds dear; And from a full heart you can respond to His announcement of His speedy coming, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22.20).

VITAL VERITIES (3)

by E. W. ROGERS

Our Lord and His Bible

After our Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, He opened the Scriptures to the understanding of His people revealing Himself to them in "the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets." This was, then, and still is, the recognised division of the Old Testament Scriptures which constituted our Lord's Bible. Obviously, in the days of His flesh, none of the New Testament was written.

The fact that the Lord Jesus taught, obeyed, read and explained the Scriptures is, in itself, a certificate of the highest authority of their validity and accuracy. He was eternal in His Being, and therefore was at the time when all the recorded events happened. He, in Manhood, was omniscient and, therefore, knew whether or not the records were accurate, distorted, exaggerated or fabricated. Since His endorsement of the Old Testament Scriptures is absolutely unequivocal they may, with good reason, unhesitatingly be accepted by all in their entirety.

The allegation that the Lord Jesus shared the ignorance common in His day is blasphemous, and cuts right across the Deity of our Lord.

HE SIMULTANEOUSLY WAS GOD AND MAN

His affirmations concerning the Old Testament Scriptures are, therefore, the competent assertion of their reality by One entitled to speak, and were in no way assertions made according to the alleged ignorance of His day.

The human parents of our Lord Jesus were, each of them, devout adherents of the Scriptures. Mary's Song in Luke 2 is a wonderful example of a Spirit-given extempore utterance made up of extracts from sundry parts of the Old Testament such as Genesis, Job, Samuel, The Psalms, Isaiah and Micah. This maiden's mind was stored with the Scriptures, the result of a diligence exerted before domestic duties made increasing demands on her time.

Joseph's cogitations by reason of the difficulties in which he found himself concerning the birth of Mary's child (*i.e.* whether to put her away or to make her a public example) were not the product of his own ideas, but the alternatives prescribed in the Holy Scriptures by which alone he desired to be guided. Would God that all Christian homes were marked by such Bible-reading, -memorising, -conversant and -obedient parents!

At the age of twelve our Lord was found in the Temple, with the doctors, hearing them and asking questions, such was His keenness for Bible knowledge. To His parents, who were disturbed because they had lost Him, He said, "Wist ye not that I must be in the things of My Father?" or paraphrased, "Are you surprised that I am reading, meditating in, and enquiring concerning the Scriptures which are My Father's things." Oh, that God would stir up the youth of our day to adopt a similar attitude despite the exacting claims on time which studies, duties and business make. "I must get at my Bible" — "I must hear my Father's voice" — "I must learn my Father's will" should be the attitude of all His children.

This is essential, for it is acquaintance with the Scriptures that furnishes a safeguard in the hour of temptation. This the Lord Jesus proved. Thrice to the devil He said "It is written." If the devil in his subtlety misquoted Scripture the Lord bound Himself by "It is written," knowing full well that no two scriptures contradict each other or justified opposing courses. He was the true David who took out of the brook of Scripture the five smooth stones of the Pentateuch (the Law) and slinging but one of them (Deuteronomy) stunned the devil (who "departed from Him for a season") only later to take his own sword (death) and by it to slay him.

To the Father's voice, in the Scriptures of truth, He opened "His ear morning by morning" (Isa. 50). In His heart, as the unbroken tables of stone in the ark, He hid God's word that "He should not sin against Him." "By the words of God's lips He kept Him from the paths of the destroyer." He was the "godly man" who "meditated in God's law day and night." Finally, when on the cross, having regard to the accomplishment of all the things that had afore been written concerning His sufferings, He cried, "It is

finished," and on the completion of the foreshadowed word concerning Himself He lay His head down to rest.

If the Scriptures played such an important part in the private life of the Lord Jesus, they no less figured in His public ministry.

In Nazareth, His native city, he read the word of God reverently (He stood up) and intelligently (He knew where to finish the reading for His immediate purpose) and enforced His comments thereon by citing Old Testament examples which, He made plain, were historical records and not mythical compositions. To the dead rich man in Hades it is said concerning his living brothers, "They have Moses and the Prophets — let them read them," for they are more powerful than the visible resurrection of a man from the dead. To the Pharisees He says, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." He certified the origin of the human race by saying that in the beginning "God created male and female." Thus He branded the evolution theory as a lie. He speaks of the flood, Lot's wife, Jonah and the fish, Daniel the prophet, Abel's sacrifice, Moses and the bush, etc., etc., as historical events, the inspired record of which was altogether trustworthy. It was He who said

"THE SCRIPTURES CANNOT BE BROKEN"

—it all hangs together, is a united whole, binding on its readers from which they cannot free themselves.

Of what use indeed is he, either to God or man, who assuming the place of a public preacher, has misgivings concerning the accuracy of the Scriptures? If one of its links is unsound then the whole chain is broken.

But not only did the Lord Jesus use the Scriptures for Himself personally, and to the outside world, He also expounded them to His own followers.

To His disciples He explained that He had not come "to destroy the law and the prophets," but contrariwise "to fulfill." The Sermon on the Mount must not be read as if it was a setting aside of the Old Testament and the bringing in of a new teaching: it is the amplification, the filling up of that which had been sketchily furnished before. After His resurrection, He expounded the true meaning of the Old Testament to His own. He was the centre of that book and the key to its proper understanding. In Him the

types had their fulfilment. Adam's coat, Abel's lamb, Noah's ark, the son on the altar, Joseph in the pit, the blood on the door post, the animal on the altar, David in the valley, etc., etc., all become plain when Christ is known: all is dark and without significance when Christ is unknown. By the presence of the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer the book becomes "opened" and its inner meaning is available for the soul's enjoyment.

That a further volume was to be added to the Old the Lord foreshadowed. "When the Spirit is come He will bring "all things to your remembrance" which He has now done in the gospels: "He will take of my things and show them to you" which is effected in the Epistles: and He will "show you things to come" which we have in the Revelation.

"THE PROPHECY OF JONAH"

by E. R. Bower.

No. 4 — CHAPTER 3

V.1. "And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time." Not everyone has a second opportunity. The 'second times' of the Scripture are worth a study. "God speaketh once, yea twice."

V.2,3. Obedience follows the chastisement of God. Nineveh was an exceedingly great city (great to God) of three days journey. Great in size: great in wickedness; great in potential.

V.4. "Yet forty days". The forty days of probation (cf. the flood (Gen. 7.17; 8.6); the Exodus (Num. 14.33); Elijah (1 Kin. 19.8); the Temptation (Matt. 4.2); Moses (Acts 7.30); and other examples of probation) were sufficient to bring a city to repentance.

Vv. 5-9. "So the people of Ninevah believed . . . who can tell if God will turn . . ." Thus to a 'divinely great city' came a reluctant messenger with the word of the Lord. A short compelling message setting out the impending fate of Ninevah. Taking the story as it stands recorded for us, there is no questioning as to the source of the message. The messenger and his message were recognised as coming from a God outside of their polytheism. From man's point of view Nineveh did not have a conscience about its evil ways or

its violence, but God, as always, sees the heart. Beneath its surface Nineveh was seemingly well aware that its way of life was contrary to Divine law. In the words of Rom. 1, "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them . . . so that they are without excuse." The king of Nineveh recognised that there must be no half measures in their repentance. There must be a "mighty cry." What a change would be seen in our present world if only the nations would clothe themselves with the sackcloth of a true repentance! "ALL have sinned"; ALL must repent.

"And God saw their works" (v.10). "Faith without works is dead" (Jam. 2.20). The message of the Baptist was repentance, and John was followed by our Lord. The "greater than Jonah" was there present with that generation who were, despite outward appearance, "evil and adulterous." Cleansed once, yet in a worse state than the first. And the word fell upon deaf ears (Luke 12). The light they had was darkness to them. (Luke 11.32-36). Truly the men of Nineveh would rise in the judgement . . . because they repented.

V.10. "And God saw their works . . . and God repented . . .". Such is the longsuffering of God. When man turns, God turns.

(to be continued).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The seed is God's Word, the sowing time is now, and the result is sure.

When a man's temper gets the best of him, it reveals the worst of him.

Like steel . . . when a man loses his temper he becomes worthless.

Where God's finger points, God's hand will make the Way. Behind our darkest clouds the sun of God's grace is always shining.

An obstacle cannot stop you if you keep your eyes on the goal.

No matter how much applause sin may draw—it's still sin.

—Anthony Orsini, U.S.A.

The Millennium — (1)

by J. E. TODD

THE COVENANT

The word 'millennium' is not a scriptural term, although it does describe a scriptural doctrine. The term is made up from two Latin words, *mille* meaning a thousand and *annus* meaning a year, therefore millennium means a thousand years.

The doctrine thus described is that at His second advent the Lord Jesus Christ will be accepted by Israel as their Messiah and He will reign over the whole world from Jerusalem for a thousand years. This thousand years of the Lord's reign is spoken of in the Revelation 20.1-6. Here we are told that the thousand year period begins with the resurrection of the righteous and concludes with the resurrection of the rest of mankind for judgement (20.7-15).

It is said that the millennium is mentioned only in one place in scripture, that is here in Revelation 20 (six times). Certainly this is the only statement as to its length, but we intend to show that the millennium is one of the great themes of scripture.

There is recorded in the book of Genesis the covenant which God made with Abraham (Gen. 12.1-7). Indeed the repeated references to this covenant, with its reaffirmations to Isaac and Jacob, make it the main theme of the book of Genesis, being referred to at length no less than fifteen times. (12.1-7; 13.14-18; 15.1-21; 17.1-27; 18.1-19; 22.15-19; 24.7; 26.1-5; 28.1-4; 28.10-22; 32.12; 35.9-15; 46.1-4; 48.1-4 and 50.24).

This agreement (covenant) was that as Abraham believed and obeyed God by leaving his country then God would make of his descendants a great nation (12.2), which was to become the nation of Israel; and through that nation to bring a blessing to all mankind (12.3), which was to be the gospel (Gal. 3.8); and that nation would possess the land of Canaan (12.7). Abraham fulfilled his part of the covenant by obeying God (12.4) and believing God (15.6).

It is to be noted that this is called an everlasting covenant (17.7,13,19). It cannot be broken or abolished. Abraham has ful-

filled his part by his obedience (26.5) and now has died, therefore God must keep his part. This means that the nation of Abraham's descendants cannot be wiped out, though many have been the attempts to do so. Also that the land of Canaan will be their's to the end of history (17.8; 48.4).

It is also to be noted that the nation would produce kings (17.6; 35.11), to be from the tribe of Judah (49.10). This part of the covenant was explained when David, the king of God's choice, was established over Israel. This expansion of the Abrahamic covenant is recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. 'And thine house and thine kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever' (2 Sam. 7.16). This declares that not only would the kingdom continue for ever, but also that a king of David's line would reign over that kingdom for ever. This is confirmed by the prophet Jeremiah, 'Thus saith the LORD; if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them' (Jer. 33.25,26, see also verses 19-24).

Hence the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the birth of this king, 'For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this' (Isa. 9.6,7). Hence the announcement of the angels before his birth, 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of David for ever: and of His kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1.32,33).

Thus the sum total of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David is that the descendants of Jacob (Israel) would dwell in the land of Canaan, reigned over by a king of David's house, while ever the earth exists.

Deliverance

(A few thoughts on Romans Chs. 7 & 8)

by Charles Stanley

The *doctrine* of the believer's being dead to the law, and his being married to another who has been raised up from among the dead, as the alone source of fruit-bearing, is set forth in the first six verses of chapter 7; afterwards, we have a case supposed of the *experience* of a quickened soul under law struggling for deliverance. This deliverance is stated by one who has been delivered. *Practice* follows deliverance.

The person supposed to be here speaking has *life*, for,

1. He knows that "the law is spiritual"—that is, not merely applicable to outward conduct, but to the inward feelings and desires; and that he is fleshly, sold under sin—the slave of sin.

2. He declares that the law is good, and resolves to be good, and to do good, but cannot.

3. He delights in the law after the inward man, and says the commandment is holy, just and good. It is because his *understanding* is changed he consents to the law that it is good; because his *will* is changed, to will is present with him for good; and because he has a *heart* now according to God, he delights in the law of God according to the inward man. This reveals his *state*, and that he is born of God; but the context shews also that he is occupied neither with Christ nor with the Holy Ghost, but with self.

But though he has *life*, he is really under law, and, through his struggling with the law, learns,

1. That in him (his flesh) *no good* dwells. (V.18).

2. That *sin dwells in him*. (V.20).

3. That he has *no power* to perform that which is good, so that he is brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. He finds that he is powerless to overcome indwelling evil by *efforts* of law-keeping. Three profitable lessons, but often learnt through deep distress and humiliation of spirit. And having found out by experience, though painfully, that *sin dwells in him*, that his whole Adam nature is sinful, with *no good* in it, and that he has *no power* over it, he is truly "wretched," and cries out for a deliverer to bring him out of it: "Who shall deliver me?" Then he finds God has already done this for him, through Jesus Christ our

Lord; and, believing this, he thanks God. He now has soul-deliverance, and waits for the deliverance of his body, for God's purpose is that we shall "be conformed to the image of his Son." He may have received forgiveness of sins before, but now he finds he is delivered from sin and the law by the death of Christ, and from that time he has *a new experience*. No doubt, among many other profitable lessons, such learn that *experience* never gives peace with God, but that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ always does.

In Romans 3-7. God is the *Justifier* of the ungodly, the *Reconciler* of His enemy—man, and the *Deliverer* from sin. The law, instead of justifying, condemns; instead of reconciling, gives the knowledge of sin; and instead of delivering, brings him in guilty, and under the curse. Yet the law is "holy," because, instead of excusing sin, it exposes sin; the law is "just," because it judges even the motions of sin, as well as sins committed; and the law is "good," if a man use it lawfully. Our sins are forgiven on the ground of Christ having died for us, but we are delivered from that evil principle in us (sin) by death, for Christ having "died *unto* sin once," we have died with Him, and are now alive *unto* God in Him who is alive again, and that for evermore.

As to his *experience* now—

1. *His eye is off self and the law*, he looks to God in Christ, and becomes occupied with all that divine grace has accomplished for him in that work. Before he knew deliverance, it was self-occupation, "I" and "me"—but now he is before God, thanking Him for what He has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. This produces an amazing change in the *state* of soul.

2. *He has God's thoughts, instead of his own about himself*. He now knows that he has two natures of very opposite qualities—"that which is born of the flesh," and "that which is born of the Spirit:" the former he sees as having been judged by God on the cross; the latter he knows is a new creation in Christ, in which God always views him. He is aware that both these natures are unchanging in their moral qualities, for "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh," and "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Both these natures are in the believer; the one acts out what is "only evil," the other what is for the glory of God. In looking at himself now, he takes sides with God, and, recognising these two natures, he concludes, "So then with the mind (or new nature) I myself

serve the law of God," but "with the flesh (or old nature) the law of sin." (V.25).

3. *He has done with himself* as to having any standing in the flesh before God, and as to confidence in it; for God has given him a new state, and put him on entirely different ground before Him. Not only is he forgiven, but God has delivered him from his old fleshly state, and given him a new place before Him. He is no longer in Adam, but in Christ Jesus: not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwells in him. This is a real deliverance, and, *believing* God's testimony concerning it, we have, by the Spirit, the comfort and power of it; for "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus." (8.1). What a wide contrast now as to state and standing, and what comfort and rest the soul has that simply receives God's testimony!

4. *He has power over sin*. If he thinks of sin in the flesh, he remembers that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin *condemned sin in the flesh*. It is gone thus for ever to faith, under the judgment of God. If he considers that in his flesh no good dwells, he knows that his standing before God now is *not in the flesh*, but in Christ Jesus. And now, instead of being helpless as to sin and its captivity, he finds he has power to walk in the light, as God is in the light, to resist the devil, and to overcome the world. He knows that by the gift of the Holy Ghost he is connected with a triumphant Christ. He is conscious of being set free, and that SIN is no longer his master; and, looking up, he can say, that "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death." (V.2). Thus, having a new nature, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the two great requirements of the law are fulfilled *in him*—love to God, and love to man; though he is not under law, and he walks "not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8.1-4).

In the scriptures we have thus far looked at, it may be well to observe, that there are four laws brought before us:

1. "*The law of God*," the demands of which even a quickened soul finds himself powerless to answer. (7.22).

2. "*The law of my mind*," the resolution of a quickened soul to obey God. (V.23).

3. "*The law of sin and death*," the principle of enmity and antagonism of the natural man to God, of insubjection to His will;

as another has said, "that deadly principle which ruled in us before as alive in the flesh."

4. "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*"—the principle and power of that new life given us in Christ by the Holy Ghost, who now dwells in us.

The soul thus brought into liberty, or set free by divine grace, is delivered in three ways:

1. *By death.* Our old man is crucified with Christ, for God condemned "sin in the flesh" in the death of His own spotless and well-beloved Son. We have thus "died unto sin," "have died with Christ," and are clear from the law, having *died* to that in which we were held; and can a dead man have lusts or sin?

2. As "*not under law, but under grace,*" sin shall not have dominion over us. We are now "in Christ Jesus," brought into the full and abiding favour of God. Faith knows no other position. And will this lead us to sin? Shall we not rather have our fruit unto holiness? (Rom. 6).

3. *By the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,* bringing us into a new order of things—new life, new position and state. Will, then, this new life and power in the Holy Ghost lead us to sin; or shall we thus be strengthened to resist the devil, and to abstain from all evil?

We are set free, then,

1. As to *conscience*, by the death of Christ, in whom God condemned "sin in the flesh."

2. As to *state and position*, as not in the flesh, but in Christ; and the Spirit dwelling in us, and not under law, but under grace.

3. As to *experience*, sin no longer has dominion over us, but having love in our hearts to God and man, and power by the Spirit to overcome, we find the mind of the Spirit to be life and peace.

4. As to *practice*, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What a deliverance! What praise and worship it calls forth! What never-ending cause of thanksgiving to God! Surely we may say to the disconsolate believer—

"Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more."

The comfort of this deliverance we have "in believing." Our *power* for the enjoyment of it, and for life and godliness, is the Holy Ghost, and we are told that if we are led of the Spirit, we are not under law; and if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the

lusts of the flesh. Before deliverance it was all "I," "me," and "my," but after deliverance, CHRIST becomes the object of faith, and the Holy Ghost the power for holiness. We can therefore do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

As to the Spirit, we may observe that—

1. He gives us "life in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8.2).
2. He dwells in us as a divine Person—the Spirit that raised up Jesus from among the dead, and shall "quicken your mortal bodies." The Holy Ghost Himself dwells in our bodies. (V.11).
3. He is our power to "mortify the deeds of the body." Observe, it does not say "the body," but, "the deeds of the body." (V.13).
4. He is "the Spirit of adoption," to make us know we are God's children. He forms affections and thoughts in us suited to such a relationship, leads us, and "whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (V.15).
5. He is the "first-fruits of the Spirit," because, by-and-by, the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. (V.23).
6. He is the Helper of our infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession for us. (V.26).
7. He teaches us to wait for the redemption of our body. (V.23).

Thus we have brought before us something of *the power* that works in a delivered soul. Ought we not, then, to "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"?

In the old-creation line of things, we have sin, flesh, death, sufferings, groanings, and infirmities, often struggling under law; but in the new creation we have deliverance from sin, life in the Spirit, thanksgiving, peace; we are in Christ, and the Spirit in us—all things working together for our good—are more than conquerors through every trouble, "are not under law, but under grace," having no condemnation, and knowing no separation.

But be it remembered, that, though so blessedly delivered, and walking in the Spirit, we can never forget that *the flesh is in us*; but the flesh is not *us*, for *we* are in Christ, and are not in the flesh before God. Yet we never lose the sense that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; we know what the conflict between the two natures is, and find our communion with the Father interrupted the moment we trust the flesh, and walk in it. Besides this, the delivered soul groans—

1. *As having a mortal body*: for "we that are in this tabernacle do

groan." "In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"—our glorified body. He knows that he has a "mortal body," liable to disease and pain. (2 Cor. 5; Rom. 8.11).

2. *Groanings within.* "Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, *even we ourselves groan within ourselves*, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body." (Rom. 8.23). This is more than suffering in our bodies; for, having the Spirit, the affections and thoughts are according to Christ, the suffering and rejected One, who is coming, not only for the redemption of our body, but to bring even this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

3. *Unutterable groanings in prayer*, for "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

How many groans the Lord Jesus will hush when He comes again! How blessed is the thought that when *Christ, who is our life*, shall be manifested, we also shall be manifested with Him in glory! (Col. 3.4). Meanwhile may our hearts by taken up with Him, stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

"THERE AM I IN THE MIDST"

Matthew 18.20

A little company of Russian peasants had met for worship, and while their gathering was proceeding suddenly the door was flung open and there entered an agent of the secret police with a body of men. "Take these people's names" he commanded. The names were written down. One old man stopped him and said, "There is one name you have not got." The officer said in surprise "I assure you, you are mistaken. I have them all." The peasant insisted that one name was missing from his list. "Well, we'll prove it. We'll count again.—Thirty!—you see," said the officer, "I have them all, every one!"

But still the peasant persisted "There is one name you haven't got." "Who is it then?" asked the officer.

"The Lord Jesus Christ," was the answer. "He is here."

"Ah!" answered the officer, "That is a different matter."

—*Selected.*

LEVI — 'AN HOLY PRIESTHOOD

by H. Shackcloth

Part I

The third son of Jacob, Levi headed a family in Israel which had the distinction among the tribes of being called of God to the priesthood, with its many responsibilities, especially those relating to the Tabernacle and later the Temple. (Gen. 29.34).

They were said to be 'separated unto Him' and as a result, unlike the other tribes, were given no territorial possession in Canaan, and were exempt from all Civic and Military duties; in spite of this, there was not much that occurred in Old Testament times which was not influenced in some way by this Theocratic order. Judah, the next son, also stood in a unique relationship to God, but for a different reason. (See footnote).

As a direct result of the 'fall' through Adam's disobedience it became necessary for God to institute some means of reconciliation between man and Himself if the communion enjoyed in Eden were to be re-established. The first tentative steps towards this end are to be seen in the early sacrifices in the book of Genesis. No sooner had man severed his relationship with God, than God responded by requiring substitutionary sin offerings by way of atonement; the only other sacrifices which are mentioned at that time were the burnt offerings which, unlike the sin offerings, represented a voluntary response to God on the grounds of His deliverance and reconciliation. In this way God's demands in the sin offerings and man's response in the burnt offerings established a pattern as seen later in all the Levitical offerings. The 'sweet savour' of the burnt offerings remind us that this was to be the way God would express His satisfaction. (Gen. 8.21). We may be sure these early worshippers understood by God's statement, that the woman's seed who was to bruise the serpent's head, would be His only begotten Son. (Gen. 22.8).

It is clear from the records of God's dealings with man that He devised His own means to instruct him. The Divine titles for example were revealed one at a time as some new experience of God was made known. God's plan of redemption with all that it entailed

was taught first to Moses and then to the people by the unique 'pattern' of heavenly things revealed to His servant.

This we have come to know as the Levitical priesthood outlined in Exodus and the book which bears Levi's name, i.e. Leviticus.

The leading themes from these books are as follows :

1. Man was provided with the means by which his moral character might be made to conform to his Creator's, who says, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy'. Leviticus 20.17.

2. Communion with God was to be restored typically by means of the tabernacle and the priesthood. The tent was to occupy the central position in the Camp, and the mercy seat above the ark of the covenant was said by God to be man's meeting place with Himself in the words, 'There I will meet with thee and commune with thee'. Exodus 25.22.

3. A comprehensive system of sacrificial offerings was ordered with the essential directive 'It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul'. Leviticus 17.11.

4. Representation between God and man was made possible through the priesthood, which represented man to God and God to man.

'He spake by the prophets'. Hebrews 1.1.

5. A calendar of feasts commencing each year with the Passover, and ending with the Feast of Tabernacles illustrated God's plans for Israel and the church during the entire period of their existence from the original Passover to the future 'day of God'. Included among the Feasts was the Day of Atonement on which day Israel could be reassured of God's 'forbearance' during the coming year, as the people anxiously awaited the re-appearance of the High Priest from the Holiest on that day. Leviticus 23.25,26; Hebrews 9.25-28.

The Levites special place in the nation of Israel is given in Numbers 1.47-53 where it will be seen that apart from some features of the tribe, already mentioned, they played a preserving role on behalf of the other tribes, 'that there be no wrath upon the congregation' V.53. This can only underline the importance to all humanity of those who know the secret of communion with God, as our Lord said of His disciples, 'Ye are the salt of the earth'. Matthew 5.13.

In the same way the Consecration of the Levites at the time of their initiation to the Priesthood (Numbers 8) has valuable spiritual

lessons. Their cleansing by the water of purifying would suggest a life which is blameless in the sight of men. The special meal and sin ('wave' margin) offerings have a deeper significance, 'the action of waving before the Lord, that which was presented to Him, seems to denote the passing to and fro before His eyes, so that He may scrutinize every part' —Soltau.

A further privilege which the Levites enjoyed was to be counted as Jehovah's first-born sons, instead of every first born in Israel as at the time of the first Passover in Egypt. Vv. 17,18.

The entire Levitical system is seen to call for man's obedience; the Sabbath breaker must be stoned to death; 'strange fire' introduced at the time of the offerings spelt instant retribution; secret sin in the camp of Israel brought judgement upon all. This plan would seem to have seriously misfired had not God revealed that 'the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God. Hebrews 7.19. The Levitical order was nothing more than a pattern ('type' 1 Corinthians 10.11 margin) of heavenly things for the teaching of the Church. Its useful purpose was to reveal to man that which God in His inscrutable wisdom knew from the beginning, that man was irrevocably lost, and utterly powerless to effect his own redemption. Once the Shekinah glory departed from the Temple in Ezekiel's day, no corrective ministry of the prophets proved able to bring about recovery; 'Lo Ammi' became the expression of God's fateful sentence (Hosea 1.9). Christ, the Messiah, was their only hope, and as Peter said, they 'killed the Prince of Life whom God hath raised from the dead' (Acts 3.15). In this manner they sealed their fate.

A fundamental truth which is becoming obscured today in some quarters, is that God is never seen to be operating through Israel and the Church at one and the same time, and it is now to this teaching from the New Testament we must turn to see how the Law must be regarded today.

Footnote—Those of our readers who may be interested in Bible Chronology may like to reflect that whilst all the other tribes can be traced through Jacob as far as the sojourn in Egypt, Levi and Judah can be traced through the Captivity (see Exodus 6.16-27) for the Levites, and Ruth 4.18 for Judah). The ten tribes are taken up again when the heads of the tribes were appointed (Numbers 1.5-16) the intervening generations not being recorded. That the Levitical priesthood and the Kingly and Messianic lives were singled out in this way from the beginning is a remarkable example of the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures.

THE TABERNACLE

Thoughts from John's Gospel

by T. Cornforth Taws (Leicester)

The primary purpose of God in ordaining the Tabernacle was, 'Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them' Ex. 25.8 and the instructions were given to Moses that it be made 'according to the pattern I shewed thee in the mount'.

When we turn to John's Gospel we find a profound statement regarding the incarnation of the Son of God, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us' John 1.14, revealing once again God's desire to abide in the midst of His people for we read 'when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son' Gal. 4.4 even our Lord Jesus Christ, who was 'God manifest in the flesh' 1 Tim. 3.16 and He was called 'Emmanuel, God with us'. Matt. 1.23.

It is interesting to observe that in this same Gospel the Lord Jesus is revealed as fulfilling the various 'types' as set forth in the 'Tabernacle in the Wilderness'.

Note : Single items in the Tabernacle e.g. the Lampstand, usually refer to the Saviour; while multiples suggest the saints, e.g. the posts of the Court or the boards of the Tabernacle.

THE GATE OF THE COURT — compare John 14.6

This was the only entrance or way of approach into the precinct of the court and so opened the way into the Tabernacle proper i.e. into the presence of Jehovah, the Triune God who dwelt between the cherubim above the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies.

Equally true today, there is only 'one way' whereby we can draw nigh unto God and that by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the type is fulfilled in John 14.6 where He said 'I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me'. He alone is 'the new and living way' Heb. 10.20 giving access 'into the Holiest of all' Heb. 9.8.

'*THE GATE*' was made of fine twined linen, reminding us of the purity and righteousness of our Saviour, while the colours of

the needlework suggest the beauties of His Person and character; the blue suggests His divinity as Son of God; His humanity as the Son of Man is revealed as scarlet. When these two colours are blended together we have purple, speaking in type of our Saviour the 'one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'. 1 Tim. 2.5.

THE LAVER— compare John 13.5

As we approach this interesting object, placed between the Brazen Altar and the Tabernacle, we notice very few details are recorded, only it was made of 'looking-glasses' (for self examination) and contained water for cleansing (from daily defilement).

When our Saviour washed the disciples' feet He emphasized that having been 'cleansed' (i.e. the altar) then to be 'bathed' (Newberry margin) was now necessary to be 'clean every whit' (John 13.10), in preparation for the Lord's service. We also, like the priests, must learn that God still requires His servants to be sanctified and cleansed 'with the washing of water by the word' Eph. 5.26 having clean hands to do His work and clean feet to walk in His ways. The prayer of the Lord for His own was 'sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth'. John 17.17.

As we now leave the court and by faith seek to enter the 'Holy Place' we notice that the 'Door of the Tabernacle' is of the same materials as the 'Gate of the Court', also the area is the same, only the shape is different (10 by 10 cubits compared with 20 by 5 cubits), suggesting that in our worship our approach to God is more limited, but with a 'higher' appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He accomplished at Calvary and now exalted to 'the right hand of the throne of God'. Heb. 12.2.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK (Lampstand)— compare John 9.5

This beautiful article (made of pure gold) sheds its light throughout the Holy Place, illuminating its glory and splendour and giving light to the priests who served. The pure gold reminds us of His majesty and glory while the lamps speak of our Saviour's witness and testimony as He said, 'I am the light of the world' and now by His grace His light 'hath shined in our hearts' 2 Cor. 4.6 helping and guiding us in our praise and worship to

'Behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple'. *Psa.* 27.

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD— compare *John* 6.35

Here, in type, the bread reminds us of the Son of God who declared 'I am the bread of life', while the table suggests the fellowship we enjoy with our Saviour day by day. cf. *Psa.* 23.5.

The bread, made of fine flour, presents the purity and holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ, while the absence of leaven reminds us of the impeccable character of His Person for 'in Him is no sin'. *1 John* 3.5.

The twelve loaves, representing the tribes of Israel, provided food for the priests, so we who are called 'a kingdom of priests' should feed on Christ 'the Living Bread' *John* 6.51 for 'none but Christ can satisfy'. "We taste Thee, O Thou living bread, and long to feast upon Thee still".

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE (Golden Altar)— compare *John* 17

The contrast between the Brazen Altar and the Golden Altar is very interesting; the former was a place of death and suffering reminding us of the humiliation of our Lord, while the other, covered with gold and complete with a crown, suggests Christ's exaltation and intercession. It was a symbol of prayer and mediation, the incense ascending to God speaking of our Saviour, who as our Great High Priest 'ever liveth to make intercession', *Heb.* 7.25 even as He did 'in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications', *Heb.* 5.7 on behalf of His own as recorded in *John* 17.

Believing that the Son of God has entered 'into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us' *Heb.* 9.24 we are able to 'draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith' *Heb.* 10.22 knowing that with boldness we are able to 'offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually' *Heb.* 13.15.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT— compare *John* 1.1

Within the veil, the Ark of the Covenant was a reminder of God's presence, accessible only by the High Priest once a year on the day of atonement, and not without the blood of a sacrifice, because 'the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest'. *Heb.* 9.8.

By faith, we now are able 'to enter 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'. Heb. 10.19,20.

"Within the holiest of all, cleansed by His precious blood,
Before Thy throne Thy children fall, and worship Thee, our God."

The Ark reflects the deity and humanity of the Son of God. Being overlaid with pure gold it reminds us that 'The Word was with God and The Word was God' John 1.1, while the wood suggests His humanity, 'The Word was made flesh'. v.14.

The Mercy Seat was the place where God was willing to meet His people Ex. 25.22, revealing His holiness and divine righteousness, which was satisfied only by the sprinkled blood of the sacrifice (sin offering), typifying the blood of Christ 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness'. Rom. 3.25.

As our Great High Priest our Saviour is able 'to make reconciliation (propitiation R.V.) for the sins of the people' Heb. 2.17, reminding us as the Scripture declare 'HE is the propitiation for our sins'. 1 John 2.2 and 4.10.

In the Tabernacle the priestly work was never finished, but maybe the *Mercy Seat* would suggest the 'finished work' of our Lord Jesus Christ, because as our Great High Priest it is written 'But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God'. Heb. 10.12.

"There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads;
A place than all besides more sweet—
It is the blood-stained Mercy Seat."

EPIGRAM

In worldly ambition men constantly say
That where there's a will there is always a way;
O Lord, be our maxim more excellent still—
"There is surely Thy way where there is not a will."
E. L. Bevir.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

_____ *by J. Milne, Venezuela*

I being in the Way, the Lord led me. Genesis 24—27.

I, with four brothers, and five sisters were blessed with God fearing parents. They were brought under the influence of the Gospel preached in Belfast around 1920 by Mr. H. P. Nicholson. In those days many were led to Christ and gloriously saved.

From my birth on May 2nd, 1916, the word of God was often read in our home and with my brothers and sisters I attended the Sunday School in the Presbyterian, and Church of Ireland, and thought to gain a place in heaven by good works. I well recall family gatherings after attending church services when we sang hymns, that were used of God to impress us with the fact that we had God to meet. One was, "A few more years shall roll, a few more suns shall set, and we shall be with those who rest asleep within the tomb". Then "O my Lord prepare my soul for that great day, and wash me in thy precious blood and take my sins away". Another was "Rock of Ages cleft for me", the last verse struck terror to my soul, "When I soar through realms unknown, see Thee on thy judgement throne", caused me to fear meeting God.

In the year 1930 having lived for about eight years in Cloverhill, Co. Cavan, where my father was employed by the G.N.R. Railway Company, we went to live in Tates Avenue, Belfast. On a nice bright evening, a number of christians from the Kilburn Street Mission Hall held an open air meeting. The brethren preached the gospel, and the sisters went from door to door with Gospel Tracts, and invitations. A sister called Rebekah Clarke, invited us to the gospel meetings, and when my father heard it was in connection with the Presbyterian Church, he willingly excepted it. We heard the gospel faithfully preached, and I got to know for the first time John 14.6. Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me". This word was like cold waters to a thirsty soul, and as I attended the meetings I learned my need of Christ and desired to be saved. One night I indicated by raising my hand that I desired to be saved. One of the brethren spoke to

me and pointed out that the “Whosoever”, meant me. He did not press me into a profession, but that night I professed to be saved. Soon I found out that I was not saved, as I had not the joy and peace that comes through believing. I desired more than ever to be saved, and made up my mind I would not raise my hand again to be spoken to. The night came when I was in deep soul trouble, as I feared to die in my sins and go down to hell. The enemy suggested that I put it off, also that I was thinking too seriously about the matter, when I felt that I was dying I could call upon God to save me. I had a great struggle as I sat on the seat, but in that dark hour the Holy Spirit brought before me 1 Peter 2.24. “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree”. I thought how good of Christ to bear our sins, but I desired to know if He bore my sins? I then saw for the first time He died for me, and understood He was my substitute, and became answerable to God for my sin. Joy filled my soul, and soon other members of our family trusted Christ and became active members in the work. The christians encouraged us to read the word of God, so I carried my New Testament and read it in the Tramcar, and if I arrived ten minutes before starting work I read and reread it. I learned to witness for the Lord in a personal way, but was two years saved before I took part in public prayer or preaching.

I was saved at the age of fourteen on a Lord’s Day in Kilburn Street Mission Hall, in 1930, but I do not recall the month, as it was all new to me. Three years later when busy in Sunday School work and other activities for God, a christian who became my brother-in-law, N. McKee by name, asked me if I knew that as believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I should be baptized. I said no, but if it was a command of God I was prepared to obey it. He gave me a number of verses to read, such as Matt. 28.19; Mark 16.15,16; Acts 2.41,42; Rom. 6 and others. I saw clearly it was commanded by the Lord Jesus, and practiced by the christians of the New Testament. He encouraged my sister and I, to go and see how the Lord’s people gathered to remember the Lord in Lower Windsor Assembly. We did, and will not soon forget the kindly manner by which we were received, and shown to the back seat where we observed with interest the godly order. After one month we expressed a desire to be baptized and to meet with the saints. A number of the elders heard our simple story of conversion, and

arranged to baptize us on August 4th. We gathered to remember the Lord Jesus Christ the following Lord's Day, and have been in happy fellowship in the same Assembly since that time.

It was like a second conversion as the Bible became a new book to me. I read with interest to see if it were true that the brethren had chapter and verse to support all they preached and practiced. The more I read, the more I was convinced there was scripture to support nothing else but an Assembly gathered to the precious Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, with saints, overseers and deacons. Phil. 1.1. It was a pleasure to attend the meetings and hear our beloved brethren Dr. W. Matthews, and Mr. Samuel Beattie with others open up the Holy Scriptures.

In those days quite a number of christians by reading the Word of God, learned the truth, and gathered alone to the worthy Name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, outside the camp. Heb. 13.13. One, was a younger brother named Stanley Wishert, who left the Baptist after much exercise in prayer before God. He and I became close friends, and would meet together in the fields, (that later became Belvoir Park) behind his home in Miltown Village, to read the word of God and to pray for help and guidance. Stanley knew more than me, and helped me much in the reading of Nehemiah. We preached the gospel in the open air, and in many of the Assemblies in and around Belfast, when we travelled on our bicycles against storm, wind and rain.

The need of foreign lands was laid upon our hearts, very especially Stanley, became burdened about Africa, and Venezuela was laid upon my heart. I recall hearing Mr. B. Duglas, and Mr. W. Wills speak of the work in Venezuela, at the Easter Conference Belfast, in 1936, also Mr. S. Saword and the late W. Williams about 1939.

Venezuela was before me day and night, and I felt that God was speaking to me in my daily reading, also by other brethren. Mr. Tom Madill an honoured elder read in the prayer meeting, Ruth 2.9. "Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap," and spoke of the many needy fields in the world. Mr. J. Hutchinson ministered in Lower Windsor on Ps. 78.18-20 "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" He said, there may be someone in the meeting, and if you put your hand in the hand of God He will lead you to a distant

land to serve Him". I thought it remarkable as I did not know Mr. Hutchinson, and I don't think he knew me.

The second world War commenced, and I thought I had lost my opportunity to go to Venezuela. I got married to Miss Georgina Donald, and together we learned quite a number of lessons that are needful, by those who would go forth to serve the Lord. One was a knowledge of Gods will for our lives, to know Him as a faithful God who answers prayer, and not to lean on the arm of flesh, with many others. I became concerned about my link with the Trade Union, and the unequal yoke, 2 Cor. 6.14. We prayed much about it, and spoke to some brethren about it, who thought it to be a necessary evil in life. After much prayer and having counted the cost as we had a little family, I sent in my resignation to the Union, and soon the shop steward, and convener came to see me. I was at this time employed on the Tool bench, in Short and Harland's Factory. They did a lot to convert me from the error of my way, as they thought, but failed. The result was the next day I lost my employment. I was more than ever cast upon God, Who did not let me down. He provided me with a better job the day following, with a higher salary and better conditions, and free from the unequal yoke and thus manifested His faithful care.

Venezuela was before me continually, and Jer. 1.7. "But the Lord said unto me — Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak". I thought, is it possible that the Lord will yet open the way for us to go to Venezuela? Mr. E. Fairfield to whom I had written concerning our exercise, returned to N. Ireland. He told us he had shown my letter to his fellow labourers in Venezuela, who said that we should be encouraged in our exercise. Sometime later he invited me to join him in gospel meetings in London Road, in Cregagh district Belfast, they continued for around eleven weeks. God gave the increase, and fruit remains to this day to the glory of Christ, after forty-four years.

Toward the close of 1946 doors were opening in different lands for those with an exercise to serve the Lord. I felt that I must get alone with God, and His word and know His will concerning our path. I asked Him to make it clear, so commenced reading Deut. Ch. 1 not knowing it's contents. The people suggested to Moses that men be sent to search out the land, and Moses said, "the

saying pleased me well: so I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe. "Ten returned with an evil report, and discouraged their brethren and 2 with fruit, and a good report. Moses said, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them," and spoke of the Lord their God, what He did for them in Egypt, and in the Wilderness, "until ye came into this place, YET IN THIS THING YE DID NOT BELIEVE THE LORD YOUR GOD." I almost trembled when I saw in what they had failed, and that I was in danger of failing there to. I told the Lord tremblingly, I was willing to go to Venezuela if He opened the way. As I continued on my knees, three men were brought before me who had secret dealings with God concerning His will and way. Jacob in Gen. 31.3. when he knew God's will called for Rachel and Leah, and told them what God said to him. Their reply was, "whatsoever God hath said unto thee do." It is very important to have our partners with us in such a step. I knew that I had the whole hearted fellowship of my dear wife. Moses was the second, who in the mountain of God, learned many things and the will of God for his life. Ex. 3.1,16; 4.29-31. He went and told the elders, and the people. We did the same, and one brother told us that they had been waiting for years for such news. They gave us the right hand of fellowship as did the whole Assembly, also four neighbouring Assemblies. Donegall Road, Kingsbridge, Finaghy, Apsley St. The third man was Nehemiah, who was the king's cupbearer in Babylon. He had prayed day and night for months, but the day had come when he would make his request. Nem. 1.6,11; 2.4,8. The king granted him his request according to the good hand of God upon him. In those dark years of war and for some time after, no one could travel very far without permission from the authorities.

It was suggested by one brother, the night that it was made known to the brethren our exercise, that a circular letter be sent to the Assemblies to inform them of our going forth to serve the Lord in Venezuela. I asked them not to do it, but to let God work, if it was His will for us to go to Venezuela He would supply the need. We praise God that he did, as we left Belfast, on February 11th with our little family of two, and arrived in Venezuela on May 7th, 1947. We have been tested again and again in different ways, but our God has proved to be a Faithful covenant-keeping God. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes. Ps. 118.9.

Please Note . . .

Dr. Nate Taylor has informed us that C. H. Mackintosh's writings on the Lord's Coming are available on cassette tapes. There is no charge for these tapes but fellowship to cover the cost of tape and mailing would be appreciated. These are professionally produced and are available from:

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THE SAVIOUR'S NAME

Tune — St. Cecilia or Quam Dilecta. 6.6.6.6.

How great the Saviour's Name!
He is the God of might;
He made the sun and moon,
And all the stars of light.

How good the Saviour's Name!
His love's an ocean wide.
It was in love He came;
It was in love He died.

How sweet the Saviour's Name!
How True in every look,
In every sigh and tear,
In every step He took.

Unique the Saviour's Name!
He is exceeding fair;
The Holy, Just and Pure,
He is without compare.

Distinct the Saviour's Name!
He is from all apart;
The Man of tender touch
Is He with perfect heart.

Supreme the Saviour's Name!
He's seated now above.
We would His worth proclaim
And His undying love.

— *Harold Butcher.*

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

Part II — *A PRESENT OR A DEFERRED HOPE?*

Will believers of this dispensation, i.e. the Church — remain upon the earth until the appearing of Christ? A close examination of Scripture shows that there are two distinct events defined: i) the coming of the Lord Jesus FOR His saints, and ii) the coming of Christ WITH His saints. In 1 Thess. 3.13, as well as in many other passages, we find the latter; and in 1 Thess. 4.15—17 the former; and Paul teaches us most distinctly in Colossians that the coming of Christ WITH His saints will take place at His appearing. He says, "When Christ who is our life, shall appear THEN SHALL YE ALSO APPEAR WITH HIM IN GLORY. (Col. 3.4). If this be so, the saints must have been caught up to be with Christ before His return to the earth in public manifestation.

Is there anything between the saint, as far as Scripture teaches, and the return of the Lord? All the Scriptures in which HE speaks of His coming it cannot be doubted for a moment that He intended His auditors to infer the possibility of His coming back at any, even the most unexpected moment. (See Mark 13.34—37; Luke 12.35—37; John 21.20,21, etc.). Paul uses similar language. In writing to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of the bodies of believers, he is careful — led by the Spirit of God — to say "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. 15.51): and in the epistle to the Thessalonians he says "We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. 4.15). It is clear, therefore, by the use of the word 'we' that he included himself as among the possible number who might be found alive on the Lord's return; and that, as far as he knew there was nothing to hinder the Lord's coming for His saints during Paul's own life-time. That Peter thought it not improbable is likewise seen from the fact that he received a special revelation to inform him that he would have to die (2 Peter 1.15). And surely the fact that the last announcement of the inspired record is, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22.20) would foster and strengthen the same conclusion. The 'coming quickly' refers to the actual event itself,

and not to any timescale (2 Peter 3.4). But notwithstanding all this presumptive evidence, everything depends upon the question whether Believers (the Church) will remain on earth until the Lord's appearing. If then we turn to Matt. 24, and contrast it with a scripture in Colossians, we find this question distinctly and plainly answered. In Matt. 24 we read, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of trumpet and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (vv.29,30). Here we have the order of events at the appearing of the Son of man; and the reader will note that (a) there is tribulation, (b) the disturbance of the heavenly luminaries, (c) the sign of the Son of man in heaven, (d) the mourning of the tribes of the earth, (e) their seeing the Son of man coming, etc., WHILE AS YET THE ELECT ARE UPON THE EARTH STILL UNGATHERED. But what have we read in Colossians? That "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3.4). So also in Revelation, we find that when Christ comes out of heaven for judgement (His appearing), "the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white." (Rev. 19.11—14). Who are these? Their dress is characteristic, and supplies the answer; for in the eighth verse we read "the fine linen is the righteousness of saints".

Evidently, therefore, "the elect" in Matt. 24 cannot be the Church, since the saints who compose the Church appear with Christ; and in fact as the chapter abundantly shows, they are the elect of Israel, the Jewish remnant whom God by His Spirit has prepared for the time when the Lord, whom they seek, shall come suddenly to His temple. (Mal. 3.1). It thus follows that the Lord Jesus will return for His people prior to His appearing; and, inasmuch as He destroys antichrist with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2.8), IT MUST also be prior to His rise and sway, and also before the great tribulation, since this is connected with the time of antichrist. But thereon follows a further thing. All the

predicted events which are looked for before the Lord's appearing are connected with the restoration of God's ancient people, and the actions of the man of sin, the son of perdition (the anti-christ) : and consequently, as far as the Scriptures reveal, there is nothing whatever between the present moment and the possibility of the Lord's return for the church.

How then, is the fact to be explained that we are said in Scripture to wait for the appearing, as well as for the rapture seeing that when Christ appears we appear with Him? Whenever the question of responsibility is brought in, the appearing, and not the coming, is the goal; and this is because that, since the earth has been the scene of the responsibility, the earth will also be the scene of the displayed recompense. This in no way interferes with the fact that the coming of Christ for His saints at any moment is the proper hope of the believer. On the other hand, it throws additional light on the ways of God in the government of His people, bringing out a new feature of the perfection of the Lord's dealings with His servants. When departing, He entrusted to them gifts for His service, saying, "Occupy till I come". The responsibility of the servants in the use of that which has been committed to their charge is confined to, limited by, their sojourn upon the earth. Therefore it is when the Lord returns to the earth that the result of their responsibility is declared. But it is not only in the use of gifts that this principle seen; it is found in every sort of responsibility of every saint. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Thessalonians are directed to look forward for the blessed issue of their persecutions to the time when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. 1.7) : and Timothy was to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Tim. 6.14). For it is then that He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. 1.10); and then, therefore, that there will be the public manifestation of the result and issue of the pathway of the saint through this world. This is the consummation and the fruition of the service of the believer, as well as the time when the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself shall be declared and vindicated and consequently, in this aspect, we are said to love His appearing. (2 Tim. 4.8).

But, as has been shown from Scripture, the Lord returns for His saints before His appearing; and it is to His coming, therefore, for them that their eye is directed. This is the proper object of our hope. Our hearts occupied with Himself, we wait longingly for the moment when, according to His word, He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also. (John 14.3). Such then is our attitude. As Israel on the passover night, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand waited for the signal to depart, so we should ever be found, with our loins girt and our lamps burning, expecting the Lord to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to take us out of this scene, to be forever with the Lord. Are we constantly maintaining this attitude? Do we begin the day with the thought that, before darkness returns, we may be caught up into the unclouded light of His presence? When we lie down at night, do we remember that before the morning dawns we may be caught away from our beds? Are all our matters kept so constantly arranged that we should desire to alter nothing, if the next moment we should be with the Lord? Are all our purposes, all our occupations, undertaken and carried on with this wonderful prospect before our eyes? Surely nothing short of this should satisfy those who are living in the expectation of the Lord. May He Himself lead us into all the power of this blessed truth, using it to separate us increasingly from everything not suitable to Himself; and, by the presentation of Himself to us in all His beauty as the Bright and Morning Star, may He occupy and absorb our hearts and minds!

DAVID AND GOLIATH

A great big giant well protected,
Held Israel's army so dejected,
Defiant, proud, he challenged all,
To raise a man, to hear his call.

They all stood by in fear and trembling,
They watched the Philistines assembling,
Just then a young lad did arrive,
His care for Israel much alive.

He made it known of his intention,
To face this foe with no declension.
A sling, a stone and skill from God,
The giant's body hit the sod.

The Philistines ran off in fear,
And Israel's army loud did cheer,
For David had again made known,
That Israel's God was on the Throne.

—James Neilly

VITAL VERITIES (4)

by E. W. ROGERS

Paul and the Hebrew Scriptures

Paul, notwithstanding his unique position in the Church, was "a man of like passions with ourselves," whose attitude toward his Bible becomes, in consequence, of added interest.

Both in his unconverted days and his later converted days the Scriptures played an important part in his life, although it is true that once he was blindly fanatical as to them, but later he became an inspired expositor thereof, revealing the meaning hidden beneath the letter.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES WERE THE BASIS OF HIS EARLY TRAINING

Listen to him as he says, "I am verily a man, which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the *law of the fathers*, and was zealous toward God as ye all are this day." And again, "After the most straitest sect of *our religion* I lived a Pharisee." And yet again, "As concerning *the law*, blameless." Being, as he says, "the Son of a Pharisee" he would have had the advantage that he refers to when writing to Timothy "that from a babe he had known the *sacred letters*," albeit that all the while the "veil" was on the book and on his heart, so that it was the letter (which kills) which engrossed him, and not the spirit thereof.

Nevertheless, such a sub-stratum in early life could not have been without its advantages when the Spirit of God began to deal with him. The importance of having the mind stored with the letter of the Word of God is not adequately estimated in these days!

IT WAS THE GUIDE OF HIS PRIVATE LIFE

In order to be effective in the ministry of the Word of God to others, its power and comfort, its searching and cleansing character, must all be known in the private life and be matters of per-

sonal experience. Otherwise, the ministry of that Word becomes merely a theological exercise, and is devoid of living power.

There is an excellent example in Acts 18, verses 9 and 10 of how an Old Testament Scripture came to the heart of the Apostle with divine power when he was in difficult circumstances. In verse 9 the words "Be not afraid" can be read "Fear not," and these two words linked with the first five words of verse 10 make the very well-known passage of Isaiah 41.10. "Fear not for I am with thee." This is an instance of the Spirit of God applying the Scripture to the circumstances in which the Apostle then was, a thing not unknown by His people today. "The Lord spake" to Paul from this scripture. "Fear not" —that meant that he was to "speak and hold not" his "peace." "For I am with thee" —that meant "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." The Lord thus applied this passage to Paul's heart when he was "in fear and trembling" at Corinth. "Fear not" enjoined on Paul boldness. "I am with thee" assured to Paul security.

Not only did he derive comfort from the scriptures, he also sought to guide his conduct thereby. When (Acts 23) he inadvertently spake improperly to the high priest he explains, "I wist not brethren that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people," by which he gave those to whom he was speaking to understand that in no case would he wittingly and deliberately infringe the will of God as contained in those writings.

His faith in the scriptures was unreserved. He affirmed he "believed all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." In his unconverted days, so blinded was he that, although he might not have thought it to be the case, he only believed some of the scriptures, and had, for example, no room in his mind for a suffering Messiah or for Gentile blessing. He did not then believe *all* that was written. It was otherwise after God had dealt with him in saving grace. He believed it all, let the rationalising Greek or blinded Jew say what they would concerning the histories and prophecies of the volume.

Happy the believer who today derives from his Bible comfort in the midst of troubles: guidance in the midst of opposition: and confidence despite alleged scholarly criticism.

IT WAS THE TEXT-BOOK OF HIS EVANGELICAL MINISTRY

Paul knew the difference between chaff and wheat: the one light, dead and non-productive; the other having weight, life, and the power of propagation. In consequence we find that everywhere in his evangelistic labours "he preached the Word of God," both in the synagogues of the Jews, and to the Gentiles. It is true that to the Jews he quoted and read the scriptures, for they had the book—it was their national volume—and to a large extent were acquainted with its letter. But it is equally true, that although in Acts chapters 14 and 17 Paul does not appear to quote the Scriptures to the Gentiles, yet his remarks are based thereon and embodied as part and parcel of his own sentences.

At Antioch Paul alleges that the scriptures which were read weekly in the synagogues were not understood, and as a direct consequence of this ignorance the nation became guilty of the murder of Him of whom they spake. He shows that the death and resurrection of Christ were the fulfilment of those scriptures, and when met with Jewish opposition cites the scripture as his authority for going to the Gentiles (13.47).

In Acts 14.15 Paul before a Gentile audience states in the very words of scripture, "God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things therein." In chapter 15, verse 15, the scripture is cited as justifying the course of evangelism among the Gentiles adopted by Paul. In chapter 17.2,3 Paul uses the scriptures as the basis of his arguments concerning the identity of the Hebrew Messiah with the Man Jesus who had been crucified but was now risen again. In the same chapter before a Gentile audience, he does not read the scriptures, or indeed say that he was quoting them (for what did they care for the Jewish sacred book), but he none the less embodies in his own remarks the words of scripture, as will be seen in vv.24,25, where respectively he states, "God made the heaven and earth and all things therein," and it is He who "giveth breath" to man. The allusion to Genesis is apparent to any who know their Bible. Indeed in Acts 26 he could affirm before Agrippa that he had said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" and appealed to that King by enquiring, "Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

The preacher today who knows his Bible sufficiently to be able to enforce his arguments by its statements, use its phrases in his preaching, and regulates his evangelistic activities by its precepts, and who does not fail so to do, will surely gain the 'Well done, good and faithful servant' from the lips of his Lord.

IT WAS THE WARP OF PAUL'S EXPOSITIONAL WRITINGS

It was not both 'warp and woof.' It was not the entirety of Paul's writings, for the 'woof' was that new Revelation communicated to Paul and which hitherto had been kept a secret, not to be found in (although space had been left for it) the Old Testament writings. Of the origin of that revelation, of the terms of its inspired communication, and of the means of its explanation Paul speaks at length in 1 Cor. 2.

—But the Old Testament scriptures found a large place in the fabric of Paul's writings, and was entwined with the statements that pertain to the 'mystery' of which he became the chief depository. No one can fail to see how greatly Paul drew upon the Hebrew scriptures, citing them here, alluding to them there, and affirming to his son Timothy that 'they were sacred letters' and in their entirety 'inspired of God.' In every Epistle, except perhaps Philemon, is there one or more verbal quotations from the Old Testament. And if so be the Epistle to the Hebrews is Paul's, his thorough acquaintance with, and understanding of the significance of, the Old Covenant and its Tabernacle is too apparent to emphasize. Surely it is manifest that for sound and profitable oral or written exposition of New Testament doctrine, a knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament scriptures is a *sine qua non*.

Jesus Only

The light of heaven is the face of Jesus;
The joy of heaven is the presence of Jesus;
The melody of heaven is the name of Jesus;
The harmony of heaven is the praise of Jesus;
The theme of heaven is the work of Jesus;
The employment of heaven is the service of Jesus;
The duration of heaven is the eternity of Jesus;
The fulness of heaven is Jesus Himself. — Anon.

"THE PROPHECY OF JONAH"

by E. R. Bower.

No. 5 — CHAPTER 4

V.1. "But (another 'but') it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry (Lit. 'it was evil to Jonah and anger burnt to him.'). The 'buts' are mounting up! "But Jonah" (1.3,5; 4.1); "But God" (1.4; 4.7); "But I" (2.9); "But man" (3.8). The last word is always with God.

How easy it is to feel angry with God when His way is not our way! Cf. David, 2 Sam. 6.8.

V.2. "And he prayed." What a difference in two prayers. God answered Jonah's prayer, but Jonah did not wish for God to answer the prayers of Nineveh; He acknowledged the salvation of God in his own recent experience, but refused it to others. "I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil". Cf. Ex. 34.6; Num. 14.18,19. The greatest of the 'greats' of the book! David (Ps. 86.5), Hosea (11.8,9), Joel (2.13), Micah (7.8), all shared the knowledge of the character of God. Jonah knew, but how reluctant to share his knowledge with others.

V.3. "Take I beseech Thee, my life (soul) from me: . . ." Cf. 2.5,6,7. Jonah was no newcomer to this experience of wishing for death, for Elijah (1 Kin. 19.4), David (as expressed in some of his psalms), Moses (11.15) had passed this way. But such experiences do not always spring from the same cause. One is inclined to think of Jonah here behaving like a petulant child because things did not go his way; because God had apparently 'changed His mind.'

Vv. 4—5. Compare God's question here with that in 1 Kin. 19.9. Jonah makes a booth for shelter and sits down to wait "what would become of the city." Abraham had once prayed for a city, but he was to see the smoke of its judgment; did Jonah sit and wait for a similar experience, anticipating the fire from heaven? What he did see, was the mercy of God. Do we ever experience similar feelings as those of Jonah?

V.6. "And Jehovah Elohim prepared a gourd . . . to deliver him

from his grief." Thus God pities Jonah in that surge of grief born of his anger. "And Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd." How strong were the emotional reactions of the prophet! "Exceedingly displeased . . . very angry . . . exceeding glad."

V.7—9. "But God prepared a worm . . . and . . . the gourd . . . withered."

"And God prepared a vehement east wind . . . that he fainted, and wished to die." And the anger of Jonah again expresses itself. "It is right for me to be angry, even unto death." (cf. v.4). The character of this man of God; this prophet; this servant of God, revealed by this chapter, is the character of the 'old man of the flesh' — something of which indwells each one of us.

Jonah again has physical suffering added to his mental anguish; that inner battle which brought him to the depths of despair. Natural feelings were allowed to subjugate his compassion and pity. Self pity became an excuse for self justification, and the purposes of God which as a prophet he should have known, became of a secondary consideration. Why should the gourd be destroyed? Why should Nineveh be spared? Why does it have to be ME? Jonah's message was one of judgment, but in his blindness he did not see that the Law in which he believed was a law of love and mercy, "shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20.6). A Law which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Jonah — the messenger from God who had little or nothing of the love of God, and in this he was typical of Israel. Remember Paul's "Song of Love"? "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love . . . I AM NOTHING." (1 Cor. 13.1—2). Jonah prayed from the depths of despair: he still prayed, but his prayer was at variance with his penitence. Prayers for self interest are usually at variance with prayers for others. This life of a 'minor' prophet, or rather, this incident from his life, is full of lessons for it is God who appoints His agents, whether prophet, wind, fish, gourd, worm or silent wind. Said a writer, "Special preparation is not implied, still less creation for the particular purpose. God employs existing agents to do His bidding." God's way is not our way (Is. 55.7), so why, as Jonah, have a fit of the sulks when His way of love over rides our way of self?

Vv. 10—11. God has the last word, and it is a question, ". . . should I not spare . . .?" Not only the hairs of our heads, but the

populations of cities are known to Him. If the herbs of the field are worthy of the pity of a man, how much more worthy of pity are those of Adam's race? Cf. Matt. 10.29—31, "Ye are of more value than sparrows." and Matt. 6.25—34, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?"

Thus the book of Jonah ends; a sign that was to be remembered in due time. In this little book there are many lessons, lessons which we tend to lose beneath the shadow of our Lord's references to the sign of the prophet. We may see, for instance, that any reluctance to fulfil His purposes does not frustrate them. We see that God is indeed "Merciful and gracious, longsuffering (slow to anger. What a difference to His creatures!), and abundant in goodness (lovingkindness or grace), and truth (faithfulness). (Ex. 34.6). We see that Jonah, the servant of the Lord (2 Kin. 14.25) was (so it would appear) the only one 'out of step'. The elements, animals, plants, worms, obeyed His will, BUT Jonah . . . Whatever we may think of this prophecy, whether we look at it as an allegory (as the Apostle Paul treated the story of Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac); as an O.T. parable, or as a "literal narrative of actual facts", let us remember that it has long been regarded by Jew and Christian as the Word of God, and if, indeed, we so regard it, then it must go without saying that it has a message to, and for, all who read. Against a back cloth of human emotions from the humanity of the sailors and their reverence for their gods, to the callousness and bigotry of the prophet, we become aware of the pity and compassion of God for the 'great city' and for those "that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand." We may also see, as God saw, the true forgiveness-seeking penitence of the Ninevites. It has been said that "in this little book of 48 verses, we reach the high-water mark of O.T. teaching. It is of priceless value, and will remain so as long as men need to learn what God thinks of the teeming masses in the world's great cities, what we ought to think of them, and how God judges us by our judgment of them."

CONCLUSION

How did our Lord see, and speak of, "the sign of the prophet Jonah?" It will be of advantage to set out the four mentions of the sign in the following way —

MATTHEW 12.38—41 when "certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees sought a sign "from Thee."

Our Lord answered, "An evil and adulterous GENERATION seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it (to that evil and adulterous generation) but the sign of the prophet of Jonah;

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly;
So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this GENERATION and shall condemn it

Because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

LUKE 11.29—32 (seen by some as a different occasion to that of Matt. 12 probably because of the variations in the narrative) tells us that it was the PEOPLE who sought a sign "from Heaven" and "when the PEOPLE were gathered thick together, He began to say,

This is an evil GENERATION: they seek a sign; (see vv.47—51) and there shall no sign be given it,
but the sign of Jonah the prophet

For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites (no mention of the three days etc.)

So shall also the Son of man be to this GENERATION.

The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this GENERATION, and shall condemn it.

FOR they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here."

MATTHEW 16.1—4 (Vv. 2 and 3 omitted by some authorities) records the second occasion when our Lord spoke of the sign, and here, it is to "the Pharisees also with the Sadducees (who) came and tempted him desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven.

A wicked and adulterous GENERATION seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given unto it,
but the sign of the prophet Jonah. (No mention of the 3 days etc.)
And He left them and departed." (No mention of the judgment)

MARK 8.11—13 is a precis of Matt. 16.1—4. "And the Pharisees come forth, and began to question with Him, seeking of Him a sign from heaven, tempting Him.

And He sighed deeply in the spirit, and saith,
Why doth THIS GENERATION seek after a sign? Verily I say
unto you,

There shall no sign be given unto THIS GENERATION."

And He left them . . ." (How suggestive this phrase is! Cf. Luke 17.25).

As we read these four Scriptures we cannot help but notice the emphasis that our Lord places upon THIS GENERATION: AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION.

Jonah was himself a sign, a testimony, to the Ninevites; our Lord was a sign to His generation. Cf. Is. 7.4, "The Lord HIMSELF shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." He was a sign "which shall be spoken against." (Luke 2.34).

Jonah went to Ninevah, albeit unwillingly, with a message of judgment; our Lord also preached to a "great city, which spiritually is called Sodom" (Rev. 11.8) of a coming judgment (Matt. 23.36; 24.34).

Jonah's experience in the deep was a sign, not to the Ninevites, but for that generation which crucified Him, and rejected His resurrection (Matt. 27.62—66; 28.11—15; Acts 4.1—3; 28.23—28) and rejected Him.

Jonah's psalm was a sign to THAT GENERATION if they were but prepared to search (Luke 24.27; John 5.36—44).

The Love of Christ: Or, Desire

by Charles Stanley

Many Christians spend much of their lives *desiring* the love of Christ, and still more in *desiring* to love Christ. "Draw me, we will run after thee." There is love to Christ, but a sense of distance. "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon? for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Such expressions as these in the Song of Solomon express the state of many a soul now, as well do they describe the condition of the remnant of Israel in days to come. How many of us have felt a well-known line in a hymn suit the real state of our souls—"Oh, draw me, Saviour, after

Thee"—and many have wondered why a dear servant of the Lord, more deeply experienced in the love of Christ than ourselves, should have altered it to, "Lord, Thou hast drawn me after Thee." Is not the difference immense?

The difference would not be greater than if you saw a child looking eagerly through a shop window at various kinds of delicious fruit within. Yes, that child loves grapes, and pears, and plums, and greatly desires them, but not one does it enjoy; it is outside, and they are all inside. A kind hand opens the door, and a loving voice says, Come in, my child. Freely I give you all. Eat, and enjoy, whatever is for your good. How real the difference between the desire of that child, and the enjoyment of the fruit! And has not that One with the wounded hand opened the door? Or does He leave us outside still, only to desire? It is, or was, the true place of a Jew outside the holiest; he could only earnestly desire. That is not the true place of a Christian. "The king hath brought me into his chambers." "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." Is not this the King with the wounded hands? "He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love." What holy, deep, real enjoyment do these words describe! Is this desire at a distance, looking through the window? No; "I sat"—perfect repose of heart—in the presence of Christ. No fear; no, such perfect love casteth out fear. God is love, and that new nature born of Him delighteth in Him "with great delight." And it is not longing to love Him, but delighting in Him. "And his fruit was sweet to my taste."

Now a very common mistake is often made. It is this: that we must love Him more, and more, and more, until at last we may hope to arrive at this banquet of love. It is not so; it is not an act of our own. "He brought me to the banqueting-house." Oh, how tenderly He led me, with those wounded hands, to the banquet of love! But must it not be our love to Him that makes the banquet of love? No, "His banner over me was love."

Is it not evident, then, that if we truly "have known and believed the love that God hath to us," we must go beyond "Oh draw me, Saviour, after Thee"? It is quite true, in another sense, that we need constantly His power to keep us, and guide us through this wilderness. But "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in

God, and God in him." Yes, He has not only brought us into the banquet of love, and spread His banner over us, and this is our dwelling, abiding place. Is it not written, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end"? The banner of love ever floats over us. The fruit is ever sweet. The perfect rest is ever secure. Not a sin did He fail to bear. Never can He cease to love or intercede for those whose sins He bore.

No, the believer has not to desire peace with God, and rest to his soul. "I sat down." He has not too long for repose of soul in the presence of Christ. No, he rests under His shadow in sweet repose. He has not to desire the love of Christ: that love is sweet to his taste. He has not to say, "Oh draw me," he is brought into the banqueting-house. He can say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies."

There is no effort to love; all is deep, perfect, full enjoyment. A miner in a deep pit, on fire, and about to perish in the suffocating fumes, may well cry out, "Oh, draw me out; oh, draw me out into the bright day and pure air." But if a nobleman sent his own son as volunteer to fetch him out of that pit of death, and then made him joint-heir with that son of a large estate, he would not then desire to be out. Neither could he desire to be brought into the sunshine and light of day, nor to breathe the pure, fresh air. No; see him walking with and talking to that son who had saved him, and who delighted to share with him all the estate.

Is this an over-drawn picture? Far from it. Every illustration fails to set forth the eternal love of God in Christ. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." Surely, then, He could not love us more. "So have I loved you." Mark, we have not to keep His commandments to cause Him to love us, or to attain to His love, but to abide in His love. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall *abide* in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." And why does the Lord thus speak to us? He says further, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." He would not have us remain outside in the continual disappointment of mere desire, but come into the banquet of full joy in the everlasting possession of His love, with the conscience purged, and in perfect repose, through His precious blood; the heart for ever satisfied, dwelling in His unchanging love; the affections

now free to act and flow forth from Himself to all the objects of His love. For this is the desire of His heart. "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Have we to desire Him to do this? Surely not. Who could have conceived such a thing? No, God so loved. Jesus so loved. It is done. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

It will thus be seen by the christian reader, that we cannot desire Christ to love us. His love to us has been displayed to the utmost. We cannot desire God to love us more than He has loved, or more than He does love. For nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We may have a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better. Paul had this desire. (Phil.1.23). But this was because he knew the love of Christ to him. We may long and hope for that moment when we shall be like Him in the glorified body, but this is because of the certainty that when He appears we shall be like Him. Yes, we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him. But all this is far different from desiring now that Christ would love us. No, He wishes our present joy to be full, dwelling in His love. He says to the Father, "And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John 17.23,23).

Just think of the glory given to Christ, already given to us. And shortly the world shall know that the Father hath loved us, even as He has loved Christ!! Oh, yes, the blessed One, with those wounds in His hands, says, Come into the banquet; my banner over you is eternal love.

But the reader may say, Ought I not to desire to love God? How plain the answer! If you know and believe this wondrous love of God to you, you will (not desire, but) love Him, *because He first loved you*. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "We love him, because he first loved us." As the children of God, we have the nature of our Father, and He is love. Would not that be a strange child that *desired* to love its parent? And the love of God leads us to

delight to keep His commandments. It is the very outflow of the new nature, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. True love is never occupied with self. Desire to love is always so. We may read page after page of those seeking and desiring to love God, and find nothing but self-occupancy, from beginning to end. If you ask them the meaning of those words, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5.5), their thought will be, the more we love God, the more He will love us. This shews sad ignorance of the great FACT declared here. Believing God, who hath raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," we are justified, accounted righteous, before the very eye of God. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." To desire to make peace with God would spoil all. It would be to set aside the peace now made by the blood of Jesus, and thus desire to make peace with God ourselves in some other way. No, it is as certain a fact that *we have* peace with God, as that He who has made our peace is raised from among the dead. We do not desire peace, we have it WITH GOD. We do not desire access to the banquet of love, we have access by faith into this grace, this wondrous free favour wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

In like manner, though we pass through tribulation, yet we "glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us."

Do not mistake: if the love of God is not shed abroad in your heart, if the Holy Ghost is not given to you, then you are not a Christian, and that is another matter. But if you know and believe the love of God to you in sending His Son, then every barrier to the love of God has been removed. You have not to desire, but the love of God *is* shed abroad in your heart, the Holy Ghost is given to you. That love is revealed in Christ, cease your vain, unbelieving desires. No longer stand with the doubting crowd without, but take your happy seat beneath His shade in everlasting repose. The Lord bless these few thoughts on the difference between love and desire to every christian reader, and may we evermore rejoice in the Lord.

LEVI — 'THE LAW FULFILLED'

by H. Shackcloth

Part II

The true operation of the law of God as we understand it in its spiritual application was foreshadowed by Moses immediately prior to his departure. He committed the writings to the Levites, its future custodians, with this interesting direction, 'Take the book of the Law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee for I know thy rebellion' Deut. 31.26,27. A remark which embodied in itself disappointment and hope, after forty strenuous years on the part of Moses.

Our thoughts are taken at once to the statement of the Psalmist, 'The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.' Ps. 31.31. This can refer to none other than the Blessed Man of Psalm 1, whose delight was in the Law of the Lord and in whose law He meditated day and night. The law of God was also intended to dominate the hearts of His people, and we can claim no more than to seek by His help to 'follow His steps' in this vital matter.

One of the problems implicit in the operation of the Levitical law was that of its overwhelming insularity; as it stood in the way of Gentile participation of the blessings of the Gospel, and for this reason had to be abolished — 'rendered inactive' (Vine) — Ephesians 2.13. Paul elsewhere reminded the Colossian church that they, as Gentiles, were 'circumcised with the circumcision made without hands', and that the 'bond' of the ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, was taken out of the way being nailed to His Cross.' Col. 2.11—14. The influential deputation to Antioch from the church at Jerusalem, testified to the same truth. Acts 15.27—29.

We can deduce from this that if the pursuit of righteousness is to be practical experience it must first of all be shown that 'by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified', and that 'the right-

eousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all that believe, for there is no difference'. Rom. 3.20—22.

To those who nevertheless hankered after the Law, Paul could write, 'the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith we are no longer under a schoolmaster.' Gal. 3.24,25.

By contrast the law of Christ is said to be a 'royal law' to be **fulfilled** as we obey Christ, a 'law of liberty' by which we shall one day be judged according to the measure of our faithfulness. James 2.8—12.

Perhaps the most encouraging statement was made to those Galatian would-be defectors by the Apostle, that, 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.' Gal. 3.13,14; whilst one of the first statements from the Gospels was this, 'The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' John 1.17.

We hear our Lord's gracious words to His disciples, 'A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another, as I have loved you that ye love one another.' John 13.34. These words are not from a Levite priest but from Him whose service was of 'the order of Melchizedek', a Royal Priest for ever more.

To those who would rob us of our liberty in Christ by legalistic practices which have no authority from God's Word; to those who are enmeshed in slavish cults which have no basis of Divine truth, and to those bound by human traditions from whatever direction they come, we may well repeat the following challenging words from the pen of the Apostle Paul, 'After that ye know God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?' Gal. 4.9.

If there was one thing Leah craved more than any other, it was to experience a less precarious relationship with Jacob than she knew at first; but when Levi was born she expressed a new confidence as she exclaimed, 'This time will my husband be **joined** unto me'. Gen. 29.34.

As believers in Christ our Confidence too may be expressed by the words, 'He that is **joined** to the Lord is one spirit'. 1 Cor. 6.17.
(To be continued).

THREE POSITIONS OF JOHN

by B. Currie (Belfast)

Of all the apostles who companied with the Lord Jesus on earth John appears to have been the closest. This may have been because he likely was the youngest and therefore required more support, assurance and friendship than the others who were more mature. He is found in at least three position relative to the Lord Jesus:

- a) His feet in the Lord's hands — John. 13.5 — FOR CLEANSING.
- b) His head in the Lord's bosom — John. 13.23 — FOR COMMUNION.
- c) He lay at the Lord's feet — Rev. 1.17 — FOR COMMUNICATION.

The order of these is most significant since without cleansing there will be no communion and without both cleansing and communion there will be no communication.

a) CLEANSING

This short paper would be insufficient to develop the deep meaning of the Lord's actions in John 13. The reader may wish to compare His movements in this chapter with those delineated in Phil. 2. Sufficient it is to see that this cleansing is the first thing brought to our attention by John in his account of the upper room, thus implying its foundational character.

The feet were the only part washed. When Peter requested full washing v.9, the Lord clearly indicated that such was required only once but feet washing was a constant need. The meaning of the Lord's words "He that is washed (bathed all over) needeth not save to wash his feet" can be understood from Old Testament ritual. When the priests were being consecrated they were washed or bathed by Moses, Ex. 29.4. In this Moses was acting for God and this never was repeated. This equates with the new birth, the washing of regeneration of Tit. 3.5 and having "our bodies washed with pure water", Heb. 10.21. We are only born again once and since there is no such thing as falling away, it can never be repeated. However the priest had to constantly use the laver in order to

remove the defilement contacted as he walked through the wilderness. We too require daily cleansing from defilement by the application of the word of God — John. 17.17. "Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth." Thus we learn that for cleansing the daily application of the word, not the blood, is vital.

b) COMMUNION

It is full of significance that before John's head lay in the Lord's bosom his feet had been cleansed. The world in which we live is a corrupt and sinful place and it is becoming worse. It is in the midst of such that we long to have sweet and holy communion with the Lord. What a privilege for John to be so close as to hear His heartbeat and feel the very throb of His pulse. How we would long to know Him better! The knowledge of Him is Christian maturity. In 1 John. 2.13,14 the fathers i.e. the mature Christians, are identified by this, "ye have known Him that is from the beginning." Even after many years of Christian experience and service Paul could still say "that I may know Him", Phil. 3.10. It is unfortunate but true, that the words of the Lord Jesus to Philip apply to so many of us, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" John. 14.9.

c) COMMUNICATION

It is as John lies at His feet that he is commissioned to "Write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter," Rev. 1.19. It was at His feet that Mary heard His word, Luke 10.39. It was at the feet of Boaz, a type of Christ in exaltation, that Ruth was blessed. If we could cultivate the secret of being at His feet in quiet contemplation then we would receive much more from Him and be able to say "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened unto us the Scriptures?".

After the high priest had been to the altar in the Tabernacle and was approaching the holiest of all, there were three articles of furniture in a straight line, one after the other.

- i) The laver — CLEANSING.
- ii) The golden altar — COMMUNION.
- iii) The mercy seat — COMMUNICATION.

For intelligent and happy Christian living this must be the order.

The Millennium — (2)

by J. E. TODD

THE PARADOX

The Holy Scriptures record two covenants which concern the nation of Israel. The first of these was made with Abraham, 'In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram' (Gen. 15.18). The second was made with the nation of Israel itself, 'The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb' (Deut. 5.2). This is distinct from the covenant with Abraham, 'The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us' (v.3).

The two covenants are distinct and therefore must not be confused. The Abrahamic covenant, which was dealt with in the first article, must not be confused with the Mosaic covenant which was made centuries later. This distinction must be made for the following reasons.

First, the Abrahamic covenant was made with an individual in his lifetime, whereas the Mosaic covenant was made with a whole nation from generation to generation.

Second, the covenant with Abraham was an everlasting covenant (Gen. 17.13,19), whereas the covenant with Israel was an 'if' covenant. 'IF ye walk in my statutes . . . But IF ye will not hearken unto me' (Lev. 26.3,14). This covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai, Moses acting as their representative. Israel's part was to obey God, 'And he (Moses) took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient' (Ex. 24.7). God's part of the agreement was to bless Israel in their wars, their crops, their water-supply, their health, their cattle and their inheritance (Ex. 23.22—33). Israel's obedience to God meant Israel's blessing from God. As an 'if' covenant it was a continually conditional covenant, it required continual obedience on the part of the Israelite nation from generation to generation, otherwise the covenant would become null and void.

Third, the Abrahamic covenant is of perpetual effect, Abraham fulfilled his part by faith and obedience and is now dead,

therefore the human side of the agreement cannot be broken. Whereas Israel broke their covenant by disobedience to God, and this resulted in the catastrophe of the Babylonian captivity. 'The covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake' (Jer. 31.32). But Jeremiah hastens to state that although Israel had broken the Sinai covenant, this in no way affected the covenant with Abraham. 'Thus saith the LORD; if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD' (verses 35—37).

Now we come to the paradox. Under the unalterable Abrahamic covenant the Israelite nation was to possess the land of Canaan for ever, but under the Mosaic covenant, which they had broken, they were to be thrust out of the land. Because of their sins, even to the point of human sacrifice, the former inhabitants of Canaan were driven out to make way for Israel. (Deut. 18.9—14). The Israelites, as part of their covenant with God, were forbidden to follow their example (Lev. 20.1—5). If Israel broke the covenant they too would be thrust out of the land, 'If ye shall . . . break my covenant . . . I will scatter you among the heathen' (Lev. 26.15,33). They did break the covenant (2 Chron. 33.1—9) and were likewise driven from the land (2 Chron. 36.15—20). The paradox being that under one covenant the land was their's for ever, whilst under the other covenant they were to be driven from the land. The solution to the paradox was that whenever Israel was driven from their land because of divine judgment against their sins, nevertheless because of the covenant with Abraham they would be brought back again later to the land of Canaan (Lev. 26.40—45).

This prophetic scenario has been enacted twice in history.

First, as recorded above, Israel sinned and were taken into Babylonian captivity. But, as prophesied by Jeremiah, the exile was to last only 70 years (Jer. 25.11—13; 29.10—14), then Israel returned to their land (2 Chron. 36.22,23) as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Second, Israel committed the supreme sin against God by crucifying their own Messiah. 'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye

have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Messiah)' (Acts 2.36). The Lord Jesus Christ himself warned of the consequences of their ultimate sin. 'They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21.24). This prophecy was fulfilled when the Romans captured and destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. But now, after 1,900 years, the descendants of Abraham are back in their land. The scene is being set for the return of their Messiah.

JOSEPH'S MINISTRY — FIRST AND LAST

BY RONALD J. JOHNSTON, BANGOR.

That the ministry of choice servants of God in the Old Testament has proved to be profitable for saints of all times is undeniable. But the final words of some have made lasting impressions in particular. Spiritual men going out of this scene, still with a heart for God. His work and His people. They spoke of prevailing conditions and what would follow their decease, and like so many events and pictures in the Old Testament they relate, so often unerringly, to the circumstances and experiences of our day.

Of these servants, Joseph is an outstanding example. Excelling in character from his youth, separated from his brethren, he was a man whose ministry would have far reaching effects in Egypt as a nation and Israel as a nation in its infancy.

His first ministry

As a young man, what was revealed to him (Gen. 37.5-7) he made known to his brethren in words of brevity and simplicity. They had no difficulty in understanding and did not like it, but Joseph gave what God had given him. We may learn some lessons viz:

(a) the value of ministry from spiritual younger brethren.

(b) the ministry we like is not necessarily the ministry we require.

(c) ministry should be understood and expressed suitably without vaneer and exaggerated mannerisms which unfortunately can be cultivated with the passing of time and only detract from the message.

His last ministry

Joseph's ministry did not alter at the end of his life (Gen. 50.22-26). He obviously had heard of the word of promise to Abraham concerning Israel's release from Egypt (Gen. 15.13,14). In absolute confidence, therefore, he says "God will surely visit you . . ." (Gen. 50.24). By faith Joseph, when he died made mention of the departing of the children of Israel . . ." (Heb. 11.22).

God had fulfilled to the letter Joseph's first ministry and this was proof that He also would fulfil what He had promised to Abraham. In calm confidence Joseph goes out — no generation gap either for his great grandchildren are brought up upon his knees. The first mention of Joseph's age at seventeen years (Gen. 37.2) is followed by his first recorded ministry to his brethren. The last mention of his age one hundred and ten years (Gen. 50.22,26) is linked with his final ministry. As a young man and as an old man the character of his ministry is unchanged. He is absolutely confident what God has promised He will surely fulfil and ministers accordingly. May we by His grace be as confident in the unchangeableness of God and His word and communicate likewise.

An outgoing generation

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation" (Ex. 1.6). The uniformity of death — not only Joseph died, but his brethren (Reuben to Benjamin) and all that generation. A threefold reminder of death. They all died but not at the one time. Joseph had served his day and generation and we reap the fruits of such in our day. May our generation have something to pass on to the next.

An incoming generation

"And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly and multiplied and waxed exceeding might and the land was filled with them" (Ex. 1.7) Death and life. One generation going out and another generation coming in (Psalm 90.3). Two processes at work. A silent dropping away and a silent growth. Like the season — May with its green leaves and opening buds and November with its fallings leaves and changing greenery. Death and young life. We witness this twofold process daily. The house with the coffin downstairs and the cradle upstairs. Children playing in a cemetery. The web run down at one end and woven at the other. Said the poet:—

"Every moment dies a man
Every moment one is born."

A serious contemplation of this would stimulate our thinking as to the preciousness of time.

God buries His workmen but carries on His work. One generation passes away, another takes up the work. We are inclined to look back on earlier generations and bemoan the loss of well known spiritual men and women, and undoubtedly we are deeply thankful for such. But another has said "There is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, especially when God casts the net." Joseph may have said "Perhaps I have made a mistake after all, I should not have brought this people down to Egypt." But Joseph had done exactly what God intended him to do. Someone else will carry on the work (ultimately Moses). One sows, another reaps. The work is all one with many parts. There are a great many threads in a piece of cloth. A great many movements in a shuttle. A great many pieces of glass to make up the mosaic pattern. "For David after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep . . ." (Acts 13.36). May the Lord enable us to do the same.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Faith knows that whatever God promises — He performs.
When love reproves and corrects, it encourages and gives hope.

Compassion is investing everything necessary to heal the hurt of others.

Faith helps us to walk fearlessly, to run confidently, and to live victoriously.

A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.

The secret of true service is to be faithful wherever God places you.

The sinner's credit is of no account; his only hope is Christ's account.

If you want to know how to pray in hard times, practice praying in easy times.

Safety is not the absence of danger but the presence of God.

—Anthony Orsini, U.S.A.

"A Few Thoughts on the Head Covering"

by J. KUNDAS, Pa., U.S.A.

The woman wears a veil on her head because she is the glory of the man, and man's glory is not to be seen. In 1 Cor. 11.1-16, there is much precious teaching on the God appointed differences between a woman's natural hair, and that which is worn ON the head, i.e. the veil, or covering.

As with all spiritual instruction, the end should be for the glory of God, for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. It is with this in view that we approach this portion of the word of God. The apostle states his recognition of the headship of Christ (vs. 1,3) and connects this truth with ordinances, "as I delivered them unto you." Since Paul was a chosen vessel of God (2 Tim. 1.11), then the Spirit of God would have us know that 1 Cor. 11 falls in the category of the apostles doctrine, in which all spiritually intelligent would desire to continue in steadfastness (Acts 2.42).

Nature itself teaches that it is a shame for a man to have long hair. What is the covering spoken of in verse 4? Certainly it is not his hair. If those that suggest that the woman's hair is her SPIRITUAL covering, then this text would say, 'any man that prays with hair on his head dishonors his head.' This is absurd to say the least! Again, the key is headship, and a recognition of order is humbly submitting to the Lordship of Christ. The man that dishonors his head in verse 4, does not dishonor his own physical head (v.3), and the same truth MUST follow in verse 5, concerning the woman. If she prays or prophecies with her head uncovered, she dishonors her head; that is, she dishonors her husband, or if she be single, she does dishonor to men. This is easy enough. The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

A woman's glory is her long hair. This is, as I have said, a natural truth. But in 1 Cor. 2.11—16, our same apostle states definitely, and with no room for compromise, that the natural man receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God. In 1 Cor. 11.15, none would fail to see that the long hair is given the woman for a glory to her. But this is a NATURAL truth. "Doth not nature

itself teach you?" But when the saints are assembled, is the glory of the woman to be seen? Verse 5 states with all authority that if a woman is not covered, it is as if she were bald, and would not a bald woman attract attention to herself? Yet, this is precisely what occurs when she is not covered! If a woman chooses not to cover herself, she is stating, "I do not recognize the authority of man to woman; Christ to man; nor do I recognize the authority of God to Christ." Strong language? I think this is exactly what the woman states when she wilfully disobeys the plain word of God. The fact that some women cover themselves prove they bow to the revelation of the word, and surely God bestows blessing on obedience. "Trust and obey, for there is no other way." She is stating simply that she agrees with God, that her glory is not to be seen. Can we say perhaps that one reason for this is found in 1 Tim. 2.11—14; ". . . but the woman being deceived was in the transgression?"

The veil of the woman is (when used in faith before God) spiritual truth. There is no less of rank in this, just order, because of the man being the head of the woman. Knowledge of this is respect for godly order, and it reveals a heart being ever ready to understand the deep things of God. What does it profit if a man (or woman) SAY he has faith? True faith rests on the word of God. Many women think because they have long hair, this is spiritual, and they are showing obedience to their husbands or to men, or to God, but this should be accompanied by a spirit of meekness, humility and subordination, otherwise it is meaningless. Without the headcovering she reveals that she desires her glory to be seen, and that she does not care what the ANGELS see when the saints are gathered (1 Cor. 11.10). The angels cannot read hearts when a woman with long hair sits quietly. But, alas, when a woman covers her head, the angels can read the activity of the inner man, because, even though the woman cannot see them, she believes the record that the angels desire to look into the activity of the saints.

". . . That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened . . . And hath put all things under his feet, and GAVE HIM TO BE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS to the Church . . ."

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (2)

— *by Daniel Ussher, (Trinidad)*

As I was requested to put these lines together the words of 2 Timothy 3.15 came to mind, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." At time of writing a father and mother that prayed for me, and taught me the Word of God are at Home with the Lord. I thank God for the memory of such. I was taken to Sunday School and meetings before I can remember and listened to many messages from the Word of God.

In January 1949 I was invited to Gospel meetings in Ballylinagh Gospel Hall which were conducted by the late Mr. Frank Knox. The Lord was pleased to work at that time and I came under deep conviction of sin. On Wednesday 12th of that month the Lord in His sovereign grace and mercy saved me. Indeed at one point I despaired thinking that I would never be saved. The words of John 5.24 were used by the Holy Spirit to give the assurance of salvation. After much trying to "believe" I got occupied with the fact that God sent His son to die for my sin and thus I became the possessor of eternal life.

At the Easter meetings in Belfast in 1960 we (my wife and I) heard various reports of the Lord's work in foreign lands. These we listened to with great interest as we were exercised before the Lord as to the future path. An aged brother, the late Mr. Henry Spencer gave a report on the work in Trinidad and gave a stirring plea for help in the work. On the advice of Mr. Edward Fairfield we wrote to Mr. Spencer in Cardiff, Wales and went over to visit him and his wife in July of 1960. Prior to going to Cardiff we informed the Assembly at Limavady where we were in fellowship about our exercise. At first my late father was much perturbed about our exercise in relation to going abroad, he felt there was much need for help locally and we were much together in various aspects of the Lord's work. However he did encourage us to keep close to the Lord and seek His will in the matter.

In March of 1961 we were commended to the grace of God by

the assembly at Limavady and well reported of by several other assemblies. At our farewell meeting goodly words were spoken by brethren David Craig and Harold Paisley as well as other brethren. Our letter of commendation was signed by eight brethren, six of these are now with the Lord. In January 1982 our letter was updated by the Limavady assembly by brethren who were then caring for the flock. We arrived in Trinidad on 20th March, 1961 and over the years there have been many ups and downs but in our own measure we can say like a great servant of the Lord, "Having therefore met with (the) help which is from God, I have stood firm unto this day." (Acts 26.22 J.N.D.) The Lord and His beloved people have been very kind to us over the years. What the prayers of the saints have meant to us we will never know this side of heaven. We deeply appreciate same and to all in touch with "The Throne" we will value your continued prayers for ourselves, fellow workers and the Lord's work in general in this little corner of the vineyard.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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A Tribute to Isaiah

Where laid ye him? Ye Palestinian hills,
Tell, if ye saw, where laid they Judah's seer?
I fain would place a wreath upon his grave,
Upon its sod let fall a silent tear.

'Tis said his body was asunder sawn
By wicked hands, like those that slew our Lord,
Accepting not deliverance, that he may
Obtain in resurrection his reward.

Where laid they him? Why are ye silent still?
I fain would know, for I his debtor am.
My father, he, I, his posthumous child,
For thru' him, I was pointed to the Lamb.

He penned the soul-emancipating words
That were the means of bringing life to me
When dead in sins I wandered far from God,
"On Him was laid all thine iniquity."

"Wreath," did I say? Yes, more, a monument
His name, so deep engraved, time shall not dim
And underneath, this epitaph inscribed
"He saw His glory and he spake of Him."

And silent still? Hath he, who turned the sod
On Moab's plain and buried Israel's seer,
Enjoined on you this silence and must ye
Hold, as sacred trust, this secret tear?

'Tis all in vain; I cannot find the place
Where he was laid, but in eternity,
It may be that I'll grasp the hand that penned,
"On Him was laid all thine iniquity."

— *Richard F. Varder (c.1890).*

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

Part III — *THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS*

In previous articles, concerning this wonderful subject we have sought to show the following from Scripture. Firstly, the certainty of the Lord's return, using scriptures referring to both His coming FOR His saints and His appearing With His saints. Secondly we endeavoured to differentiate between (1 Thess. 3.13), the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints, and (1 Thess. 4.16,17) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ FOR His saints. We will now seek from the Word of God to establish what this event, which is generally known as The Rapture will mean to each one of us.

When the Lord returns FOR His people two things will take place — the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the change of living believers; and then both alike will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is distinctly taught in 1 Thess. 4.16,17. Our blessed Lord Himself foreshadowed this truth, indeed stated it, though His meaning could scarcely be apprehended without the further light of the epistles. On His way to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, He said to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha saith unto Him, "I know that He shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11.23—26). Here then we have the same two classes — those who believed in Christ, but who should have died before His return, these should live; and secondly, those who should be then alive, and believing in Him, these should never die — corresponding exactly with the two classes found in 1 Thess. 4.

In order however to make the subject clear and simple, it must first be shown that only believers will be raised from the dead at the second coming of our Lord for the Church. There is no doctrine more plainly taught in the Scripture, or so completely overlooked or ignored by the mass of professing Christians. The common thought is, that at the end of the world, at the close of the

millenium, there will be a resurrection alike of believers and unbelievers; that all together will be arraigned before a judgement throne, and that then the eternal destiny of each will be declared. But this theological conception, albeit so widely taught and accepted, not only has no foundation in, but is also directly opposed to, the teaching of the word of God. This will be confessed if attention is given to the proofs about to be adduced, that none but believers, blood bought born again, will be raised at the Lord's coming FOR His saints. First of all, a few Scriptures may be cited from the gospels, in addition to that from John 11. On coming down from the mount of transfiguration, the Lord charged His disciples that they should not tell what they had seen, "till the Son of man was risen from among the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from among the dead should mean" (Mark 9.9,10). They believed, as Martha did, that there would be a resurrection at the last day (John 11.24); but until this time they had never heard of a resurrection from among the dead and this it was that caused their astonishment. Here, of course, it was the resurrection of Christ Himself that was in question; but inasmuch as He was the first-fruits of His own, His resurrection was both the pledge and type of theirs. In Luke 14.14 we find the expression, "the resurrection of the just;" and again in 20.35 the Lord speaks of those "who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world," "and the resurrection from among the dead." The phrase which the Lord uses is unmistakable in its signification that it is a partial resurrection, that those who obtain this resurrection will leave others behind them in their graves. The teaching of John 5.28,29, supports the same conclusion. Going back to the 25th verse, it will be noted that the term 'hour' includes a whole dispensation. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." That hour has lasted until the present time, in accordance with the preceding verse, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life;" and it will last until the Lord's return. It marks the whole day of grace. In like manner the term 'hour' in the 28th verse included the whole dispensation. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall

come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" — judgement. Two resurrections are thus clearly distinguished; that of life, which will take place, as we shall see, at the coming of the Lord; and that of judgement, which will take place after the close of the millenium. (Rev. 20.11—15).

If we turn now to the epistles we shall find even more exact statements. The subject of 1 Cor. 15 is the resurrection of the body; and yet not the resurrection of the bodies of all, but only that of believers. This may be seen at a glance. After showing the consequences of the false doctrine — that there was no resurrection — the apostle states the truth: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." (1 Cor. 15.20—23). Language could not be more exact or explicit. So also in the scripture already cited (1 Thess. 4) it is said, "The dead in Christ shall rise first" (no others are within the apostle's view): "then we which are alive and remain," etc. There is not a thought of unbelievers being included. It is this fact which explains this same apostle's expression in another epistle: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (rather, from among the dead,) Phil. 3.11.

One more scripture may be permitted. In Rev. 20 we read of some who "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The application of this scripture will be examined, if the Lord will, in a future article; but attention now is called to the following statement: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (vv.4,5). It is remembered that interpreters have sought to prove that this is a spiritual resurrection (whatever that may mean): but if so, then the resurrection at the close of the chapter is not a literal one, and therefore they would prove, like the false teachers at Corinth, that there is no resurrection of the dead! No language so clear and unmistakable, especially when taken in connection with the other scriptures adduced, places beyond all doubt that God in His grace has purposed that believers should rise from among the dead at the coming of the Lord; and this is called the first resurrection. There-

fore the term first-fruits is applied to the resurrection of our blessed Lord (1 Cor. 15.20), being the first-fruits of the harvest of His own to be gathered in at His coming. (See Lev. 23.10,11).

Having then established that when the Lord returns it is to gather His own, whether they have previously died, or are still living upon the earth, according to His word — "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (John 14.3). We may now consider the manner of His coming, as well as the rapture of the saints. The most precise information is given to us upon the subject in 1 Thess. 4.13-17 which may be quoted at length. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (go before, or anticipate) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The bearing of this important passage is sometimes overlooked from inattention to its exact statements. The Thessalonian saints did not doubt concerning their portion in Christ on His return; but, somehow or other, they had fallen into the error of supposing that those who had fallen asleep before that event would suffer loss. It is to correct this mistake that the apostle gives some special instruction "by the word of the Lord," i.e. by a revelation upon this particular subject. He shows, then, that all who sleep in (or through) Jesus, God will bring back with Him, that this indeed is connected with our faith in, and is a consequence of, the death and resurrection of Christ. Thereon he explains how this is possible, and this explanation it is which formed the subject of the special revelation to which we have alluded. The Lord will come, and then the dead in Christ will be raised, the living changed, and thus will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, etc. This may take place, as we saw in the last article at any moment. Let us therefore familiarize our minds with

the scene. Suddenly, then, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven in the manner here described. First, with a shout. This has caused a difficulty in many minds. If, they have thought, the Lord returns only for His people, and He descends with a shout, must it not then be in a public manner? By no means necessarily. The word itself is one of relationship, indicating, for example, the order of a commander to his soldiers; and thus it is a shout intended only for those to whom it is addressed, the import of which would not be understood by others. When our Lord was upon the earth a voice came to Him from heaven, and some of the bystanders thought that it thundered, while others said 'an angel spoke to Him' (John 12.28,29). So also at the conversion of Paul, his companions heard a voice, i.e. the sound of a voice (Acts 9.7) 'but they did not hear the voice of Him that spoke to me,' that is, the significance of the voice, (Acts 22.9; compare Daniel 10.7). So will it be when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. All His own will hear and understand the import of the shout; but (if) heard by others it will only seem as the roll of distant thunder, or, taken in combination with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, should these be likewise heard, as a strange phenomenon, to be discussed and explained by scientific men. It is probable that the three — the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (see Numbers 10) HAVE BUT ONE OBJECT, the summoning, the assembling together, of the dead and living saints for their translation into the presence of their Lord.

Two effects follow, and follow instantaneously; for the apostle says in another epistle, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." (1 Cor. 15.51,52). "The dead in Christ shall rise first." What a stupendous scene! All that are Christ's, including, therefore, saints of the past, as well as of the present dispensation, shall rise at His coming. (1 Cor. 15.23). Tracing down the line of the ages from Adam till the last saint to be gathered in, all this countless multitude will, 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' rise from their graves-raised incorruptible. And not only so, but all the saints then living will be changed, so they all alike will be clothed upon with their resurrection bodies, in fashion like unto Christ's body of glory. (Phil. 3.21). It is then, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put

on immortality, that the saying that is written will be brought to pass, "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. 15.54; see also 2 Cor. 5.1—4). But no sooner has this marvellous change been accomplished than all its subjects will be caught up 'in the clouds' to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord! Then the Lord Himself enters for the first time, as far as His people are concerned, upon the full fruit of His redemptive work, of the travail of His soul. And what tongue could tell, or pen describe, His joy when He redeems from the grave the very bodies of His people, and when He brings by the word of His power all His chosen ones into His presence, and all conformed to His own image! Neither is it possible to express even our own joy, the joy on which we then shall enter, when the longing desires of our hearts are all realised, and, like Him, we shall behold His face, see Him as He is, and be with Him for ever. It is for this we wait, and the time is not far distant when all will be accomplished; for we rest on the sure word of our faithful Lord, who has said, "Surely I come quickly."



VITAL VERITIES (5)

by E. W. ROGERS

Paul's Letters

If the Epistles of Paul were set out in chronological order, the resulting arrangement would differ somewhat from the order in which they are found in the New Testament. For the *first* recorded letter from his pen is the 1st Thessalonians—not Romans, and the *last* from his pen is 2nd Timothy—not Philemon. Seeing that they form part and parcel of the one Revelation of God to men, it follows that they must have inter-relations, one letter with another, and the object of the present chapter is to ascertain what such subsisting relations are.

Paul's letters may be grouped in three classes:—

Class I. comprises those letters which were written during that

section of Paul's life which is covered by the history of the book of the Acts.

Class II. is covered by that period of Roman imprisonment referred to in the closing chapter of the book of the Acts.

Class III. embraces those letters written by Paul during the remainder of his life.

Not that it should be supposed that the letters of Paul preserved in the New Testament are the only letters he wrote, but they are the only letters which the Holy Spirit has deemed it necessary to retain for the use of the Church throughout the Christian age.

Class I. includes Romans, Galatians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

Class II. includes Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

Class III. embraces 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus.

It has ever been an undecided matter in the mind of Bible Students as to who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. Much thought and attention have been given to this branch of study but the only result *definitely* obtainable is that "God who spake in times past by the prophets to the fathers" is in this letter continuing to speak by His Son. The authorship has undoubtedly been kept anonymous to impress the reader with the Divine origin of the message.

Nevertheless, the Epistle to the Hebrews stands in conspicuous contrast with that of Paul to the Romans, for in the latter the problem is as to how to get the prisoner out of the criminal court, while in the former it is as to how to bring the once defiled sinner into the sanctuary.

If Peter brought the Gentiles into the light of the gospel it is this anonymous author who brings the Jews out of the shadow of Judaism.

CLASS I

As one peruses the book of the Acts, an ever pressing question in the mind is "What precisely was the gospel which these early evangelists preached?" and while that question is answered partially by the addresses of Peter and Paul as recorded in Acts 2, 10, 13 and 17 yet nowhere do we find the question so clearly and fully answered as in the Epistle to the Romans. The theme of that

Epistle from beginning to end is "The Gospel of God," as it affects sinner, saint, and Jew. Space would forbid an exhaustive analysis of this subject but an examination of that letter will show that Paul names the Central Theme of the Gospel—Christ: His own office in relation to the gospel—a trustee. He defines the need of the gospel in chapters 1 to 3: he states the facts of the gospel, the condition laid down in it, and the glorious results of the gospel in the lives of men now, and their destinies later.

But in view of God's foreknowledge of the propensity of men in all ages to "boast" in their own works, how wise and gracious it is that He has preserved for us Paul's letter to the Galatians in which the gospel is defended from Judaistic attempts to intermingle law with grace, and works with faith. For if in Romans the gospel is stated, in Galatians it is defended, the lines of defence being historical, logical, and appellative.

This raises another question :—

Seeing that the Gospel was preached, what of those who believe and of those who reject its testimony?

These questions are respectively answered in 1st and 2nd Thessalonians. The former shows that the hope of those who believed, which had hitherto been earth-centred, was now directed heavenward to obtain eternal glory there; they now wait for God's Son from heaven, Who would deliver them from the wrath of God which was coming on the godless world.

In the case of unbelievers, however, the 2nd Epistle reveals the awful doom of such as "receive not the love of the truth" nor "obey the gospel"; that it is "eternal destruction" from the presence of the Lord. It is not annihilation (which is never the thought in the Greek word here translated "destruction") but the eternal shutting out from the light of His presence in the gloom of "the blackness of darkness."

Again, after the gospel had been preached and the preachers had moved on, how did the disciples conduct themselves? This question is fully answered in 1st and 2nd Corinthians. The Jewish synagogue and the heathen temple were abandoned, and they gathered together "in church". These periodical gatherings were for the purposes of observing the Lord's Supper, prayer, ministry, etc., all the details pertaining to which may be ascertained by a careful study of these two letters.

Paul not a few times speaks of "faith, hope and love," and these six letters answer thereto.

In Romans and Galatians the gospel is presented for "faith's" acceptance.

In Thessalonians the "hope" of the believer is presented, a hope which is unaffected by life or death.

In Corinthians "love" is presented as that which tends to make the machinery of "spiritual gifts" work smoothly.

To quote another: There exists "A company brought into touch with God through living faith, their lives illuminated by heavenly hope, and their hearts knit together by holy love."

CLASS II

While all Scripture is God-breathed, yet some parts of it are on a higher plane than others. So the New Testament generally is on a higher plane than the Old, and so too, this second class is on a higher plane than the first class. For here we find the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief theme of these letters.

In Ephesians, Christ is presented as the One who loved the Church and gave Himself for it. He is "Head over all things," He is the "beloved One." This letter takes us back into eternity past, and carries us on into eternity future, and shows that events on earth in the meanwhile effect the accomplishing of a purpose made before all ages to be realized in future ages. Its main theme is The Church, that which is dearest to the heart of Christ. Its election, constitution, resources, ministers, individual responsibilities, and conflict form the main themes of its six chapters respectively.

In Colossians the same Blessed Person is presented, only this time in such a way as is calculated to correct the tendency of the believers to adopt the world's philosophical systems, and religionists' veneration of angels. The Lord is here presented chiefly as Head of the Body, and the four chapters of the Epistle may roughly be said to deal with (a) The Person (b) His work (c) His claims, and (d) His people.

These two Epistles have been likened to two great mountain peaks, between which is a deep valley, the Epistle to the Philippians, the famous second chapter of which speaks of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus.

It is an Epistle that shows the effect in the Believer's heart of the truths contained in the other two Epistles. The presentation of Christ in such a way finds a response to such an extent that Paul is able to say "For me to live is Christ: to die gain." "To depart and be with Christ is very far better." Christ was the one object of his life.

Paul is one who gives practical display of what he enjoins. He had a humble mind as chapter 2 shows. He had a heavenly mind as in chapter 3.; and in the midst of all the disturbing events of earth he had a tranquil mind (see chapter 4).

But what shall be said of the short letter to Philemon? Surely it is a concrete case exemplifying the application to life of the truths of the former three Epistles, and that in the case of the least intimate of earth's relationships, viz., Master and Servant. Observe how the Spirit of Christ fills His servant Paul, who is able to say "If he hath wronged thee, put that to my account." This forever shuts the mouth of objectors who might charge Paul with writing high ideals, but failing to display them in action. Here is a case in point, doubtless one of many.

CLASS III

While Ephesians speaks of the Catholic Church in regard to the Purpose of God, 1 Timothy deals with the local church as God's witness on earth. His earthly witness in Israel having failed, that people has been temporarily set aside. Meanwhile, another witness exists. Companies of believers from all races, form on earth God's testimony. Each company should be "the pillar and base of the truth" in the particular place where it is found. Hence in 1 Timothy and Titus much is said concerning "behaving in the house of God," and the ministry of "bishops" and "deacons" therein. They are Epistles which have to do with regulations and conduct "*in the house of God,*" i.e., the assemblies of God's people.

Thus far Timothy and Titus are in accord, though it may be observed that Paul's letter to Titus is wider. In its second chapter he shows the importance of proper "behaviour" *in this present age*. Five definite reasons are given why the Christian should be well behaved, viz:—

That the word of God be not blasphemed.

That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed.

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

That we should live soberly, righteously, and godly.

That we might be free from all iniquity.

2nd Timothy is a suitable close to the series, having to do with testimony in the world. In the midst of a cruel, cold, opposing world how refreshing to read from the pen of the veteran Paul—"I am not ashamed": "be not thou therefore ashamed." (Ch. 1 vv. 12,16,8). All that is requisite for last days is to be found "in Christ Jesus", a key phrase in this letter. In the midst of foes "God is our Saviour."

Paul, the warrior, has been contesting in respect of a good cause: the runner has not fainted but "finished his course": the trustee has not proved unworthy but has "kept the faith." He now confidently awaits "the victor's crown," which the Rigueous Judge will award Him in the day of His appearing.

Thus he looks on to the next great thing on earth — the Kingdom.

May God enable us to "follow Paul" in these matters, and to "love His appearing." The danger is ever-present that we may be like Demas who forsook the spiritual and ardent servant, "having loved this present world."

"THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM"

by E. R. Bower.

No. 1 — AN INTRODUCTION

The prophecy of Nahum is not only a 'minor' prophet, it is a prophecy which although having much attention paid to it over the years, has now apparently become neglected, perhaps it appears to have little or no relevance to our day or to the future. Nothing is known of Nahum or of Elkosh, but his oracle against the "exceeding great city" (Jon. 3.3) of Nineveh lives on as one of the books "written aforetime" and "for our learning" (Rom. 15.4). The story of "Jonah and the Whale" is a familiar one, but for many the significance of Jonah's prophecy is passed by, and Nahum's burden overlooked. Between the visit of Jonah which brought Nineveh to

repentance, and its utter destruction there is an interval of possibly a century and a half, although dates are uncertain. During that interval and probably near its end, Nahum comes upon the scene with his vision of Ninevah's overthrow. His vision may be coincident with the Assyrian invasion of Israel and Judah; with the collapse of the northern kingdom of Israel; and with the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 and 19). Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had to withdraw from the siege of Jerusalem and return to Nineveh where he was assassinated within the temple precincts (2 Kings 19.36,37). Commentators appear to be agreed in naming Sennacherib as the wicked counsellor; the counsellor of Belial (margin) of whom Nahum speaks but others consider Rab-shakeh ('chief of the captains' — a title and not a proper name) to be the wicked counsellor and Sennacherib as the man of Belial (1.11). Sennacherib's assassination fulfilled Nahum's prophecy (1.14). "I will make it (the temple) thy grave: for thou art light (in the balance)." Cf. Dan. 5.27. For the background of the books of Jonah and Nahum see 2 Kings 18 and 19; Isaiah 36 and 37. The wicked counsellor is a foreshadowing of the vile person who will stand up in the last days and speak great things against the God of gods, but will be brought to an end. (Dan. 11). Writers who see this foreshadowing of the "man of sin" think that the evil counsellor and the man of sin will be renegade Jews. If Rab-shakeh is seen as the evil counsellor then his knowledge of the Jew's language might bear this out. The story of Nineveh as seen in the contexts of Jonah and Nahum centers upon the sobering thought that God does not forget; He is not mocked (Gal. 6.7); man does not "turn up his nose" at God lightly. As we read Nahum's graphic poem (and his word painting is of forcible terseness), we see pictured before us those reminders that God does not forget. He still fulfils His own law, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me" (Ex. 20.5; 34.6,7). Would that the perpetrators of modern terrorism and of war would remember this! Nineveh forgot the mercy extended to them by God over the three or four generations after Jonah's call to repentance. Now His Name was blasphemed and Nineveh had become a byword for cruelty and oppression — "the cruelest of all the great empires of antiquity. They gloried in their records of a ferocity at which we stand aghast." (Sayce). "Judged from the vaunting inscriptions of her kings, no

power more useless, more savage, more terrible, ever cast its gigantic shadow on the page of history as it passed on the way of ruin. They cut down warriors like weeds, or smote them like wild beasts in the forests and covered pillars with the flayed skins of rival monarchs" (Farrar, quoted by "Precious Seed" 1967). Having experienced the mercy of God, they were now to experience His vengeance.—*To be continued.*

LEVI — 'THE LAW IN THE HEART'

by H. Shackcloth

Part III

There is a day known to the Lord when He will fulfil His long awaited promise to receive His redeemed people unto Himself. Following this there is another day, concerning which, the disciples asked of the Master, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel', with the reply, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.' Acts 1.6,7.

However, we may be assured that one prophetic fulfilment is being enacted in preparation for this event. We refer to the statement 'He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his sheep.' Jer. 31.10.

Whenever Israel displeased God in an extreme degree the punishment was either, at first, captivity or later, dispersion; even as we write we note how that God either uses the events of history to hasten the return of His people or perhaps fashions history to further it, which may be occurring now with the singular return of a large number of Israelites from Ethiopia.

This return is the precursor of the time when a further prophecy will be fulfilled, 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.' Jeremiah 31.31. This is said to be distinct from the Sinai Covenant, 'which, my covenant, they brake, although I was a husband unto them', saith the Lord. 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' (vv. 32,33).

These statements can refer only to blessings for Israel quite distinct from those vouchsafed to the Church. We take to heart the words of the Lord to His disciples, as the remnant of Israel, 'When these things **begin** to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth night.' Luke 21.28.

(Concluded).

The Millennium — (3)

by J. E. TODD

THE PROPHETS

Because of God's promises to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, the prophets looked forward to the golden age for Israel when all these promises would be fulfilled. Being prophets their vision enjoyed the advantage of divine inspiration. The earthly glories of that coming age form the climax of most of the prophetic book of the Old Testament. The prophets' vision was of Jerusalem and the land of Canaan inhabited by the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob under a king of David's line enjoying uninterrupted peace and material prosperity while ever the earth exists.

Here follows a sample statement from each prophet with some further readings, for this subject fills a considerable portion of the prophetic writings.

David prophesied, 'To Israel for an everlasting covenant. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance' (1 Chron. 16.13-18 and repeated in Psa. 105.7-11).

A psalmist, Ethan, prophesied, 'Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie to David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me' (Psa. 89.35-36, read the whole Psalm and also Psalms 2, 72 and 110).

Isaiah prophesied, 'Thou (Jerusalem) shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken' (Isa. 62.3-4, see the whole chapter and also chapter 2).

Jeremiah prophesied, 'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,

that the city (Jerusalem) shall be built to the LORD . . . Shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever' (Jer. 31.38-40).

Ezekiel prophesied, 'They shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever' (Ezek. 37.25, read verses 15-28).

Hosea prophesied, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon' (Hos. 14.5, read verses 4-9).

Joel prophesied, 'But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation' (Joel 3.20, read the whole chapter).

Amos prophesied, 'I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel . . . And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God' (Amos 9.14-15).

Micah prophesied, 'He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us . . . Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old' (Micah 7.19-20, read verses 11-20).

Zephaniah prophesied, 'At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you . . . when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD' (Zeph. 3.20, read verses 14-20).

Zechariah prophesied, 'And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited' (Zech. 14.11, read verses 11-21).

The future vision of these prophets can be summed up in the words of their fellow prophet Daniel, 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' (Dan. 7.13,14).

This is confirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken . . . and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.' (Luke 24.25-27).

GOD'S SALVATION

by Charles Stanley

What must I do to be saved? How often has this question been asked since the words were first uttered by the jailor of Philippi? How necessary it is that the divinely-given answer should be before us in this our day, when thousands are clinging, with a terrible zeal, to human righteousness and fleshly ordinances as a means of salvation! How refreshingly simple is the reply of the Spirit given through the apostle: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But how difficult it is to persuade the sinner that this is *all* that God requires of him! And yet, turn to whatever portion of God's word I may, I fail to find that man has ever been his *own* saviour.

Take an example. On the sands of the desert were stretched a multitude of Israelites, writhing in the throes of death, through the bite of the fiery serpents, the reward of their sin. (Num. 21). What can save them? If their prayers and works of righteousness, surely the time to do so has now arrived. Their religion is one of works and ordinances, but they have sinned, they are guilty—yea, they are lost and dying, and nothing can for one moment avail them, save God Himself, the One against whom they have sinned; and, blessed be His name, He interposes, and, by the mouth of His servant, Moses, proclaims *His* salvation.

"*One look*" at the serpent of brass, and the deadly wound is healed, the Israelite is saved from death. It was a salvation outside of man, it was God's salvation; man had neither to merit it by good works, nor obtain it by ordinances—he had simply to BELIEVE it.

All that he could do was to turn his dying eye to the uplifted serpent, and this was all Jehovah required of him, for He had said to

Moses, "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." The bitten Israelite's faith grasped the promise of God, and expressed itself by a look. Healing and life were the immediate result.

Thus has it ever been. Man in his extremity has always had to go for help and succour to that God, whom, in his moments of prosperity or trial, he has treated with proud neglect. But, blessed be His name, flowing from His heart is an exhaustless supply of grace, which is ever at the service of all who, confessing their sins, turn away from creature help, and trust implicitly in Him.

And now a word with you, reader, if unconverted. Know you not that you are suffering from the bite of a serpent more terrible than those which retribution brought upon the sinful Israelites in a bygone day? In what are *you* trusting for salvation from the awful consequences of your sin, the hell towards which you are travelling so rapidly? Who can rescue you from that dread abyss, on the brink of which you are even now tottering—that abyss of eternal judgment?

Will your ceremonies, baptism confirmation, teetotalism, blue-ribbonism, reformation, the keeping of feasts, and observance of holy days, your good works and prayers, avail you in this matter? No! No! No! Not all the ceremonies and good works in the world, ten million times repeated, can ever atone for one sin; they do but come in as a barrier between your soul and God. I tell you. He will accept neither you nor them. You are lost, poor sinner, and none but God can save you, and He will only save you in one way.

You must come to Him as the prodigal came to the father, in Luke 15, *just as you are*, in all your nakedness, wretchedness, filthiness, and unworthiness, with no good thing about you, and nothing to recommend you to God but your need, your penitence finding expression in the cry, welling up from the heart conscious of its guilt, "I have sinned," with faith that God can, and will forgive, you, through the work of His Son.

Listen, while Jesus proclaims the gospel of God's salvation.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For 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 3.14-16).

How unspeakably precious is this! The blessed Son of God is using the story of Israel's sin and Jehovah's mercy, to illustrate God's present way of saving sinners. As then, so now, the sinner of that day looked, and lived. The sinner of today, weary of that sin which threatens him with God's eternal wrath, looks back in faith to that wondrous scene at Calvary where Jesus suffered, the Just for the unjust; sees Him there as the One who came from the glory, out of the love of His heart, to bear in His own sinless person the judgment due to fallen man; and believing God has raised Him from the dead, receives everlasting life.

Oh! mystery of mysteries—love unfathomable, unutterable—God's love to man!—to man who had trampled His glory underfoot, and whose vile heart took perpetual delight in transgressing His holy laws. Yet forth from the Father came the Son of His love, and trod the earth as the "Man of sorrows," and the Father traced, with ineffable delight, each step of His blessed journey, while was sounded forth from the glory the Father's voice of loving recognition: "This is *my* beloved Son." Wondrous word, the heart of Jesus, dishonoured by man, was refreshed and cheered by the sense of the Father's full delight in Himself.

It was the Father's presence, the abode of eternal light and love, exchanged for a world which understood and loved Him not; the cold indifference of men pressed upon that loving heart, and grieved it to its core. It was the joy of heaven exchanged for a cross and a grave. The form of God, with its supernal glory veiled, that He might assume a body prepared for Him, in which He could suffer and die.

Only the Father and the Son will ever know the depths of the sorrow and anguish of Gethsemane and Calvary: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was the dying cry of the Son of God. Dost thou know, my reader, why God forsook Him in the hour of His awful agony? It was because He was bearing sin, and a holy God hid His face from the Sin-bearer, in order that He might bless the sinner with eternal glory.

Yes, Love's gift in death has satisfied infinite Holiness. The heart of the Father finds eternal rest and satisfaction in the shed blood of His dear Son, that blood which is to Him the blessed proof of a

perfect obedience rendered in the scene of man's terrible failure. Heaven's gates are thrown wide open, a holy God, seated on a throne of grace, beckons the prodigal to Himself, and offers him the kiss of eternal reconciliation; bids him come just as he is, and partake of the feast which everlasting love has spread, bids him come and partake, without money, and without price.

Loudly sounds forth from God's own lips, over land and sea, the glorious proclamation of pardon and peace. Harken, oh, poor, perishing world—hearken to what a God of love is saying to thee : "PEACE HAS BEEN MADE THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE CROSS." "HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON HATH EVER-LASTING LIFE." The message is to the poor, as well as to the rich and the noble, and the command to His servants is, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in, that my house may be filled."

The presence of the Son of God on earth, His wondrous death at Calvary, His resurrection and ascension to glory, His being seated at the right hand of God—all this explains why God does not make man's salvation depend upon his own obedience and righteousness. Salvation has been procured for the sinner by the work of another, the divinely-appointed Substitute, who Himself bore God's wrath against sin, and rose from under it triumphant, bursting asunder the bands of death and the grave, and crushing beneath His pierced feet the enemy of souls—thrice blessed proof of an accomplished redemption.

Here may the weary, heavy-laden sinner find rest, joy and everlasting peace.

Hail, glorious Saviour! Worthy art Thou to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing throughout the eternal ages, Amen.

And yet—oh, sorrowful truth!—spite of all this, millions of unsaved men and women are marching on towards hell, supremely indifferent to what God has done in love to save them from its endless woes.

And millions of others are groping about in a maze of ordinances, vainly seeking for a salvation which has already been procured for the sinner by the atoning death of the Son of God.

Oh, my reader, as you value your deathless soul, let me beseech you to tear from your heart everything in which you are resting for

salvation apart from Christ. Look away from everything to Him, just as the dying Israelite looked away from everything to the serpent of brass. Look unto Him, the all-glorious, God-appointed Saviour, once nailed to a cross of wood, from whose pierced side flowed that blood which alone could make atonement for the soul. Base ALL your hopes, for time and eternity, upon Him who shed His precious, precious blood, AND UPON HIM ALONE.

Think of it, "one look," and the virus of the serpent's bite was annulled, the Israelite leaped to his feet, made perfectly whole. One look of faith at Jesus, and the load of sins is gone, buried for ever in the sea of God's forgetfulness; all fear of wrath removed, and everlasting life gained.

Oh, do you not believe, my reader?—*God asks nothing more of you*, He waits to save you—He waits, I tell you. What a wonderful sight, God waiting to receive the sinner! The God who, in His mercy, came to the rescue of rebellious Israel in the wilderness, has sent His only-begotten Son to suffer in the sinner's stead, and to bear his judgment; and He now waits to pardon all who accept that Son as Saviour. Oh, will you not accept salvation in God's own way? You are not expected to save yourself, or even to contribute towards your salvation. Jesus, the Saviour, procured salvation, amid inexpressible sorrow and agony, at Calvary, for all who shall believe in Himself.

All things are now ready, sinner; the banquet is spread, the guests are pressing in through the open door of grace. Will *you* be among the blessed number? Pass in, poor wanderer—pass in.

Oh! says some one, my sins are so many and great. Of course they are; the wound of the bitten Israelite, no doubt, smarted dreadfully, but that did not hinder him from looking away from his wound to the God-appointed means of healing.

Jehovah had not said, Whoever is occupied with his wound shall live, but, Whosoever *looketh* shall live. Jesus did not say, Whosoever is occupied with his many and great sins shall receive everlasting life, but, Whosoever *believeth* in ME.

God speaks of man's ruin, and of His own gracious remedy, in the same breath. For example, we read in Romans 3 : "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" but what follows immediately afterwards? "Being justified freely by his grace, through the re-

demption that is in Christ Jesus." The man who has sinned, and come short of His glory, is he whom God justifies FREELY.

Instances could be multiplied shewing that God's mode of dealing with the sinner, is, to convince him of his sin and danger, and then point him to what He has done, in His boundless love, to put away the sin, and avert the judgment.

Hence, when a sinner is convicted of his guilt, then God would have him look outside himself, away from his own helplessness and vileness, to His Son, once lifted up at Calvary, and obtain salvation by believing in Him.

God sent the earthquake, to awaken the Philippian jailor out of his sleep of indifference, and shew him his need of salvation; and his lips gave immediate expression to the fear of his startled soul—"What must I do to be saved?" In an instant came the answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

There need be no pause between conviction and salvation. All the exercises of soul, the doubts, fears, cries, groans, and endeavours to find something meritorious in oneself, always end in the believer's ultimately looking away from himself to Christ, and finding, to his joyful astonishment, that real peace and salvation are connected, entirely and absolutely, with Him and His finished work.

Food for Thought

Lust and Immorality are a canker to the mind . . . a corrosive to the conscience . . . and a curse to a nation.

Words break no bones . . . but they do break hearts.

In creation we see God's Hand: in redemption we see HIS HEART.

People judge Christianity by what they see in Christians.

Ponder the wonder of Jesus.

To show your love for Christ . . . live for Christ.

A well-read Bible is the sign of a well-fed soul.

The only place to hide sin is under the BLOOD OF JESUS.

When God wipes our tears, sorrow gives way to eternal song.

—Anthony Orsini, U.S.A.

DOORS IN THE REVELATION

by B. Currie, (Belfast)

No. 1

In his gospel John has more references to doors than any of the synoptic writers. These are to be found in chapters 10, 18 and 20 where we note such well known references as "I am the door," 10.9; "Peter stood at the door without," 18.16; "the doors were shut" 20.19. In total there are nine such references.

When he wrote the Revelation John referred to three doors:—

1. 3.8 "I have set before thee an open door," — this door opens OUT FOR SERVICE,
2. 3.20 "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him and sup with him, and he with Me," — this door opens IN FOR COMMUNION,
3. 4.1 "After this I looked, and, behold a door was opened in heaven," — this door opens UP FOR RAPTURE.

We shall briefly consider each in turn.

1. A DOOR OPENED OUT FOR SERVICE — Rev. 3.8.

There are some who would take this verse and give it a very wide application and insist that service is open for all and sundry. However this is not the case in the New Testament which constantly and consistently insists that prerequisite conditions are necessary for service. The list of qualifications necessary for a deacon (Gk.— a servant) is found in 1 Tim. 3.8-13, and clearly indicates that high moral, doctrinal, and personal characteristics must be seen in any who wish to serve.

The verse being considered shows that such is true, not only concerning an individual, but also for an assembly. The open door is set before an assembly, Philadelphia, which is one of the two (Smyrna being the other) not rebuked. This is an immediate indication that the door for service is not open to every group claiming to be an assembly. In fact the verse gives three reasons why the open door is set before it:

- a) "thou hast a little strength,"
- b) "hast kept my word,"
- c) "hast not denied my Name."

a) "thou hast a little strength"

It is very clear that this is not a rebuke but a commendation. The Lord appreciates a little power to continue in the ways which are pleasurable unto Him. The expression is in contrast to that which was seen and experienced in the early days of church testimony —

Acts 4.33 "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." The words "power" and "strength" are the same Greek word, *dunamis*. We can learn that we cannot expect the "great power" of pentecostal days in a time of general departure and declension but there will be found assemblies of Philadelphian character which have "a little power."

This "little power" is detected in a two fold way, one positive and one negative.

b) "hast kept my word"

This is the positive indication of the little power. The verb to keep means to watch, to guard as Acts 12.5 "Peter therefore was kept in prison," also 16.23 "charging the jailor to keep them safely." It has the implication of treasuring and honouring as Matt. 19.17 "keep the commandments," John 19.16 "he keepeth not the sabbath day," John 14.15 "if ye love Me keep My commandments," 2 Tim. 4.7 "I have kept the faith," Rev. 22.7 "blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." This is but a selection of the seventy-five occurrences of the word in the New Testament to impress upon us that strength is not measured by numbers attending meetings, nor evangelical zeal, nor by interdenominational activity, but by how much we watch, guard, treasure and honour the word.

In order to keep the word we must first of all know it and then obey it. The scriptures are neither old fashioned nor archaic since God's standards and moral requirements do not change. It is incumbent upon all Christians to read the Bible carefully and prayerfully with a submissive spirit willing to obey its precepts. Slipshod and hurried reading without meditation will not produce all that is implied in "keeping" and cannot therefore indicate "a little strength" which means that the Lord will not open doors for service.

c) "hast not denied my Name"

This is the Name in which we have been saved — Acts 4.12, baptised — Matt. 28.19, gathered — Matt. 18.20, in which we pray — John 14.13,14, and in which discipline is carried out — 1 Cor. 5.4. The fact that things are done in His Name implies both His absence and that we are acting as His representatives. Thus to dishonour His Name means that we are not giving a true representation of Him during His absence.

The verb to deny means "to abrogate, forsake or renounce" — W. E. Vine. It is used for example, of Peter denying the Lord, Matt. 26.72 "again he **denied** with an oath" and of Moses forsaking and renouncing Egypt, Heb. 11.24 "**refused** to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Thus the indication of "a little strength" is seen in those who by neither life nor lip deny His Name. It is before such an assembly that the Lord sets an open door. Where a company has moved away from the basic principles and by their actions and associations compromise His word and His Name we can be sure that their door of service has been opened by a hand other than the Lord's.

(To be continued).

Three Men of God

BY R. D. ELWOOD, (NEWTOWNABBEY)

The only three men recorded in scripture that "walked with God," are ENOCH, NOAH, and LEVI.

A PROPHET

In Gen. 5.18-24 we read of Enoch. His name means, "INITIATED or DEDICATED," and he dedicated his life to God.

His walk with God was habitual, and he had this testimony that he "pleased God." He lived by faith and was translated up to God by faith. (Heb. 11.5).

Enoch is a picture of the "Saved on earth" at the second coming of the LORD JESUS CHRIST to the air to collect His Bride from this old world and all its wicked ways.

Enoch was the seventh from Adam and that would speak to us

of perfection. This perfection we shall enter at His coming, note 1 John 3.2 . . . "When He shall appear we shall be like Him . . . and Phil. 3.21 . . . "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His Glorious Body . . ."

Enoch prophesied as a Prophet that the "Lord cometh." He lived a year for every day of the year, that is to say, he lived for 365 years on earth before God took him away.

A KING

In Gen. 6.9 we read of Noah "walking with God," and his name means "Rest or COMFORT," and he lived for 950 years.

In his generation Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord" . . . Gen. 6.8 (his Salvation).

God talked with Noah . . . His communion. Gen. 6.13.

God covenanted eight times with Noah . . . His promises. Gen. 9.13. Eight would speak of Resurrection, or something new. The evidence of God's promise is His rainbow in the sky. Noah did what God commanded, . . . His obedience. Gen. 6.22.

Noah was the tenth from Adam and ten would speak of man's responsibility. (e.g. the ten commandments). Noah typifies the King, as after the flood he was sovereign over the whole earth. Gen. 9.2-3.

A PRIEST

In Mal. 2.4-7 we read of Levi. His name means "JOINED or ATTACHED." (the third son of Jacob), and Levi became God's appointed tribe to serve Him. His work was "a Marriage of Service, or joined to God," and was a mediator for the children of Israel.

Levi had the covenant of Life and Peace and spoke the Law of Truth without sin. He walked with God in peace and equity and justice and Godly fear. He turned many from their sins.

Levi would speak to us of the PRIEST.

In contrast when we come into the New Testament, there was only one person that walked with God, and He is "THE LORD JESUS CHRIST." He is the PROPHET, THE KING, and THE PRIEST, who is so anointed by God Himself.

In Luke 7.16, He is declared as a "GREAT PROPHET." In Rev.

17.14, He is declared as the "LORD of Lords, and the KING of Kings, Lk. 1.33 also declares "Of His Kingdom there shall be no end. In Heb. 6.20 He is declared as a HIGH PRIEST for ever. As a testimony the Heavens opened on at least three occasions and declared Him to be the "One in whom God was well pleased." (In whom He found Great Delight).

He is the unique Son, the Beloved of the Father. Matt. 3.17, Matt. 17.5, and John 12.28.

. . . His words were oracles . . . His acts were miracles. Some of old time have been king-priest, some have been king-prophets, and some priests have prophesied, but our LORD JESUS CHRIST is the only person who can be PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING. It is this calibre of person that we can put our trust on in every situation. Col. 1.10.

The Love of Jesus

by C. H. Mackintosh.

In looking at Revelation 1.5, 6, we can trace the following actings of love: first, love thinks of its objects. This marks the motive in operation to be unaffectedly pure, for when the heart regales itself by meditating on its object, it seeks not to be noticed, to be praised or exalted for thinking of its object; its reward is found in the very thought itself—a reward, a pleasure with which nothing can compare.

Secondly, love visits its object. It could not be content with merely thinking: the same principle that leads love to think with pleasure, induces it to visit its object; and, moreover, we can trace the same purity, elevation, and disinterestedness, in the visit as in the thought. It does not think upon its object in order to please or attract the attention of any one, neither does it visit in order to effect such ends; it has its own real, substantial enjoyment, both in thinking of and visiting its object.

Thirdly, love suffers for its object. It rests not satisfied with merely thinking of, or visiting its object—it must suffer. In order to exhibit itself in all its reality and intensity, love must put itself to cost for its object; it must spend and be spent, not because it expects a return, but simply because it will express itself in a way not to be mistaken. Love never thinks of what it may reap for itself in thus suffering. No: it simply contemplates its object, in thinking of, visiting, and suffering for it.

Fourthly, love exalts its object. This is the climax. In the exaltation of its

object, loves sees the fruit of previous thought, visitation, and suffering. Hence, love feels exquisite happiness in exalting its object, for in so doing, it reaps the wished-for harvest.

Let us now apply the above blessed characteristics of love to the Lord Jesus, and see how His love exhibited all of them. Did not He ponder in His own eternal mind His much-loved church before the foundation of the world? Yes, truly "His gracious eye surveyed us ere stars were seen above." Did He rest satisfied with merely thinking about us? No: He veiled His glory; He came down into this cold, heartless world, as into a vast quarry, from whence He hoped to hew out stones for the temple. He made His way down into this "roughly valley" of ours, which had "neither been eared nor sown." "The day-spring from on high hath visited us;" but He did not rest satisfied with coming down to look at us in our misery and degradation; He determined to suffer for us, to groan, to bleed, to die for us; He hath washed us in "His own blood," which marks the intensity of His sufferings for us. What, then, was all this for? Why those ineffable sufferings of Jesus? Why the groans and bloody sweat in the garden? Why the mysterious hour of profound darkness, together with the cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Simply that the love of Jesus might exalt its object. And He has exalted His object, yea, to the highest point of elevation: "He hath made us kings and priests unto God."

Thus we have seen how the love of Jesus has thought of, visited, suffered for, and exalted its object: this is for our comfort. But then we should remember that if we love Jesus, we too will often like to think of Him, to contemplate His grace, ponder over His perfection; moreover, we will pay frequent visits to the secret of His sanctuary, not to gain a name as persons of much prayer, but simply to indulge the desires of our hearts after Him "who is the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Again, we shall be ready to suffer for Him, not in order to commend ourselves to our brethren as persons of great energy and zeal, but to express the high estimation in which we hold His blessed Person. Finally, it will be our constant effort to exalt Him in every place: our constant cry will be, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." Let us earnestly pray for such a deep tide of Divine love in our poor, cold, narrow, selfish hearts, as will make our service not the mere spurt of imperfect zeal, kindled by the unhallowed spark of human opinion, but the calm, steady, constant flow of unalterable affection for Jesus—that affection which has its primary joy in pondering over its object, ere it comes forth as an actor or a sufferer in His cause.

"Come, saints, praise the Lamb, His mercies proclaim,
And lift up your heads and sing of His name;
His love to the church, which He purchased with blood,
To make her His bride and the temple of God."

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (3)

— by John Hawthorne, (N. Ireland)

Among the many Christian homes into which children were born was one in the North of England, a farm house outside Whitewaven. The parents were Robert Hawthorne, a Scot, saved out of a "kirk" family and received into Low Waters Assembly, Hamilton and Anne (nee Boadle) a farmer's daughter whose parents were disinherited after leaving the Church of England. They became foundation members of Hope Hall Assembly, Scilly Banks, which is now sadly extinct. The child was John Hawthorne, their firstborn. At the time of his birth there were six saved relatives in the home and when father was there — seven. That, plus the fact that his mother was a Sunday School teacher, would clearly indicate the nature of his upbringing.

Early impressions were made by the death of his grandfather but Satan soon subtly dispelled these with the reminder that the family were "long-livers." The second and lasting impression was the learning of the truth of the Lord's coming. This truth was forcibly impressed upon the three children, two girls having been born, after the family had moved to live in Belfast. Mother was visiting a friend on the far side of the city of Belfast and we lived on the East side. The time of her expected return passed by and longer until we were convinced that the great event had actually happened, leaving us behind for the inevitable judgement of God upon the ungodly. On a subsequent Lord's Day in Ballwhackamore Hall at the close of the remembrance of their Lord the saints sang No. 106 in the Believers Hymn Book. "It may be at morn, It may be at midday, or that the blackness of midnight will burst into Glory . . . when Jesus receives from the world His own." This dispelled a thought in young John's mind that he might wait until the summer when he would normally go to his grandmother for holidays and always have the

opportunity to attend test meetings — a suggestion his mother had made earlier. Although only in his tenth summer John desired salvation on that very day and got it in the Sunday night meeting in the gospel hall. The speaker was the late Wm. Campbell — the "wee panio man" — to distinguish him from the preacher's son. He spoke from the healing of the leper in Mark 1. As the hearers were directed to Christ's person and power John recalled those precious words:—

My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.

Resting on that fact and with assurance from John 3.16 — the latter half — he was saved on the seat without his mother or sister being aware of what had transpired. This was made known about 8.20 p.m. by inserting a little note in the clock rim on the living room mantelpiece.

What is to be done with young children like this professing to be saved? Usually two things which are WRONG, viz: prop them up when they have nothing or knock them down when they could have life. What happened John? His father said to all enquiries — "He is of age ask him." Likewise the brethren in old Mourne Street assembly, with which the parents were then connected. They waited until John was 16 and satisfied on testimony and evidence, they baptised and received him, these included such worthies as Capt. Hill, S. Roberts, T. Eccles, T. McKeown (Sen.).

Another question now arises — What is there in the assembly for young folk? There was and still is Sunday School work, open-air and tract work locally. Saturday village work according to the area of the city wherein one resides. There are now vast new housing estates that have not been tracted by assembly workers.

All these activities are good training ground for "full time" work if one is led so of the Lord. Eventually when moving around the province is secular employment in the Telephone industry, one was afforded the privilege and honour of sharing in series of gospel meetings. The earlier labours with J. Thompson, Alex. Little, R. Beattie and others. Encouragement was received from these brethren

and other full-tune evangelists as well as from different assembly elders including Bloomfield where we were then in fellowship. While travelling to the funeral of late Wm. McCracken, who was now father-in-law, one of these said to me — "My servant is dead — arise and go." No doubt a reference to Joshua 1.2. The decision to leave work and fully serve the Lord was not quickly or lightly taken, indeed it proved to be akin to the experience of salvation. However, January 1968 saw the step taken. Since then labours have been shared with various brethren in Ireland and elsewhere. We can only say "By the grace of God I am what I am — 1 Cor. 15.10" and "Having obtained help from God I continue until this day." — Acts 26.22. As we feel the rapid approach of the Lord's coming and the increasing and abounding spiritual darkness with accompanying carelessness we would make one appeal — Brethren pray for us. — 1 Thess. 5.25.

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Selected

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by J. E. Fairfield

God's Shut in Ones

Not in the limelight which so many share,
Tis pleasing to the flesh to labour there;
The secret place is not so keenly sought
Where God's "Shut-ins" the choicest wreaths have
wrought.

The clamour for the platform oft bespeaks
The glory that the occupier seeks;
Enamored by a crowded atmosphere
Who restless wait, and lend a boredomed ear.

A lonely furrow many a pilgrim ploughs,
In sweet content, adoringly he bows;
An unseen fellowship to him is more
Than all the honours earth could on him pour.

"Shut-ins" learn God in no uncertain way,
Lessons which doth the loneliness repay;
It is the school that gives the flesh no place
In sweet communion at the throne of grace.

The school in which one touches unseen things,
And counts but naught the mirth of earthly Kings;
To have the heart find satisfaction sweet
Sitting like Mary at the nailed pierced feet.

Then happier far to be a "Shut-in one",
In fellowship with God's Beloved Son;
Than being in the public eye
Gaining the praise of men that soon must die.

Soon shall the Shut-in ones unfettered be,
And in the unsullied light of Heaven see
Rich gems which nothing shall their lustre dim,
Fruit of their toil in secret done for Him.

— R. Hull, (Belfast)

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

Part IV — *THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE*

Scriptures to read prior to this article, (1 Cor. 7.29,30; Rev. 17.4; 18.22,23; 19.7,9,16; 21.2,9,10,17). These passages from the word of God deal with matters connected with the thought of marriage, and the preparation for it.

Of Babylon we read that a time is coming when the voice of the bridegroom and the bride is to be heard no more in her. The moment will arrive when men will no more be permitted to hear those voices connected with the mercies of God. Indeed we might say that of all God's mercies, and there are many, marriage is among the greatest, because it speaks to us in a peculiar way of Christ and the church. But the time is coming for Babylon when that voice will be no more at all heard in her.

We will refer to Adam, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to develop thought of marriage. In the case of Adam and Eve, there was no marriage, for a marriage supposes onlookers, witnesses; there were no spectators with Adam. Then again, there was no such thing as choice on Adam's part, for choice suggests alternatives — others to choose from. A man today chooses his wife from others, but there was no such thing with Adam. Eve's qualification was that she was formed out of his own rib, a companion of his own order. Innocent man — that was the order. Then there was no thought of clothing; no preparation — no wedding garment, for the moral question had not been raised, there was nothing to cover. Nakedness and innocence go together, but the moment the moral question of good and evil is raised there must be clothing. It is protective. So we read, "The Lord God made them coats of skin". Thus they were clothed indicating the blessed protection of the death of Christ. However the people under those coats of skin were unchanged — they were sinful, though they were under the protection of God. Though Adam wore a coat of skin he was not in accord with what was set forth in it.

When we come to Isaac taking a wife, again there is no question of choice. On the contrary, when the servant is sent out to

fetch Rebecca he says, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me" — there was but one woman for Isaac — there was no question of choice. However, in Jacob we get the idea of choice; it says of Rachel that Jacob loved her and he made a proposal for her. He would work seven years for her, and when he had done so he counted them as days for the love he bore her. All these are divine features to teach us how the Lord had chosen the church. He has won the church for Himself, and the idea of choice comes in at this point. It is the things we have power to choose which are our danger; providential things do not carry the same menace. It is where the will has place, where we can make personal choice of a thing, that the danger lies. And this is perhaps specially seen in regard to our choice of a wife.

Now the Lord has chosen the church for Himself, and He has made no mistake. He loved the church; it is the vessel of divine choice, and He gave Himself for it. He has worked for her — to use the type — and His labour, though much, seems doubtless to Him but as a few days. It is through the natural relationships that God is pleased to give us impressions of these great things, His great thoughts as to Christ and the church. The very idea of marriage is taken from God's thoughts as to Christ and the church, for in order to give man an idea of it, He has given marriage to men, so that He might set forth in that precious relationship something of the blessedness of His own primary thoughts in regard to Christ and the church. There is always a danger in what is natural, it carries with it an element of danger, for the natural is opposed to the spiritual; so in 1 Corinthians the apostle says, "The time is straitened. It remains that they have wives be as though they had not". We are not to live in these things, but to learn in them and to profit in them. The Spirit of God would counteract the influence of what is natural in our souls by this thought, "the time is short". One's impression as to that grows; it is impressed on the spirits of many that the Lord is very near at hand, the time when Christ will take His bride, and that thought is to control every feature of nature — joy or sorrow, or gain or loss — every feature of nature even at its sweetest it to be held in control by the thought that the coming of the Lord is at hand.

We must all be aware that we are very near the time spoken of

in Revelation 17 when Babylon, the mother of harlots, will be seen. Women have become increasingly prominent in our days; if we are spared a few years longer I think we may see women in control everywhere; they will control government, the judiciaries, the courts of law. The Revelation shows us that all is to be headed up in a woman: Babylon (the world system, to be destroyed by Antichrist) says, "I sit a queen and am no widow" — she is seen clothed in scarlet, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls — you see how closely the enemy is imitating the divine thought.

Beloved brethren, a Man has been seen on this earth, an incorruptible Man — a Man who served God faithfully, who could not be turned aside. Now God has it in hand to form a bride for that Man. For this reason we see that the enemy is against the church, he is seeking to destroy it, preparing a counterfeit, Babylon, the mother of harlots.

What a sweet and blessed contrast to turn to chapter 19, where the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His bride has made herself ready. What a lot of preparation goes on before the marriage day comes; what activity it involves that all may be bridal and new and fresh; that there may be no marks of contamination, but that all may speak of virginity and purity. We read here, "the bride hath made herself ready — she has zealously cast off every element of impurity, every element that would suggest a garment spotted by the world, every element that would not speak of virginity — she has made herself ready. And then she is clothed in a garment in correspondence with her affections; her affections are pure, undivided, and her garments are in correspondence with her affections. She is clothed in fine linen, pure and bright, and we are told that the fine linen is the "righteousness of the saints". Every little bit of righteousness worked out in us practically is going to have its place in that garment of fine linen. You may say, but they were such little things. Yes, and the threads that go to make the linen are very fine, very slender in themselves, but when divine skill has woven them together, what a garment it is going to be! If His wife has made herself ready, it is in the daily and continual practice of righteousness. How it would comfort our hearts as we suffer for righteousness here, to know that we are working out that which is to be our garment in the day of

glory, having all our hopes centred in Christ, and our affections gathered up to Him!

In chapter 19, following upon the wife's having made herself ready, we find Him making war, and it is said that He is clothed in a garment dipped in blood; it is a vesture with a name written on it, King of kings, and Lord of lords". And not only is that written on the vesture, but it is upon His thigh. What I understand by that is that when you look under the garment you see exactly the same thing as upon it. What is seen outwardly is in correspondence with what is seen beneath. When Abraham sent his servant to fetch Rebecca he made him swear, putting his hand under his thigh; it indicates the strength of a man. Now the name on the garment here is in exact harmony with what is within; the name is upon His garment and upon His thigh. When He came here as an infant He wore swaddling clothes — they were the garments of infancy — they were suitable to Him, for He was born a babe; those garments indicated what He was — a babe. When the church comes out of heaven from God she is seen "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", that is her eternal setting. (Rev. 21.2). She is FOR HIM — her beauty is for Him; she is adorned as a bride, for she is a bride, and her beauty is for Him in eternity.

If we look at that scripture we shall find that there are four simple figures left to us in eternity: God and man, and a husband and a wife. The theme runs all through scripture. It opens with a man and his wife and it closes with a bride adorned for her husband. What lies between those two points is the work of God down the ages. What a history lies between the coming of Christ and the preparation of the bride! How beautiful is her adorning for Him. The church will always be beautiful to Christ; it is an eternal beauty. The fairest in face and form naturally will fade, but the beauty of the bride is worked out in moral perfection, through moral questions. She is wholly the product of divine work — eternally beautiful to Christ.

In chapter 21.9 she is spoken of as "the bride, the Lamb's wife"; she is in her working clothes, so to speak, now. Like the woman in Proverbs 31 that Solomon looked for but could not find. Here she is able to carry her husband's honour unsullied; able to see a field and purchase it; a vessel of utility — for the church is both ornamental and useful. She can work indeed, but

she is beautiful to Him — all her beauty is for Him; she is not a bride to men, she is the bride of Christ. When she comes out the figure changes and it is as the city in which the light of glory of God is seen; there are the walls great and high, and the gates of pearl — all those wonderful four-square dimensions which speak of what the church is to be in the world to come for Christ. Yet interesting as that might be there is something being affected today, and the last feature which is seen is "The Spirit and the bride say, Come"; that is what is to mark the bride at the end, she says, Come! And that is not only addressed to Christ, but to him that hears, and to him that is athirst, and to whosoever will. The greater part of the "Come" is for Christ but it makes room for whosoever will to come to Him. When the moment arrives for Christ to take the church, she is ravished with Him — she cannot do without Him. She says, "Come", for she can wait no longer. She cries with intensity of longing for Him, she calls for Him with a desire which cannot wait — and the next moment He is here! The desire after Him is increasing on every hand — we are conscious of it in our own hearts — He cannot be very far away; it is a true impression which we have — bridal affections are stirring in the hearts of the saints, and we know it.

What shall we do meanwhile? We recognise that the time is short, and we rejoice with those that do rejoice; and we weep with those who weep, but we will not remain there, for the time is short; all is committed to the Lord, that our hearts affections may be kept for Him. How easily an influence connected with the affections will turn us away from Christ. It was seen in Eve, for the enemy came in through the vessel of affection, she was in the transgression and Adam followed her. So the corrective exhortation here is that it remains for those that are married, to be as not married, those, who weep, as those who weep not. One bride and one wife will remain throughout eternity; natural links will pass away, but Christ and the church will remain, as the product of all God's ways on the earth. We give thanks to God for all His mercies here, but as loving Christ we are lifted above the natural into what is spiritual. May God help us to gather into our souls His precious thoughts of Christ and the church, and of what she is to be in purity and affection, and in her righteousnesses, as the product of the work of God!

VITAL VERITIES (6)

by E. W. ROGERS

Paul's Doctrine

Illustrated in Luke's Gospel

Paul and Luke were often fellow travellers. Some of their journeys are recorded in the 'we' section of the book of the Acts. Doubtless they frequently spoke together of divine things.

Luke had made thorough search into those things that were commonly taught about Jesus and, having satisfied himself as to the accuracy of his findings, recorded them in his gospel. Paul, on the other hand, had many visions and revelations from the Lord, and his epistolary doctrine is the result.

This paper is designed to show the accord that exists between the doctrine of Paul and the researches of Luke.

THE INCARNATION.—An analysis of Gal. 4.4,5 reveals:

(a) The control of God in earth's affairs: His Son was born at the time intended. "In the fulness of the time". Caesar Augustus, Luke tells us, made a decree that all the habitable world should be registered. Its enforcement, however, in Judea, appears to have been delayed. When it did become operative, Joseph and Mary had, in consequence, to proceed to Bethlehem where the Child was born. God governmentally controlled the enactments of world rulers for His own ends.

(b) A divine mission explained His presence on earth: 'God sent forth His Son'. Luke informs us that Zechariah affirmed "the dayspring from on high" had visited God's earthly people (Luke 1.78). Heaven's light was brought into earth's darkness. Mary's child was of heavenly origin: He had a divine mission: God had sent Him.

How fully Luke accords with Paul!

(c) He became incarnate through a woman — "made of a woman". Contrary to nature the Lord Jesus was born not having

human father. The details which Luke had ascertained from Mary he recounts. He gives historically what Paul summarizes in four short words.

(d) He came into the Jewish fold, being subject to the divine law which had been entrusted to them: "made under the law". Pursuant to the rites of the Mosaic law He was taken to the temple and on the eighth day was circumcised "after the custom of the law", and was presented to the Lord "as it is written in the law of the Lord"; later a sacrifice was offered "according to that which is said in the law of the Lord" (2.22,24,27). He came, in grace, into that particular race in order that He might dwell with them representatively and thus give all the world hope.

(e) The object of His advent was "to redeem them that were under the law". This Anna understood and for Him gave thanks to God and spake of Him to "all them that looked for redemption in Israel". She knew He had come "to redeem". God had visited and "sent redemption to His people". (1.68).

THE GOSPEL. Romans 10.12 summarises in significant words the gospel which Paul preached everywhere, to the Jew first and to the Gentile. God, having made of one blood all the nations of the earth, all like the first man were sinners. Notwithstanding, salvation was available to all if each appealed to the Lord therefor. Restricted national privileges no longer obtain. All barriers are removed. Divine sovereignty discussed by Paul in Rom. 9 does not annul man's responsibility implied in chapter 10. The two principles co-operate together as Paul shows in chapter 11. Universal guilt is met by universal grace.

This Luke illustrates. He records the visit of the Lord to the Nazareth synagogue where he reminded the people of the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian. Israel's famine would have been removed earlier had the nation returned to Jehovah, but the whole northern kingdom was steeped in idolatry. No leper in Israel received cleansing in those apostate times: Jehovah had to demonstrate His presence in a Gentile leper. Not even one widow in Israel was willing to open her home to the prophet of Jehovah, but as the result of her welcoming Elijah a Sidonian widow had enough while famine was all around. Thus, when Israel refused Him, His heart of grace and arm of power went out in mercy to

the Gentile and the same Lord of All was rich unto all that call upon Him whether it were man or woman, starving or diseased, Sidonian or Syrian.

FORGIVENESS. Paul regards redemption and forgiveness as parallel (Eph. 1.7). Redemption is freedom from the bondage of sin: forgiveness is freedom from its guilt. Paul taught the final removal of every sin thereby endorsing the words: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more". He was himself a forgiven sinner and wrote from experience as well as revelation on this matter.

Luke dilates upon this. He tells of the woman, who was a sinner, and who came into the house of Simon the leper. To Simon she seemed a five hundred pence debtor: himself he regarded as only a fifty pence debtor, if indeed so much. Certainly she was ten times as bad as he. Both, however, were bankrupt and God was willing to cancel the debt of each. The Lord assured the woman that in her case her sins, which admittedly were many, were all forgiven: the whole debt had been cancelled: she could go in peace. Simon, too, might have done likewise if only he would acknowledge his bankruptcy.

This Paul teaches. He tells the Galatians that Christ paid the price in order that the guilty might be redeemed from the curse imposed by the breach of the law and be put judicially into a position of unassailable righteousness. For the repentant bankrupt sinner the Sinless Saviour has paid the debt and his indebtedness is "remitted".

ACCEPTANCE. Read Eph. 1.6. The word "accepted" used here denotes that the beauty of the Lord has been put upon the believer. He is 'graced' in the Beloved. Being 'in Christ' God sees no spot in him: he is 'all fair'. Having on the wedding garment he is fit for the King's presence. Not that God conceals imperfections by a covering. "If any man be in Christ Jesus there is a new creation: old things have passed away: all things have become new". God never patches up with new cloth an old garment, nor does He put new wine into old wine skins: He starts completely *de novo*.

The doctrine of acceptance is nowhere better illustrated than in the parable of the prodigal son. Visualize him, having come to

himself, returning to his father. When yet a great way off the father, whose heart had longed for his return ever since he left, saw him, ran, fell on his neck and kissed him. The father had determined that the kitchen was no place for his son, but the son knew that the rags were not suitable for his father's home. Yet the father's love had gone out to the prodigal in his rags and sin. It was a love not engendered by the prodigal's repentance but was native to the father's heart. It could not show itself, however, while the prodigal remained at a distance but, immediately he confessed, the father is free to do all his heart yearns for. In quick succession follow the ring, shoes, best robe and fatted calf. The old things were discarded and the erstwhile prodigal is accepted in the Father's home in all the beauty that he had put upon him.

PROPITIATION AND JUSTIFICATION. Paul, in Rom. 3.21-26, expounds the doctrine of justification. He affirms that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the ancient mercyseat (the propitiatory, as it was called) and that He by the shedding of His blood, was also the propitiatory offering. The blood shed and sprinkled on and before the mercyseat gives God a righteous ground on which to justify the ungodly, freely, by His grace. This, Paul says, is available to all though the benefits are only conferred upon those who believe.

Luke gives an apt illustration of this in chapter 18.

The Publican could not lift up his eyes to heaven: he dare not face God. He stood afar off: he dare not draw near to God. He smote on his breast for he knew that the real trouble was in his heart. He cried: "God be propitious to me the sinner", whereby he pleaded the benefits of the sacrifice and merits of the blood which God had ordained for the guilty. The Pharisee, on the other hand, pleaded his own worth but received no justification: the publican pleaded the blood and the Lord certified that he went down to his house justified.

It is possible for God righteously to dispense mercy to the guilty because in Christ, a valid substitute has been found by Whom the claims of divine justice have been met. All may follow the procedure of the publican with like results. Doubtless he did not enter fully into the implication of the words he used: nor is it likely that he could give an ordered exposition of the doctrine of

propitiation and substitution, but God knew his heart, and he knew himself: that was enough.

INTERMEDIATE STATE. Paul, in Phil. 1.23; 2 Tim. 4.6-8; 2 Cor. 5.1-9; and 2 Thess. 1.9, sets out his doctrine in regard to the intermediate state after death. For the believer death is an immediate translation from earth to heaven, into the Lord's presence. There is no hint of a period of unconsciousness or sleep. Bliss is enjoyed immediately. Happy as it is to serve the Lord here, it is far better to be with Him there.

Yet for the unbeliever it is otherwise. He will suffer everlasting destruction (not annihilation but the utter and irremediable ruin of his well-being) from the presence of the Lord. His doom will then be cast: it cannot be altered.

Of this Luke, Paul's companion, writes. Let the reader ponder Luke 16.19-31. Eternal torment, immediate and unalterable, befalls the unbeliever at death. This has been denied and the meaning of the Lord's words has been distorted: no wonder. Unbelievers resent it and the devil who is the relentless enemy of Christ, seeks to blind men's minds to it.

On the other hand, Luke tells of the dying robber to whom the Lord said: 'Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' Undeserving and active sinner almost to the last, though he repented at a later than the eleventh hour, he is assured by the Lord that he need not wait for the kingdom, but that immediately death ensued, he would be with Him in Paradise: he would depart to be with Christ which, for him certainly, was far, far better.

Thus Paul and Luke teach harmoniously, the one theologically and the other illustratively: the one characterized by *multum in parvo*: the other writing at length to simplify it.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT. Paul's teaching on this subject is found in Rom. 14.10-12; 2 Cor. 5.10; 1 Cor. 3.10-15.

Both Paul and Luke ever kept before them "the day" when they would each appear at the judgment seat and be examined in respect of the motive and method of his life's work. There was the possibility of all being consumed and lost, save the soul. There was, on the other hand, the possibility of making something for the Lord now and receiving something from Him in return later.

Of this Luke speaks when he records the parable of the pounds entrusted by the nobleman to his servants. During the time of his absence it was the responsibility of all to trade with the pound and to occupy till his return. Idleness and love of ease were to be eschewed: reward would be commensurate with diligence. The napkin, provided for the use of the worker, should not be misused to conceal the trust. All would inevitably be revealed later. On his return he would reckon with his servants and any such indolence would involve loss. Then the veneer of any hypocrisy would be removed and the servants would be "manifested" in true colours. None would be exempt from this for "each" of the ten must appear at the Bema. Then the sum total of life's work would be computed and everything done would contribute in arriving at the final assessment. The Lord would pay wages to His servants according to the work done. That which looms large in the sight of men may prove to be combustible in the day of testing, and *vice versa*. Quality will then count.

His awareness of this explains Paul's indeviating and constant devotion to his Lord and ministry. This led Luke to throw his lot in with that noble pioneer missionary. This awareness lies at the back of their journeys, hazards, preaching and writing. They themselves had yet to be examined: they must work and do all possible seeing they had but one pound—but one life—and this must be used to the gain of their common Lord.

Hymns and their Writers

by Jack Strahan

This popular series which recently appeared in Assembly Testimony has now been produced in book form and will be available mid November from :

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"THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM"

by E. R. Bower.

2 — CHAPTER ONE

(a) *A psalm. The wrath of God. Nineveh's doom foretold. Vv.1-8.*

"God is jealous, and the Lord (Jehovah) revengeth . . ." (v.2). In this 'introduction' to his pronouncement of coming judgment, Nahum speaks of the character of God relative to His people. Jehovah is a possessive God, and he who touches Israel touches the apple of His eye (Deut. 32.10; Ps. 17.8; Zech. 2.8). The adversaries of His people are His adversaries (Deut. 4.24; 5.9; Ex. 34.15). God, as Nahum portrays Him, may appear to some as of a different character to that by which He is generally known, i.e. a God who is love personified; a long-suffering God (Num. 14.18); slow to anger (v.3); showing mercy to those "who love Me and keep my commandments." (Ex. 20.5; 34.6,7; 34.14; Deut. 4.24; 5.9). But because He is jealous for His people, His wrath must go out against those enemies of His people who set themselves against the Lord and His anointed. Slow to anger, but great in power. Nineveh may not have known the Ten Commandments given at Sinai (was this in the poet's thoughts (vv.5—7)?); but they had known the mercy of God and were without excuse (Rom. 1.18—32; 2.1—16). The preaching of Jonah was long forgotten, they had taken advantage of the mercy of God (as does a present generation); the greatness of His power was no longer recognized. A previous generation had repented at the preaching of Jonah and would, in the day of judgment, stand up as witness against "an evil and adulterous generation." (Matt. 12.38—41). God does not forget, neither will He acquit the wicked. (v.3). Sentence has been passed; "it has been decreed" (2.7. some versions).

The first eight verses are an acrostic psalm in which, in common with other psalmists, Nahum speaks of the wonders of God in nature (perhaps with the wonders of the Exodus and the wilderness journey in mind). What a beautiful expression, "The clouds are the dust of His feet (v.3)! To Nineveh the message was, "God is jealous . . . who can stand before His indignation?". Even those who think themselves secure! The anger of Jehovah is a fearsome

thing, but in His character He is "good, and a stronghold in the day of trouble" (2 Kings 19 again). Jerusalem and Judah (and Nineveh) had proved this for themselves, BUT . . ." Judgment was to be no longer delayed; an overwhelming flood would be the instrument in the hands of God for making an utter end of the great city. An historical note — Nineveh was besieged over a period of nearly three years by the Mede, Cyxares, aided by Nebuchadnezzar, but to little avail until the river Tigris upon which the city stood, swollen by heavy rains washed away a large part of the fountains of the walls and of the fortifications. The king of Assyria (a great grandson of Sennacherib) saw this as fulfilling an ancient oracle and set fire to his citadel and, with his concubines and eunuchs, perished in the flames. The enemy entered unopposed. Some see v.8. of this passage as foretelling by what means the city fell.

(b) Various messages.

(i) To Nineveh. Vv.9—12a.

V.6 may remind us of Ps. 1.5, "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment", and v.9 reminds us of Ps. 2.1, "Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Affliction (or 'trouble' as v.7) will be given no opportunity to come a second time against Judah (or perhaps a reference back to v.7 and Nineveh's own day of trouble — "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" Jon. 3.4.). Nineveh would not ever go against Judah again. The metaphor of the thorns in v.10 is often used in Scripture (2 Sam. 23.6; Pss. 58.9; Lk. 8.12; Ecc. 7.6; etc.) and the picture here seems to be of being enclosed within a hedge of thorns — a 'boma' — set up to protect those inside. The Ninevites within their mighty walls thought themselves secure, but no more secure than a thorn hedge which has been set on fire. Whilst giving themselves to carousel, their security was washed away, and they were destroyed. And history was to repeat itself at Babylon (Dan. 5) and we may think also of Ben-hadad (1 Kin. 20).

The "counsellor of Belial" (v.11) who imagined evil against the Lord was, as mentioned above, probably Sennacherib who with superior forces went up against Jerusalem but was 'shorn' of 185,000 men in one night by the Angel of Jehovah, and he was to "pass away" (v. 12a).

(ii) **To Judah. Vv. 12b—13.**

"Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more" — is this a promise for the then immediate future, or a promise for the last days? Judah and Jerusalem were to suffer further affliction from Babylon and from Rome, and they will yet be afflicted or disciplined, so is Nahum looking far beyond the impending overthrow of Assyria? "His" yoke — the yoke of the "Assyrian" — was to be removed from them. When?

(iii) **To the evil counsellor. Vv. 14.**

A personal message to Sennacherib. The Assyrian royal line is to end; the gods of Assyria will be destroyed. The temple of their gods will be the scene of the removal of both king and gods. "I will make it (the temple) thy grave, for thou art worthless". The edict had gone out. We may note that these events form the historical interlude in the prophecy of Isaiah (chs. 36—39).

(iv) **To Judah. Vv. 15.**

Some versions re-arrange the closing verses of chapter 1 and the opening verses of chapter 2, but the LXX is as the A.V. Who quotes who is immaterial. See Is. 52.7. Judah, safe from Assyrian invasion may now keep her feasts and pay her vows, for Belial will no more pass through. He is finished. Again, is this the then present or the yet future?

The Millennium — (4)

by J. E. TODD

THE KING

The announcement of the angel before the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ makes it clear that He is the king of David's line who is to rule for ever over Israel. 'He shall be called great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1.32—33). The wise men journeyed from the east to find this king, 'Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?' (Matt. 2.2). His disciples acknowledged the Lord Jesus as

such in the words of Nathanael, 'Thou art the King of Israel' (John 1.49). The Lord made public claim to this title by enacting the prophecy of Zechariah by riding into Jerusalem on a colt (Matt. 21.1—11). 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass' (Zech. 9.9). The crowds shouted in reply to his claim, 'Hosanna to the Son of David' (Matt. 21.9); to be echoed by the children in the Temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David' (verse 15). The chief priests and scribes condemned such adoration, but the Lord replied 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise' (verse 16, quoting Psalm 8.2). Even his enemies acknowledged that he made such a claim by their mockings as the Lord Jesus Christ hung upon the cross. These included Pilate (John 19.1—22) as well as the Jewish leaders (Matt. 27.32—43). 'Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written' (John 19.21—22).

The Lord Jesus Christ announced in His teaching that He would return to this earth as the Son of man, the Person spoken of by Daniel as God's appointed ruler over the nations. 'Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages, should serve Him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed' (Dan. 7.13—14). The Lord referred to this often in His parables as recorded in Matthew's gospel. The parable of the householder (24.42—44), 'Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (verse 44). The parable of the wise and wicked servants (24.45—51), 'The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of' (verse 50). The parable of the ten virgins (25.1—13), 'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh' (verse 13). The parable of the talents (25.14—30), 'After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them' (verse 19). The

parable of the sheep and goats (25.31—46), 'When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory' (verse 31). But first the Son of man must be crucified, 'When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said unto his disciples, . . . the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified' (26.1—2).

Not only in His parables but also in His plain teaching the Lord referred to His second coming as the Son of man. 'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be'. (Matt. 24.27, see also Mark 13.26—27 and Luke 21.27).

It is not always appreciated that it was the Lord's open and public claim to be the Son of man of Daniel's prophecy which was the immediate cause of His crucifixion. As described in Matthew 26.57—66 the Jewish council had great difficulty in finding two false witnesses to agree in condemning the Lord. Placed under oath the Lord was required to answer if He was or was not the Messiah. He replied, 'Thou hast said; nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven' (verse 64). All the court recognised this as a quotation from Daniel the prophet. Believing His claim to be the Son of man to be false, they condemned Him to death for blasphemy.

The apostle John looked forward to the day of His appearing when he would take up His supreme earthly authority as the Son of man. 'The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ' (Rev. 11.15, see also 19.11 to 20.6).

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Christian finds safety—not in the absence of danger,
but in the Presence of God.

A man who uses good judgement is like a pin—his head
keeps him from going too far.

When your knees knock, kneel on them.

When right you can afford to keep your temper—when
wrong you can't afford to lose it.

—Anthony Orsini, Florida, U.S.A.

DOORS IN THE REVELATION

by *B. Currie, (Belfast)*

No. 2

In the previous issue we noted that John referred to three doors. These were:—

1. — 3.8, A door opened OUT FOR SERVICE.
2. — 3.20, A door opened IN FOR COMMUNION.
3. — 4.1, A door opened UP FOR RAPTURE.

The first of these has already been considered and we now shall look at the remaining two.

2. A DOOR OPENED IN FOR COMMUNION.

This verse is contained within the message to the church in Laodecia, which was materially very rich but spiritually very poor, Rev. 3.17. Their state is all the more alarming when we learn that they never appreciated their position before the Lord. Like Samson in the Old Testament they knew not that the Lord had departed and they were spiritually, as he was physically, "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked", Judges 16.20,21.

Even in the midst of corporate failure the Lord still encourages individual fellowship and so He appeals to "any man". He knocks through His word and awaits the response of the Christian to open. It is our responsibility to open since this door cannot be opened from the outside; communion cannot be forced. Yet it ought to be a great encouragement to all to know that even in the midst of general collective departure there is a standing Lord desiring communion if we hear and open. An interesting Old Testament parallel and illustration is found in the Song of Solomon 5.2—6.

It is the cause of great concern to many spiritual saints as to how long such a condition can continue. It is obvious that this must be a temporary state because if there is not a collective, repentant return to the Lord the assembly must cease in its character Godward since the Lord continues to be outside and is no longer in the midst. I say the assembly in its Godward character since these are golden lampstands and are not viewed so much in their testimony

manward. Many companies continue in a spirit of excitement, entertainment and formalism but it is clear to the spiritual that the Lord has long since departed. The parallel with Judaism is obvious. The Lord personally left Judaism in Matt. 23.38—24.1 but this was not publicly manifested until the veil was rent Matt. 27.51, and it was openly demonstrated that the Shekinah presence had departed.

However it is good to know that until conditions in the assembly become irreversible the individual can enjoy the sweetness of fellowship with Himself, just by opening the door.

3. A DOOR OPENED UP FOR RAPTURE.

After chapter three the church is not in view again until chapter nineteen when she comes forth as a wife with the King when the tribulation is over. This prompts the questions — if the church comes out of heaven how and when did she get there? The answers come in 4.1 where what happened to John is typical of what will happen to the church. Not that John is typical of the church since she is represented in the chapter by the four and twenty elders and we cannot have two different pictures of the same company within the compass of a few verses. The immediate and sudden rapture of John to heaven is a clear picture of the immediate and sudden rapture of the church.

Since the church as seen in the four and twenty elders are seated, clothed and crowned in chapter four and the tribulation does not begin until the seals are opened in chapter six, this gives clear, unambiguous and acceptable proof that the church will not pass through the tribulation.

What a hope is ours! Sudden glory at any moment! Note that it is all the Lord's doing in 4.1. John never opened the door, he never took the initiative to go up, he was passive and the Lord was active, nor was he called up because of his faithfulness. It shall be the same when we are called and caught away to glory. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God", 1 Thess. 4.16. We all shall be raptured, reunited with those who have gone before, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord". No wonder the breathing of our hearts is "even so come Lord Jesus".

In summary then, we learn from these doors that we should serve Him in a scriptural way, in communion with Himself until He comes again to take from the world His own blood bought people.

JOSEPH WEPT

BY CHARLES STANLEY

After the death of Jacob we find the brethren of Joseph in great distress, Gen. 50.15—21. The remembrance of their past conduct might well, indeed, be overwhelming, for they understood not the grace in Joseph. They thought of their sin, but entirely lost sight of the forgiveness and grace of Joseph; and they said that Joseph would certainly requite them "all the evil which we did unto him". Surely they deserved all this. There was no excuse for their sin. It had been terrible. They had as good as killed their brother by casting him into that pit. There was no pity in their hearts when they took him out of that pit, and sold him into slavery, though they saw the anguish of his soul: he besought them, and they would not hear. (Gen. 40.11—21).

But had not their sin been brought to their consciences? Yes, in the very presence of Joseph, though they knew him not. He was dealing with them; he understood their thoughts and their words. Judah had said, "What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants". It is an awful moment, thus to be brought into the presence of God, and all laid bare!

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood before him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren". Oh, what grace! "And he wept aloud". He said, "I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence". It was not now that they prayed to be forgiven, but "Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt". Then did he make known unto their astonished ears the purpose of God, in their salvation from famine. "Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him".

What a life picture of the wondrous ways of God in grace! The Spirit of God uses various means to bring sin so home to the conscience that there is no escape. But when sin is not only felt, but confessed to God, what a revelation in Christ, the true Joseph! Our sins are felt to be loathsome, and we abhor ourselves in His holy presence. It is He who is dealing with our souls. We own all to Him; and He says, Yes, it was for those very sins I sent my beloved Son to be the propitiation. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". Thus the Antitype goes infinitely beyond the touching type of Joseph.

There was not, however, one thing lacking to shew and prove the forgiveness of Joseph; yet, after years of kindness on his part, they feared the reality of his forgiveness. How was this? No doubt the better they knew their relationship to Joseph, and all his righteous conduct, the baser would their own appear, but, as we have said, they could not fathom the grace in Joseph's heart. And is it not so with those who are brought to know their relationship with the risen Jesus? The more we *know* Him, while we abhor the flesh and all its sad fruits, the more we rest in His grace.

If they looked at their own past conduct, they might give way to gloomy unbelief, until they sank in despair. If they looked at *his* past conduct and love to them, how could they have a doubt? Past failure often gives Satan a great handle, and he will ever use it, if possible, to drive the child of God to despair. By this mark we may always know it is his work. The Holy Spirit may have to humble us, and deepen in us a sense of what sin is, and the need of greater watchfulness and dependence; but then He will also deepen in our souls a blessed sense of that mercy which endureth for ever. "Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord; even thy salvation, according to thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me; for I trust in thy word". At such a time it is of all importance to be able to say, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear".

With these thoughts, let us look at our deeply interesting scripture. No doubt the brethren of Joseph deserved punishment. And if God dealt with us in judgment, what do we deserve? They had thought of this, and reasoned from it, until doubt and unbelief had

got a strong hold upon them; but they did not despair. There was the lingering sense of his grace: they went to Joseph, whereas despair would have led them to depart from him. It is so with God : the lingering sense of His grace draws us near to Him. Despair would drive the soul to utter darkness.

They "said unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee, now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin". It was terrible to have sinned as the brethren of Joseph. It is this that gives sin its deep aggravation, to have sinned as the brethren of the risen Jesus. And mark, it is much easier to pray for the forgiveness of sins, than to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Many there are who continue for years to pray for forgiveness of sins, just like the brethren of Joseph, who never believe their sins are eternally forgiven.

This, then, was their position: long ago their sin had been brought home to them; they had stood self-condemned before Joseph. He had fully revealed his grace to them, and given to each the kiss of forgiveness. But little understanding the grace in Joseph's heart, they now pray for forgiveness. Now look at Joseph; does this please him? "Joseph wept when they spake unto him". What a picture of Jesus! What a touching scene! How deeply his heart felt their unbelief! How could they doubt his love? No doubt God greatly overrules—yea, uses this humiliation for blessing to His children. "And his brethren also went, and fell down before his face". They also did what the prodigal thought of doing. "And they said, Behold, we be thy servants". Thus the poor unbelieving heart is ever ready to take the place of serving, in order to be deserving.

Surely it is far better to be thus humbled and broken in the presence of our Joseph, than to be indifferent about sins. But, oh, how sweet to a crushed, broken spirit are those words, "Fear not". And again, "Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them:" or, as in the margin, "*spake to their hearts*". Is not this what our Jesus does? Full well does He know that even His own words would fail at such a time to comfort, unless applied by the Spirit to our hearts. Let us not, however, forget the grief it gave Joseph for his brethren to doubt his forgiving love.

With our eyes we do not see our Jesus weep; we do not thus, as

they, see the pain—if we may use such a word—it gives to doubt His love; but do we not hear Him say, "Why are ye troubled; and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have". They had just heard, for the first time in resurrection, those blessed words, "Peace unto you". Yes, words spoken on the first day of the new creation. Now why were they troubled? What thoughts would arise, if they looked back only for one short week? Oh, what a week!—never such events had taken place, or can take place in one short week.

They were now the brethren of the risen Jesus. He had sent them the message to assure them of this. They never had been, and never could be, in that relationship until He had died, and risen again. (John 12.24). They had not yet grasped, or understood, this marvellous grace. And as Joseph wept, so the risen Jesus could not bear to see them doubt His love.

If they thought what they had done, even in those few past days, what cause for trouble in His presence! If they thought what He had done, what cause for eternal joy! Yes, how much depends on whether we are occupied with ourselves, or with Him! What had they done? All had forsaken Him; one had denied Him in the presence of His enemies. All had loved Him, and did love Him; but, oh, how weak is the flesh in the hour of temptation! And more, they had known His love, and yet they had so sadly failed to stand by Him. Had He not deeply felt all this? Yes, He says, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul". (Ps. 142.4). Yes, if they looked at their own conduct, they could only feel troubled in His presence. But if they looked at what He had done, had He not spoken to their hearts? Yes, after warning the boldest of his fall, before it came, in infinite grace, He turned to His disciples, and said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me". He was going away, no more to be seen with them in the flesh, but He speaks to their hearts, to trust Him even as God, whom they did not see. Yes, He spake to the heart. He said again, "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". Did He not then go up to the cross, and accomplish their and our eternal redemption? Did

He not bear their and our sins in His own body on that cross? Had not those words been heard, "It is finished"? Had He not risen from the dead, Head of the new creation, the first-born from among the dead? Had He not sent the joyful message, that they were now His brethren—that they stood in the same relationship to God the Father in which He stood, alive from the dead? Yes, He had said to Mary, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God". Old things had passed away, all things had become new, and all of God. As yet they understood it not, and were therefore troubled when He stood in their midst, and said, "Peace unto you". If Joseph wept, Jesus said, Why are ye troubled? Did He not speak unto their hearts? Yes, He says, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts"? Had He not borne their sins, to be remembered against them no more? He shewed them His hands and His feet.

It might be asked, But how could they know, and how can we know, that all that would otherwise give trouble is gone for ever? Surely His own word, spoken to the heart, is enough: Peace be unto you. Satan and memory would bring up the past. The Lord Jesus says, "PEACE", and He had made it by the blood of the cross. Joseph had not done this for his brethren. Jesus has for His. Peace and forgiveness is now proclaimed through Him; and as it was with Joseph's brethren, it is much easier to pray for forgiveness of sins, than to believe the forgiveness proclaimed. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins". "Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things". It does not say, Whosoever continues praying for forgiveness of sins shall at some future time be forgiven, but, all that believe *are* justified. And if praying for forgiveness, long after they were forgiven, made Joseph weep, may we never grieve the heart of the Lord Jesus by a single doubt! God grant that we may hear the Lord Jesus speak our hearts in these scriptures. It was wondrous grace in Joseph, but have we less in Jesus? Far be the thought. All the types of the Old Testament were but figures, or pictures, but in our Lord Jesus we have the infinite fulness—God manifest. Ever, then, may these words abide in our hearts—"Peace be unto you".

"HAVE FAITH IN GOD"

How prone we are, in moments of pressure and difficulty, to turn the eye to some creature resource! Our hearts are full of creature confidence, human hopes, and earthly expectations. We know comparatively little of the deep blessedness of looking simply to God. We are ready to look anywhere and everywhere rather than unto Him. We run to any broken cistern, and lean on any broken reed, although we have an exhaustless Fountain and the Rock of ages ever near.

And yet we have proved, times without number, that "creature streams are dry". Man is sure to disappoint us when we look to him. "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" And again, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited". Isaiah 17.

Such is the sad result of leaning upon the creature—barrenness, desolation, disappointment. Like the heath in the desert. No refreshing showers—no dew from heaven—no good—nothing but drought and sterility. How can it be otherwise, when the heart is turned away from the Lord, the only source of blessing? It lies not within the range of the creature to satisfy the heart. God alone can do this. He can meet our every need, and satisfy our every desire. He never fails a trusting heart.

But He must be trusted, in reality. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man *say*" he trusts God, if he does not really do so? A sham faith will not do. It will not do to trust in word, neither in tongue. It must be in deed and in truth. Of what use is a faith with one eye on the Creator, and another on the creature? Can God and the creature occupy the same platform? Impossible. It must be God or—what? The creature, and the curse that ever follows creature-confidence.

Mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit".

How blessed! How bright! How beautiful! Who would not put his trust in such a God? How delightful to find oneself wholly and absolutely cast upon Him! To be *shut up* to Him. To have Him filling the entire range of the soul's vision. To find *all* our springs in Him. To be able to say, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be moved".

Note the little word, "only". It is very searching. It will not do to say we are trusting in God, while the eye is all the while askance upon the creature. It is much to be feared that we frequently talk about looking to the Lord, while, in reality, we are expecting our fellow-man to help us. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings".

How needful to have the heart's deepest motive springs judged in the presence of God! We are so apt to deceive ourselves by the use of certain phrases which, so far as we are concerned, have no force, no value, no truth, whatever. The language of faith is on our lips, but the heart is full of creature confidence. We talk to men about our faith in God, in order that they may help us out of our difficulties.

Let us be honest. Let us walk in the clear light of God's presence, where everything is seen as it really is. Let us not rob God of His glory, and our own souls of abundant blessing, by an empty profession of dependence upon Him, while the heart is secretly going out after some creature stream. Let us not miss the deep joy, peace, and blessing, the strength, stability, and victory, that faith ever finds in the living God, in the living Christ of God, and in the living word of God. Oh! let us "have faith in God".
—(selected).

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (4)

by J. E. Fairfield (Venezuela)

(a) MY CONVERSION

Some time ago I was in an office and the man there was noting some of my personal details. "Where were you born?" he asked, "Lurgan", I replied, "in fact I was born twice in Lurgan". With surprise he said "Boy, that's some going!" Well it was some going. I am thankful to the Lord that in the very town where I was born I also was saved in 1921.

I was born into a family the eldest of six children and we were taught to go to church, be upright, honest and God-fearing but I could not say that my parents were saved. I knew that "Christ died for our sins" but never really understood my own personal need as a sinner.

As a child I was taken to the Parish Church where I was christened, named and my godparents accepted responsibility for me until I was old enough to be responsible for myself. Growing up I really tried to do my best. I thought I was better than the other boys because I did not play football with them on a Sunday. However deep down I knew that there was something else necessary — something I did not possess.

One morning our day school teacher awoke and asked her husband for a drink of water. When he returned with the water he found her dead. The thought came to me, just as a child, "I wonder where I would be if that had been me?"

My mother had put a picture in the bedroom of the broad and narrow ways. I wondered how anybody could go up the narrow road since it went so very high. However I was impressed with the door and I understood that if I wanted to go the narrow way up to Heaven I had to go through that door.

I heard a group of men preaching in the open air. One of them said "Likely you say your prayers before you go to bed". In my simple way I thought "I do". I had been taught to say,

"Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
And if I die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take".

In the morning I would recite another,

"Now I rise and see the light
I pray the Lord to lead me right,
In all I do and think and say
I pray the Lord to guide my way".

After each we would repeat "Our Father which art in heaven" . . . etc. and pray for the family. "Well", the man preaching said, "add this to your prayer — Lord show me myself — and when the Lord answers that prayer then pray — Lord show me Thyself". I took those two phrases and added them to my prayers morning and evening.

At the age of sixteen years I was confirmed by the bishop. He laid his hands upon my head and made me to understand that I was now responsible for myself and my godparents were released from their vows. He also taught me that I had become a member of the body of Christ and I received a little card permitting me to take communion. I went home very happy and announced to my mother that the next Sunday I would be taking holy communion. She refused me permission and when pressed for a reason she said, "Holy communion is for holy people and you're not holy". That impressed me and made me think a lot.

I remember leaving church after confirmation with a friend of mine called Davy. When we came out the first thing he did was light a cigarette while still in the church grounds. — I nearly fainted. I tried to talk but I could not and he said, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "Davy, are you not afraid?" "Oh", he said, "I know what's wrong with you, you think you're better than I am". That is just

what I did think. "Well", he said, "I want to tell you there's not a bit of difference, you're just as bad as I am". That was a sermon to me. With all my religion I was just as bad as Davy with cigarettes and matches in his pocket while being confirmed and smoking in the church grounds. I learned "there is no difference".

On another occasion my father came home from work and with tears running down his face he told my mother that two of his workmates had been converted. After that my father died very suddenly. The youngest of our family was born some months after he died.

A little group, of Christians known as "Pentecostal" had come to Lurgan early in 1920 and erected a portable hall on the property belonging to my boss. Seven of us young lads chummed together including the boss's son. He asked us all to go to the portable hall on a Sunday night and we all went. I do not remember much of the preaching but I remember a text on the wall "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved". I went home and added that verse to my prayers but still was not saved and could not get peace. By the end of the week I could not sleep and was afraid of Hell. I said to the Lord, "If I'm spared to Sunday night this matter will have to be settled".

I went to the meeting again on the second Sunday of 1921. The preacher told a story about a man who had charge of a drawbridge over which trains passed and it was his responsibility to lift the bridge open to allow ships to pass up and down the canal. One day he was given instructions not to lift the bridge because a special train was to pass over during the day. During the day a ship came with a load of grain which had to be delivered that day. The grain merchant prevailed upon the bridge keeper to let him and his cargo through and finally he bribed him. The bridge keeper thought he had plenty of time to raise and lower the bridge before the train would come. He opened the bridge, the ship went through and as he was about to lower it he heard the whistle of the train in the distance. He froze, lost his reason and was unable to close

the bridge. There was a terrible accident and the bridge keeper spent the rest of his life in a padded cell in an asylum and his wail night and day was "Oh! if only I had. Oh! if only I had". I thought that is what my cry will be for eternity "Oh! if only I had".

The meeting closed and the people went out. My six companions hurried outside and waited for me under some trees. I wanted to go and, yet, I wanted to stay — I cannot explain it. However I remained and the preacher came to where I stood and he said "Are you saved?" I burst out weeping and said, "No Sir, I'm not saved". "Well", he said, "would you like to be saved?" I replied "I would love to be saved". Then he said "would you like to be saved tonight?" That brought me to a standstill, I was leaving it off night after night and the words of that dear man reached me. As I listened to him I could hear the boys outside saying "Ned's caught!" I was not caught. Nobody had tried to trap me but when I heard their words I felt like running. Immediately the thought came to me — "those boys may carry your coffin to the graveyard but remember you'll meet God alone". I said to myself "I don't care what they say I'm going to get salvation tonight". Just then the preacher said to me "could you not receive the Lord Jesus as your Saviour?" I had tried to believe — I had always believed — but when he asked me to receive I just said to myself at that instant "I will". I cannot explain anymore than that and I am not going to try. The man sat beside me and read the Scripture and prayed and asked me again "could you not accept Christ?" I said, "Mister when you were talking to me at that door over there I accepted Christ". I went home and told my mother that I was converted and she was really glad to hear of it, even though she herself was still unsaved.

The next morning was Monday. When I awoke to the awful reality that I had to face the workmates. I thought I would keep quiet and just let them notice the change. I was working at the bench when I became aware that nobody else in the workshop was working. I could feel

everyone was looking at me, I was like a magnet for all eyes. I raised my head and sure enough they were all watching me. One of them beckoned me over. He said, "Will you answer me a question?" "If I can", I replied, "Oh", he said, "you can, you can, will you?" "All right", I said, "I will". "Is it true you were converted last night?" Before I knew it the cat was out of the bag, I said "Yes Geordie, God saved me last night". He burst out laughing and gave me three months before I would be back with the boys. Well more than three months have passed since that wonderful night, long ago in 1921.

It was not until I was baptised and in assembly fellowship that I heard brethren telling the date of their conversion. I had to go and look up the date of the second Sunday — it was 9th January, 1921 when I got salvation.

(To be continued)

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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