

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

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CHELTENHAM 1970

Report on Bible Readings and Addresses

Introduction

2 Peter 1 : 1 to 11

(F. Wallace)

MR. Wallace's message provided an introduction both to the Bible Readings and to the Addresses, all directed primarily to young people. He spoke about the conflict seen in Peter's Epistles, and then dealt with the following subjects : The call of God comes to every Christian to engage in the conflict ; this call should make our lives distinctive as a uniform does ; God provides the armour, and calls us to the discipline which all war demands ; faith in God is essential for this conflict ; the fellowship of Christian companies united together to face the enemy is of great value ; we must avoid treasonable contact with the enemy ; diligence is needed to develop the Christian qualities being studied this week.

Quotations

1. It is absolutely necessary that we should have action in our lives that indicates beyond all possible doubt that we are engaged in this warfare for God. I want to refer to three kinds of action : Baptism, the Remembrance of the Lord, and Christian service. You may ask what these have to do with warfare. I believe baptism is taking our place in the ranks. In 1 Corinthians 15 : 29 Paul says that there were persons who were baptised for the dead. I believe it means that the Christians who were baptised, taking their place among those who had faith in God, desired to represent Him in the world. These were dying and going to be with Christ, leaving vacancies in the ranks. The persons who became Christians and were baptised, were in principle baptised for the dead, that is, they took the places of those who had died. They were reinforcements. So it is today. As time goes on, the Lord calls home one and another, and there are vacancies in the ranks. Are there any here who up to this moment have never been baptised ? I lay it upon your conscience that you should be baptised. . . to take your place as a dedicated Christian in this warfare.

2. I suggest that the best day for the Christian at the present time is when he is gathered with others for the Lord's Supper. We have nothing else before us than Jesus. We want to give Him something, to give Him pleasure. We want to indicate by our presence and our personal participation that we are here for His will and for His delight. It is until He comes. And just as a C-in-C can look down the ranks and find pleasure

and pride in the gathering, so I believe it is true in a pre-eminent way that Jesus looks at the gathered companies of His people and views them with pleasure and delight. They are prepared to set aside time to come together, and to think of nothing else but Himself. They are not there to ask anything, nor to learn, but simply to express their appreciation and response to Himself for all that He has done.

3. It is very important to be occupied in some form of service for the Master. It gives you a sense of dependence, some form of concern. It causes you to read your Bible and to pray, gives you a sense of need. It is very, very important that you should be engaged in some form of service. He requires it of you. He wants you to do it now. Do not let anything stand in your way. Apply diligence to this thing.

4. v. 10. 'If ye do these things ye shall never fail : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. Is this the victory march, when the band is blaring and everything is just right ? This is what the apostle is saying. An abundant entrance into that everlasting kingdom will be granted to those who are faithful to Christ and to God. Every one who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will be in this victory march, but how wonderful to be beforehand actively engaged, and to be overcoming in His Name when the assembling shout is heard and we all go into the Lord's presence for ever. We are all needed, and I trust we shall all be instructed minutely as to the way we can engage the enemy and defeat him. I trust we shall all go forth from Cheltenham ready to meet the enemy in our towns and villages and cities, and defeat him. It is not going to be a life in which failure causes despair, but a life of victory is possible. We can be 'more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'

BIBLE READINGS

The general theme of the Bible Readings was " Battlegrounds in the Christian Life," and the Scriptures read and the Titles are given with each paragraph.

Contending for the Faith. Jude 1 to 4 and 17 to 25. (J. N. Shepherd)

SATAN has from the beginning tried to destroy the line by which the Saviour would come. Since He has gone to glory, Satan's attacks have been directed against His people. These have often been by bringing persecution against them, but a far more subtle form is to attack the Faith, through evil men crept in unawares into the Christian company. These are not converted men. They are ungodly men, who deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The epistle of Jude was written to warn us about these attacks. This was not, apparently, Jude's first intention in writing. He was going to write about the common salvation, but he was diverted from his purpose, in view of these men crept in,

" The faith once delivered to the saints" is of such supreme importance that we are called to contend for it. " The Faith " here speaks of

the great body of the Christian Doctrine--the revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the fact of the Lord's coming here in love, God and Man in one blessed Person, the facts of His going to the cross for our salvation, His bodily resurrection from the grave, His ascension and glorification on high, His soon coming, first for His own, and then to reign. These are not our opinions, they are the **facts** which constitute the Faith. We are called to contend for the whole body of these things ; they are absolutely vital ; they have come from God.

The opponents of the Faith are those who have turned "the grace of our God into lasciviousness." They have also denied "the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." It is really rebellion against the Lordship of Christ, the essence of Christianity.

Vv. 18 and 19 certainly apply to our times, when there are mockers, who walk after their own ungodly lusts. "These be they who separate themselves". This apparently means that they exalt themselves along the lines of the Pharisees. How supremely important it is that we should realise that they have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of His.

Vv. 20 and 21 give four disciplines which will fit us to contend for the Faith. 1. "Building up yourselves on your most holy Faith." How much time do we spend building ourselves up in relation to earthly things ? There is only one way of being prosperous as a Christian, and that is to spend your life in this blessed Book. 2. "Praying in the Holy Ghost." All true prayer is in the Holy Ghost. Only what comes from Him is acceptable to God. I cannot ask God for just anything I like, but God has committed Himself to answering and doing what is prayed in the Spirit and is therefore according to His will. 3. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." We are in that place, and what a wonderful place to be! And we can keep ourselves consciously there, through prayer. Nothing so fits us to meet the attacks of the enemy as the sense of God's love upon us personally. 4. "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is the future sense of eternal life. We are just about to see the Saviour, and we are to look on and up to heaven in the light of that coming moment.

Vv. 22 and 23 refer primarily to those who have been seduced by these evil teachers. Some need to be treated with compassion, but others, like Lot, have to be pulled out of the fire.

How wonderful to be able to end like this—"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." You might say "I know I'm going to fall in something today. But it's only to be expected." Oh, no it is not ! Although we have no strength in ourselves, there is absolutely no reason why any Christian should ever fall ! Why ? Because we have One who is able to keep us from falling. And to Him there rises a paean of praise—glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Notes : 1. Many leaders professing Christianity are today apostates, even though the apostasy has not yet come. 2. The epistles of John commend assisting those who disseminate the truth and refusing those who do not bring the truth. They also give the tests. (1 John 4 : 2, 6) 3. RSV gives a helpful text in v. 22 : "And convince some who doubt."

Satan against Christ. 2 Corinthians 4 : 3 to 6, 11 : 2, 3, 12 : 7 to 9.

(J. S. Blackburn)

WE are now to embark on a study of three related kinds of conflict which, unlike contending for the Faith, take place within the individual Christian's experience. These are : Christ opposed by Satan ; the Spirit opposed by the flesh ; and the Father opposed by the world. The importance of a firm hold on the Faith is immediately seen. We are unlikely to wage these conflicts intelligently unless we understand something of the Trinity.

Why is there such difficulty in spreading the gospel ? Why are Christians so liable to wander from the pathway ? It is because we have a most powerful and wily foe, ceaselessly active against our Lord Jesus Christ. In this aspect of the conflict, we may say generally that the devil uses the world to appeal to the flesh.

In the Revelation we read, first, in 12 : 9 all his names from the beginning, and finally, in 20 : 10, of his final defeat at the hands of the Saviour. At the beginning, therefore, we know that "the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly," and moreover, that the Lord can give us victory now. Otherwise it would be a daunting thought that such a foe is active within each of us.

In our first passage, Satan **blinds** the minds of them that believe not. In the second, he **beguiles** through his subtlety. And in the third, he **buffets** the Lord's servant in his body. Although none of these activities of Satan is completely overcome in us in this life, it was certainly true of Paul that when blinding failed he turned to beguiling, and when beguiling failed, he was allowed to buffet.

When the gospel is veiled, it is the minds of men which are blinded by Satan. The power for liberation is the gospel, by which is given the priceless treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. V. 6 also tells us that nothing less than the creatorial miracle, by which God caused light to shine in the primeval darkness, can avail against Satan's blinding.

In ch. 11 we are reminded that the Church is now espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ, and what He looks for is single-hearted faithfulness to Himself as her absent Lover. It is at this point that Satan's second attack is directed, that is by seduction in its most nauseating form. Satan beguiled Eve by casting doubt on God's word, and pretending to offer something better. In its threefold form, it parallels the temptation in the wilderness. Our safeguard is in everything which makes more precious to our hearts the love of Christ, and in obedience to the word of God. The Lord's Supper surely has a special place on both these counts.

In ch. 12 we learn that God permitted Satan to bring bodily suffering on Paul to keep him humble. Three times he asked the Lord to remove it, but Paul accepted the answer, No, and got on with the full tide of the missionary enterprise, thorn and all ! "My grace is sufficient for thee," was enough for his heart, and his experience of that grace was something he would never have known but for the thorn.

Notes. 1. In 4 : 4, the 'shining in' was with a view to 'shining out'. (N.T. 'radiancy'.) 2. 'Sufficient' in 12 : 9 means 'exactly equal to the need'. 3. 'Made perfect' in 12 : 9 might be explained as 'geared to.'

The flesh against the Spirit. Galatians 5 : 16 to 26. (J. Stoddart)

WHAT we are reviewing today is nothing less than civil war within ourselves, the battle of the flesh against the Spirit, and we must take a close look at this enemy. It is a deadly reality because it is the incorrigible, sinful, fallen nature we have all inherited from Adam. Vv. 19-21 describe the kind of operations from that source—a formidable list, so relevant to our times. On the other hand we have the Holy Spirit, with the power of the new nature begotten of God producing the very desirable fruit listed in vv. 22-24. These two powers, the flesh and the Spirit, are in deadly opposition within ourselves.

The Christian himself, that is, the responsible ego, can yield to either one or the other of these powers. This ego is not the same as either the flesh or the Spirit. It is the responsible personality, to which all New Testament exhortations are addressed. It acts in certain natural ways, such as eating, sleeping, walking, and many other normal functions which have no essential connection with either the flesh or the Spirit, but are the actions of—just you or me, responsible, normal, natural, men or women, and these actions are not, in themselves, moral issues at all.

How is this deadly engagement to be successfully waged? Ecclesiastes 8 : 8 reads "There is no discharge in this war," and in 9 : 11, "The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift." Here in our chapter we have definite, clear and concise instructions for the fight. First, in v. 16, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Let us describe this as **submission**. That is to say, seek those things which are according to the nature, the intense desire, of the Spirit within us. Now look at v. 18, "Be ye led of the Spirit". That is to say, we are not to be motivated by a mere code of conduct, but submissive to the gracious direction of the Spirit in the Word. Let us call this **direction**. Lastly, in v. 25, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." A repetition? Not quite! Walk by the Spirit, since the Spirit Himself is our life. Here is a very persuasive argument for us to yield to the Holy Spirit as He empowers us to walk. I use here the word **devotion**. We do not engage in this warfare at our own charges. It is in the power of the Holy Spirit that we may move forward triumphantly and victoriously. Let us ever remember that we cannot engage in this fight by our own efforts.

I would like to draw attention to the 'let us' of the last two verses, 25 and 26. The writer of this epistle here puts himself on the same plane as those to whom he is writing. Here is a man who still feels he has not arrived. He is still a learner with us all in this wonderful way of battling with this deadly foe, the flesh.

Finally, in v. 24, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts". This is not an exhortation to crucify the flesh. We are completely and utterly incapable of doing it. It means just this, that God dealt with the flesh at Calvary. He utterly and finally condemned and defeated it, and the Christian, by virtue of his faith in Christ has taken God's side against the flesh.

Notes. 1. In Galatians 2 : 20, in contrast with our chapter, the flesh means simply the body. It is the same usually in John's writings.

2. It can only be maintained that the law is the rule of life for the Christian, by removing Galatians from the Bible. 3. The flesh caused the sufferings of Jesus, and is not improved as we grow older. 4. In Isaiah 40 : 31 running precedes walking. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9 : 26, 27, "I therefore run, as not uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body. . . lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 5. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Let us pray, "This is Your promise, make it good in my life."

The world against the Father. 1 John 2 : 13 to 17. (F. A. Hughes)

I PROPOSE to speak of the meaning of the terms used in this Scripture in relation to three matters : the world ; the Father ; and those to whom the Scripture is addressed.

I refer first to the world. The world we are told not to love is not the people in the world that God in His infinite grace loved, but it is a system of which the character is clearly portrayed.

First, Satan is its God. In 1 John 5 : 19 we read that "the whole world lies in the wicked one." The world has rejected Christ ; it has not a mother cradles her baby. The world has rejected Christ ; it has not known the Father ; it cannot receive the Spirit of God, so that it is a system completely alienated from Divine Persons in its responsibility. Next we see that the prince of this world, Satan, is judged, and the world itself is a judged system. Although the world is so attractive, it is already under the judgment of God. It is marked by the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is remarkable that when Babylon is judged, it is proclaimed, "God has judged your judgment upon her" (Revelation 18 : 20). I particularly want you to come to a right judgment of the world in which you live. It is in God's sight less than two days since the world crucified your beloved Saviour. (2 Peter 3 : 8) Do you want to find all your ambition, all your hopes, all your pleasures in such a world ?

Secondly, if we love the world we shall turn away from the love of the Father, for the love of the world stands in absolute contrast with the love of the Father. In the Lord's prayer in John 17, when He speaks of the world He says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." The system of this world is absolutely **unrighteous**, for righteousness in Scripture is that which is due to the name and honour of God, and this world knows nothing about it. When He prays about the saints, He says, "Holy Father." He wants them to be encompassed by the holy character and affections of the Father Himself.

Finally, in relation to the persons to whom these words were addressed, there are three classes of people here. We are brought into the family of God by receiving the Saviour. (John 1 : 12) Within that family, we find in 1 John 2 a gradation, but two features of the whole family of God are, that their sins are forgiven for His Name's sake, and that they

have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power for the true Christian life, and for the battleground. The victory is assured on the divine side. The desire of Divine Persons is that we should be brought into victory in the conscious sense of the Father's love which will never let us down, and will hold us to the end.

Notes. 1. It is striking that this warning, "Love not the world", is addressed to those who have made real progress, that is, to young men. They need constant salvation through the written Word of God which warns of the world, promotes experience of the Father's love, and is the offensive weapon in this warfare. 2. The Lord did accept the Pharisee's invitation, but His testimony had power to dominate the situation. 3. Giving up the ways of the world is necessary to enjoy the Father's love, and the giving up and the enjoying help each other. 4. Meditate on the fact that Christ died to deliver us from the world: cultivate communion with God and the Father's love: and everything will fall into place. 5. The way to discern the will of God is (a) by prayer. (b) Scripture (c) Do not grieve the Spirit, who can lead us. 6. An acrostic of prayer in Acts: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

The Unseen Warfare. Ephesians 6 : 10 to 19. (J. S. Blackburn)

Each day we have considered **where** the conflict being studied takes place. Contending for the faith takes place in the great realm of the intercourse of people. The skeletal framework of the Christian faith is like an encircling system of forts which must be maintained if we are to enjoy what really belongs inside. In our second third and fourth Bible Readings we considered the conflicts in those parts which are fought out within the Christian's own being and experience. This morning it is about the wrestling of Ephesians 6 that we have to ask the same question. What is the arena? What is the ring where the spotlight shines? For the answer, look at v. 12: "For our struggle. . . is in heavenly places." (The phrase 'high places' in AV is the same as 'heavenly places' in the rest of the epistle.) The question then becomes: What is heavenly places? At least an important part of the answer must be, the level at which intercourse is effected between 'wicked spirits', (v. 12), the Spirit of God, (vv. 17 and 18) and ourselves. This is clearly the vast realm of the spiritual arena. Man is the only one of God's creatures accessible to other spirits, good and evil.

Another helpful answer is that heavenly places is the Christian's Canaan. There is immense illumination in spiritual things in the typical story of the children of Israel's entering into Canaan. In Christian experience, Canaan represents our realising all that results from our union with Christ in heavenly places, whereby we know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and are filled into all the fulness of God. The fight to possess Canaan was the only fight God intended them to fight. Amalek was able to attack them because of the stragglers, and the fight was no part of God's plan. From some fights we should run away (1 Timothy 6 : 11), but the fight for Canaan represents for us the good fight of faith.

How can we be victorious in this struggle ? There are two answers in our passage : v 10 " Be strong in the Lord." The might of His strength is on our side, and through Him we can have the victory because of the victory of His resurrection life. Secondly, in v. 14, victory can be ours if we put on the whole armour of God : the girdle of truth, the breast-plate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer.

Notes. 1. The conflict in Canaan applies to all, but everyone may not have realised it. 2. Ephesians 2 : 2, 3 presents activity in the spiritual realm, but, paradoxically, by the " dead." 3. Joshua and the Captain of the Lord's host is a picture of the Christian's being strengthened in the Lord. Ephesians 1 : 21 shows the quality of the power able to ensure victory. 4. The armour is against failures in behaviour which give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4 : 27) 5. The fiery darts are thoughts of evil which set in flames the flesh. 6. The weapon of 'all-prayer' might well use the prayers of 1 : 17 to 19 and 3 : 16 to 19. 7. Let us seek the delights of our Canaan. One glimpse of Hebron kept Caleb continuing.

ADDRESSES

THE general theme of the addresses was 2 Peter 1 : 5 to 7 : "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity." Each of the eight addresses was devoted to one of the qualities enumerated.

Faith Galatians 2 : 20 (E. Brown)

Outline 1. Why study faith ?

- (a) Because of our need
- (b) Because everything starts with faith (quotation 1)
- (c) Because great faith impressed Christ

2. What is this faith ?

- (a) Faith in essence is belief in a Person trusted (quotation 2).
- (b) Faith for being saved leads on to faith for living

3. How does this faith act ?

- (a) Faith obeys
- (b) Faith is serene
- (c) Faith sees
- (d) Faith suffers

(We sometimes see faith exhibited in a particularly marked degree, as, for example, in George Müller, Gladys Aylward, Pastor Wurmbrand)

4. Applications of faith

- (a) Faith relies on the resources of God
- (b) Faith thrives on tests
- (c) Faith times things well (quotations 3 & 4).

Quotations

1. In this glorious outline of Christian virtues in 2 Peter 1, the **first one** that is mentioned is **faith**. Here, where there is this progression, this outline of all the virtues which comprehensively together give us the sum and total of the life of faith, which must be lived if we are to take part in a positive way in the Christian conflict, we are reminded at the outset that unless we start with faith we do not start at all. Of course, when we do start with faith this becomes the basis from which all else will flow.

2. Let us consider just for a moment **what faith is in its essence**. It might be said that faith is belief in a record or a witness and I am sure many scriptures will come to your mind for this. Very often it shows itself in belief in a person, and when we say that we have faith in God it means that we so accept that He is utterly and completely reliable and consistent, that when He reveals something that He wants us to do, we accept that it is incumbent upon us to act in obedience to what He says.

3. Moses seemed to be aware that ultimately God was going to use him for the deliverance of God's people. Here was the ideal opportunity, and with one blow one enemy was removed ; but just think, if he had gone on like that, delivering one Hebrew per day, it would have taken him about 5,480 years to get through the job, even if he worked on the sabbath. He had to wait forty years before he was led to the conclusion, that God in God's time could do far more than Moses in Moses' strength and Moses' time. The time came about forty years later that Moses was used to deliver about 2,000,000 in one go. It must have been irksome for Moses to wait day after day to be used for the deliverance of God's people but after forty years he found that by waiting he had saved about 5,440 years. Faith times things well.

4 Now Abraham knew God, Abraham trusted God, and Abraham obeyed God. Perhaps we might say that he epitomised in his life and attitude that grand acrostic of FAITH—F.A.I.T.H.—Forsaking All I Take Him. Abraham so lived his life that in the face of all apparent opposition, in the face of all apparent evidence to the contrary, when God spoke, Abraham, in the full confidence in the knowledge of his God, acted completely without reservation. This I feel is the essence of faith.

Virtue Joshua 1 : 3 to 9 (T. Tyson)

Outline

1. The meaning of virtue.

(a) Root meaning : particular quality which gives a thing its character e.g. the virtue of a knife is to cut. (quotation 1).

(b) Secondary meaning : courage, energy, manliness

2. The meaning of adding

Costly co-operation in action. (quotation 2).

3. The example of Joshua

(a) His task : to possess in practice the land God had given in promise

(b) His equipment :

(1) experience of God's power in the past

(2) awareness of the needs of the present (quotation 3)

(3) determination to do as God said (quotation 4)

Quotations

1. Last night we talked about faith ; now, we are going one step further to the working out of faith in its first character of virtue.

The **essential root meaning** of this word, we understand, in the New Testament, is the **particular quality of faith that gives it its character**. The virtue of a knife is to cut ; the virtue of a ruler is its straightness ; the virtue of salt is its saltness ; so we ask ourselves straight away what is the essential virtue, the essential characteristic of a Christian, without which he is no good ? I suggest to you tonight that the essential characteristic of a Christian is to be like Christ—Christlikeness. If we are not like Christ then as Christians we are outside of what ought to be characteristic of us. This is the meaning of virtue. Michael Greenacre's commentary on this particular word has an excellent little sentence, "True excellence is the manliness which is Christlikeness."

2. **Add** means to supply with your faith, virtue, to let your faith be demonstrated by this quality of vigour, energy, virtue. It is an interesting word, i.e. 'add'. It comes from a word which was used in Greek to describe the man who sometimes had the privilege to play in the chorus in the Athenian drama festivities and he shared the expenses with the author and the State, and he was called the choregos. This cost him a lot of money and the word gradually expanded to the thought of very **costly co-operation in an action**. I think this is grand for it is just what 'adding' is. We are called to this costly co-operation with God, to produce in our lives something that is worthy of Him and pleasing to Him.

3. We need courage to run away. "But thou, O man of God, flee these things" said Paul to Timothy. I used to be told when I was a little boy, "if you play with fire you will get burned." I used to love making bonfires and I used to wonder how my mother could always tell I had made a bonfire when she had not seen me ! Of course, I had not realised that my clothes smelled. If you play with fire you may not get burned but your clothes will smell. "Hating even the garments spotted by the flesh". Do not tamper with it, it will defile you. Have the courage to run away.

4. I want to close with a challenge. When the Philistines went out to war against Israel and the ark was taken into the battle, the commander-in-chief of the Philistine army gave an order of the day, "Quit you like men, O ye Philistines, and fight," and they did and they captured the ark. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians he said exactly the same words, "Quit you like men, be strong." There are men and women in our country who are straining every muscle, every nerve and every energy to get to the top of their particular field.

Are we to be less energetic in the service of our Captain, that perfect Captain Who learned obedience through suffering ? Do not let Him down, but be really energetic in our Christian testimony and in our Christian witness, as the man of the world is for the things of the world. This is a challenge to us tonight "Quit you like men, be strong". "To your faith add virtue".

Knowledge**Acts 4 : 7 to 13****(L. Waller)**

Outline 1. Academic attainment is not true knowledge
(quotation 1)

2. Whom we are to know :
the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (quotation 2)
3. What we are to know : the doctrines of Christianity
contained in Holy Scripture (quotation 3)
4. Why we are to know :
 - (a) to safeguard from the attacks of the enemy (quotation 4)
 - (b) to become men of God
 - (c) because of the power of our hope

Quotations

1. The knowledge that we are speaking of at this conference tonight is far removed from academic attainments and from the "Moloch" upon which we continually sacrifice our children, but rather it is the spiritual knowledge which brings life and peace."

2. In the portion which is under consideration this week in 2 Peter, Mr. Tyson has reminded us that we are to add to our faith, virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; but if we had read two or three verses previous to this—"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" and further down "if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ", we would have found Christianity is, in essence, the knowledge of divine Persons. Christianity is the knowledge of God as He has made Himself known in revelation. Christianity is knowledge. It is not opinion. It is not thought. It is not hypothesis. It is the knowledge of God manifested in a revelation of Jesus Christ. This is Whom we are to know.

3. As we enter the Christian life it is expected of us that we grow, mature, change and develop after the Man Christ Jesus. And what we are to know is the reason why the gospels and the epistles were written. We are to know the things concerning Himself. I insist that we need to know these things, that is, the saving grace of God and the doctrines of Christianity as contained in the pages of Holy Scripture.

4. We need to know the Scriptures in order to combat the enemy. Satan beguiled Eve in the garden. You have heard it said before, no doubt, that Satan did not knock on the gate and prance in with a curly tail and a smile, announcing "I'm the devil and I've come to tempt you." Rather, he was most subtle, and glided in unnoticed, reared his head in Eve's off moment, and cast one moment of doubt in her mind—"Hath God said?" Knowledge would have preserved Eve. God **had** said, and the moment Eve admitted the doubt, all was lost.

Temperance

Hebrews 12 : 1 to 3

(R. Davison)

- Outline**
1. Background : "I lost control" (quotations 1 and 2)
 2. Meaning of Temperance : Self-control
 3. Origin of Temperance : it must spring from knowledge (quotation 3)
 4. An illustration of Temperance : the Race (quotations 4 and 5)

Quotations

1. The sequence of christian qualities and virtues in 2 Peter : 1 brings us to what is described in the epistle as "temperance," which comes after "knowledge" and which I suppose one can look at as growing out of the fertile soil of the knowledge which we have to give diligence to provide.

2. I am the problem. I am what gets in the way of my being like Christ. This is something which people generally recognise. They say "I am terribly sorry, I lost my temper when I said what I said ; but just for the moment, I lost control of myself". It is a common, everyday expression. It is surprising how few people stop to wonder who it was that took over. If I lost control of myself, who took over ? What took over ?

3. The order in Scripture is profoundly important and if we set out to this task of holding oneself in, however this might be accomplished, without this arising from **knowledge**, what we get is asceticism, or something which appeals to the natural man and which feeds the very thing we are trying to suppress. But what springs from **knowledge**, right knowledge ? I suggest to you a **knowledge** of myself—self-knowledge. I must know what Paul knew, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing". We must **realise** that, God (although it does not express it this way) has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. This has also to arise from a **knowledge** of Christ. The apostle says "That I may **know** him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings". As I say again it is extremely important that we see the divine order in 2 Peter 1 the way it is, and self-control must arise from knowledge.

4. The lusts of the flesh are the misapplication or the misuse of pleasures that God has provided for us. We eat a good meal and enjoy it, but if we go too far (and I am not quite settled as to what 'too far' is. 'Far' might be further to me than it is to you. The question is how far is 'too far' to you ?) appetite becomes gluttony. Nor do I mean, of course, an occasional extra helping ! What I mean is the habitual practice with regard to my body by indulging it in any way. Peter calls for temperance, self-control.

Patience 1 Peter 1 : 7 to 9 2 Thessalonians 1 : 4 (J. A. MacGregor)
2 Peter 1 : 3 and 8 to 11 James 5 : 7 and 8

- Outline**
1. These virtues as a balanced whole (quotation 1)
 2. These virtues are fruit out of death
 3. The change in Peter bids us not despair (quotation 2)
 4. Patience is serenity, but also endurance
 5. Patience in suffering
 6. We shall not need patience in heaven (quotation 3)

Quotations

1. I am not much of a cook. I would not like to think what kind of a result might follow if I were to try my hand at such a task. But I do know that when anybody bakes a cake or makes a pudding, or composes a chemical mixture, they put ingredients into the basin, or whatever it be—test tube—and when the final result is achieved and the ingredients have lost their individual character, they can no longer be identified. Now, we all know this, and I believe this catalogue of Christian virtues is like that. They are not to be developed in isolation. They are to be mingled with the Spirit's power in each and every one of us. So, we will not see a man who is marked only by faith. We will not see a man who is marked only by virtue. We will not see a man or a woman who is marked only by temperance, or by patience, or by godliness, or by kindness, or by brotherly love. We shall see a complete Christian testimony to the power of Christ in the human life.

2. This very letter was written by a fisherman. It was written by a man who, on one occasion, swore and blasphemed and denied his blessed Lord. There is hope for each and every one of us because Peter, the one who is writing, that over-zealous fisherman, came under the power of the Christ of God. He looked, and Peter was never the same man after. He came under His captivating power and he wrote this lovely epistle. That to me, is a miracle. We have scriptural authority for saying that the language of the apostle Peter, even after his knowledge of the Lord, was of the nature of Billingsgate, but he was so wrought upon by the Spirit of God and the power of Jesus Christ that that same man could write this wonderful letter that we are considering, and, amongst other things, he could speak of 'patience'.

3. There is a moment coming when we shall not be able to display patience—the moment when we see and are like our blessed Lord. But in the meantime, as we were reminded this morning, and again this evening, we are called upon to walk daily and to be characterised, not, as I said, by glamour, but in the quiet of our everyday circumstances we are called upon to wait patiently upon the Lord. He is going to put things right. The Psalmist could say that he was distressed when he beheld the way in which the unrighteous walked. He was prepared to wait until the Lord dealt with the evil. We are considering these matters together. We are waiting upon God, and our earnest desire should be that we should be so filled with the Spirit that we shall be men of calm serenity, of steadfast persistence, waiting for our Lord.

Godliness 1 Timothy 6 : 1 to 16 and 3 : 14 to 16 (C. Curry)

- Outline**
1. The Profession of Godliness (quotation 1 and 2)
 2. The Pursuit of Godliness (quotation 3)
 3. The Profit of Godliness (quotation 4)
 4. The Power for Godliness (quotation 5)

Quotations

1. A short definition of godliness would be, being what Timothy is advised to be, in these letters. Godliness is, of course, a broader term than we have been considering. It covers many aspects of the christian life. It covers the whole manner of life of the christian. I would suggest

to you that what is involved in the thought of godliness is just that sense of awareness of God and the seeking to please Him which can colour all our ways and attitudes, and the godly person is the person who has in his mind the thought of what is due to God and what suits Him and applies those lines of thinking in his own life.

2. There are the unbecoming things, the things that we may not think very much about, but that are unbecoming to the person that professes godliness. We have to ask ourselves the question, whether our demeanour is consistent with the profession that we make. Not only our demeanour but things like our appearance, our manner, our speech, our main interests in life, we have to ask whether they are suitable to a person that professes godliness.

3. Though most of the exhortations to Timothy are active, to be energetic in this life of godliness, there is the quiet side to the life of godliness. Chapter 2 : 2 speaks of a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. That verse seems to say that the life of godliness has a restfulness and composure about it, time for communion with the Lord, time for prayer, time for drawing on the resources of the godly life, time for equipping oneself with the equipment that God provides. Time spent with the Lord is all-important ; also time spent in meditating on the Word of God. 'Meditate on these things.' How important is the quiet, restful, unrushed cultivation of the presence of the Lord and of communion with Him.

4. There is real profit in physical exercise, bodily exercise. Some here might show that they had too little in the way of bodily exercise ; we were told it might be possible to have too much. There is nothing in that verse to suggest that physical exercise is a bad thing. What it says is, that it is good in its own context but godliness is a bigger and broader thing and what is gained is durable, not only in this present life but in that which is to come.

5. The spring from which the godly life is prompted is in Christ Who has manifested God here in this world. There we have the source ; there we have the perfect pattern of all that is pleasing to God. It is a profound matter that is infinite in its value and in its wonder. There are mysteries in it that are hard to plumb and yet the Holy Scriptures speak of Christ manifest in the flesh. This is something that is fathomless and that cannot be controverted. It is big, it is undeniably great and incomparable that God has manifested Himself in the flesh. The spring, source and supply from which a godly life will get its energy, its pattern and its incentive can only come from dwelling on the profundity of the Christian revelation, the basic Christian revelation in this verse, God manifest in the flesh. This is a great thing to move us in this direction.

Brotherly Kindness

1 John 3 : 11 to 18

(C. D. Blakeborough)

Outline

Although the actual word Philadelphia occurs only four times in the New Testament, love of the brethren is enforced on many pages of the Bible. The Lord Jesus said in the upper room "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another : as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my

disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13 : 34, 35) (quotation 1)
If we would enquire, what is the meaning of love, then we should think
of something active. 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue ; but in
deed and in truth". Among the best helps is Romans 12 : 10 " In honour
preferring one another." (quotation 2)

Quotations

1. But our word is brotherly love, love for those who are united to Christ in the same way. There is a verse in the bible which says 'Love the brotherhood', so we are to direct our love toward the brethren, which seems an easier task than directing our love toward our neighbours. These brethren, every one who is born again, you may think they are 'square' or 'old fashioned' but God has chosen them just the same as He has chosen you. We sometimes think that we are something special ; it is not surprising God has chosen us, but fancy God choosing **him** ! But God did choose 'him', no matter what he looks like from the outside. God chose him ; that brother or sister belongs to God, he is a person for whom Christ died. We are told in 1 Corinthians 8 : 11 that if we sin against such a person, we sin against Christ Himself. These are the people with whom God wants us to associate, the people that God wants us to know and love, especially chosen in a similar way. Nothing is done by chance. These people we are asked to love, are God's chosen people. This knowledge should help us to love the brethren. But of course it is not quite so easy as that. There are all kinds of difficulties when we start thinking about the practical business of loving the brethren.

2. How are people going to judge your christian behaviour ? How will people judge whether this conference has been of spiritual value or not ? I can only suggest that the way they will judge it will be by the way that you behave—faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, but also brotherly love. If you read the following scriptures, you will see the kind of persons we are exhorted to be in the epistles : Romans 12 : 9-13, Galatians 5 : 13, Ephesians 5 : 2, 1 Thessalonians 4 : 9 and Hebrews 6 : 10. There is a tendency for people to wear badges. I suggest that the badge of a christian is whether we love one another. Do you want to know whether you are a christian ? We have read verses which would appear to give you some guidance on the subject. “ We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren ” (1 John 3 : 12). If you want a practical word as to how you can influence people more effectively than giving tracts, let me refer you to John 13 : 35 “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another ”. It was said of the early church “ See how these christians love one another ”. Can this be said of us today ?

Love Romans 13 : 8 to 10 (J. Stoddart)
 1 Corinthians 13 : 4 to 8 and 13

Outline 1. Never out of debt ! (quotation 1)
1 John 4 : 8 and 16 Romans 5 : 5

Here is a debt we can never discharge—the debt of love.

2. Divine love extends to all men (John 3 : 16)

3. Love is the divine nature (quotation 2)

1 John 4 : 8 and 16 Romans 5 : 5

4. How divine love acts. A Test (quotation 3)
5. Ministry is to increase our stature in divine love
6. "The greatest of these is love"
7. The outshining of divine love (quotation 4)

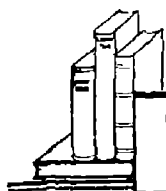
Quotations

1. When we think that to our faith we are to add virtue, knowledge, temperance (or self-control), patience (or endurance), godliness, brotherly kindness, we must feel that nothing else could be added to our Christian life. It seems right that a conference like this should end with the most wonderful word—love.

2. There is only one statement in the whole of Scripture that tells us what God is in an absolute way, and that is 'God is love'. God is love ; someone is going to say to me that it also says 'God is light.' This is relative because it follows on 'in him is no darkness at all'. So it is light in comparison with darkness. But when it says 'God is love' there is nothing to add. It is not a relative term. It is absolute ; and it is this same love which is the very essence of God's nature that has been made yours and mine. The first mention of the Holy Spirit in Romans 5 is the message that tells us that the love of God has 'flooded our hearts' (as the word should be) by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. The action of the Holy Spirit taking up His place in your heart and mine is simply to cause a flood and that flood is to overflow because it is the love of God Himself.

3. If love is God's nature and God has given me His nature of love, then the stature of your Christian life and mine is the measure in which divine love is true of us. Now let us proceed to 1 Corinthians 13 and see what this means. Instead of the word 'love', we will substitute the word 'I'. How can we do that ? Well, if the new nature in me is love, this is the new 'I', is it not ? Therefore it should be true of me what is true of love, and this instantly becomes the measure in which you and I have grown in the divine nature. We have acquired a fair knowledge of scripture and this is good and right, but let us test ourselves to see if that has had its divine intention in us in increasing our spiritual stature. Begin at verse 4, I suffer long and am kind. I envy not. I vaunt not myself, am not puffed up. I do not behave myself unseemly ; I seek not my own : I am not easily provoked ; I think no evil, rejoice not in iniquity but rejoice in the truth. I bear all things. I believe all things. I hope all things. I endure all things. I never fail. How do we stand ?

4. The question that is the outcome of this conference : How are our lives going to be affected ? Is there going to be a change now that we are going back home ? Is there going to be seen something more in my life, not merely an academic interest in scripture, but the outshining of the love of God, the expression of love within the christian circle, and outside, compassionately to the world that is soon to meet its judgment ? O ! as we preach the gospel in these days, are we trying to be clever ? Are we trying to justify our position before a godless world, or are our hearts so filled to overflowing that we present Jesus to the world as the answer of divine love to every problem that it has ? May the Lord teach us a gracious lesson here and endear Himself more to our hearts. All these things are only to be seen perfectly in Him, and as we adore and admire them in Him, then in truth they will be seen in us for His glory.



GOD CARES

W. F. S. TAYLOR

1 Peter 5 : 6, 7
Mark 4 : 35-41
Luke 10 : 38-42

I LISTENED to a recording of a hymn recently and was very impressed with these words, "These are days when the world is uncertain, and the power of the atom unknown ; but a far greater power up yonder, ever watches and CARES for His own".

On listening to these words, I began to think how greatly God cares for all them that trust Him, for them that are His. He encircles us day by day with His loving care, seeing to it that we are not subjected to anything apart from that, which He in His wisdom, thinks we ought to be subjected to.

How bitter and distressing are the difficulties which we are so often called upon to endure ; how deep are the sorrows which each one of us has at some time or another to bear ; and yet, through the darkness and the gloom shines this glorious truth, "Casting ALL your care upon him ; for he careth for you".

Truly these are waters to swim in. The same One Who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand, cares for us. It is not that we are so very special (we are only men amongst men) but because we belong to Him He cares for us.

How very precious it is to know this, to have this certain knowledge that no matter what we are called upon to pass through in our pilgrim pathway, whether it be life's lights or its shadows, the ups and downs, the summer days as well as the winter days, the great, grand, sheet anchor of our souls is this, "God cares for us." Verse 10 tells us that He is the God of all grace, and this is the God Who cares for us. It was the grace of God that brought us to the knowledge of His salvation : it is the grace of God that teaches us to live righteously, soberly and godly in this present evil world ; it is the grace of God which exhorts us to look forward and upward for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2 : 13).

When we think of eternity, all is sure and certain for He has said so. When we look forward within the confines of time, we do not know what a day has in store for us, but we do know this, that whatever is our lot, HE CARES FOR US.

Now in 1 Peter : 5, I would like you to notice that we must cast ALL our care upon Him : not just a part of it, but ALL of it : that

burden, that sorrow, that anxiety, that anxious foreboding, everything that would distress us. Just roll it all upon Him, and bask in this precious truth, **HE CARES FOR YOU**. He Who spared not His own Son—He cares for you. He Who gave you to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that He might bring you home to glory—He cares for you. He Who has written your name in Life's Eternal Book—He cares for you.

He cares for you every step of the way. All we have to do is by prayer and supplication to make our requests known to Him. There is no need to stagger under your burden, the burden you cannot even share with your nearest and dearest ; tell it all to Him and you will experience His peace. The peace that passeth all understanding will garrison your heart. This is the God in Whom we have placed our trust, surely then we must trust Him fully. The same blessed Person Who has brought us hitherto, will watch over us and care for us until He brings us to the place which is being prepared for us, the Father's house. I am not suggesting, of course, that we can go through our varied circumstances completely unaffected. We must have our exercises and experiences. What I am trying to say is that once we have the knowledge thoroughly implanted in our souls that **GOD** cares for us and watches over us moment by moment, we can enjoy the peace and tranquillity which are the products of a faith which looks up to God knowing that **HE CARES FOR US**.

In Mark 4 we have that well known incident of the storm on the lake which tested the faith of those who professed to follow the Lord Jesus. It is so very easy for us to criticise the disciples whose faith failed on that occasion. What was there to worry about ? We cannot understand what all the panic was about. The Lord was in the boat. So, we so easily criticise, because we were not called upon to pass through that particular circumstance. But, the strange thing is, when we find ourselves being tossed about by the storms of this life, we find do we not, our outlook and attitude are strangely similar to that of the disciples on this occasion. It is one thing to speak of God's ability and God's care when we are outside of the circumstances, but an altogether different matter when we personally are being tossed about, when the storm is actually raging about us. Yet the same One who was in control of the boat on that day, is in complete control today : Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

Our weakness lies in the fact that we do not **KNOW HIM** as well as we ought. Remember John 14, the last night He was to be with His own. His heart was full of tenderness, He was about to leave them. His disciples had been with Him night and day for well nigh three years. Some of them had witnessed His majesty ; all had seen His miracles. They had watched Him in all kinds of situations, walking on the water, raising the dead, feeding the multitude. He had given them precious instruction as to Himself, and yet how little they knew Him. Philip says to Him "Shew us the Father". Look at the reply the Lord gave to Philip. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me Philip ? " The whole secret is in getting to know Him. When the Lord has been a long time with any soul, He expects that soul to know Him. Some of us

have been with Him much longer than three years and yet we must hang our heads in shame, for we do not know Him as we ought. **THIS IS THE REASON FOR OUR FAILING FAITH.** May we seek to have the Apostle Paul's desire when he said, "That I might **KNOW HIM**, and the power of his resurrection".

To refer again to Mark 4, we have a most instructive scene—a violent storm and the poor disciples at their wits end. Now these men were well accustomed to storms and the hazards of this kind of life. They were fishermen. Suddenly their craft is being tossed about; the water is coming into the boat and it is filling fast. These men who were used to this type of circumstance begin to panic. In the midst of the panic the Master lies asleep. How truly He felt all that we feel. He was tired and He slept. The disciples in their panic were sure they were about to sink. How illogical is unbelief! How absurd to think that the boat would sink when the Son of God was aboard! Yet this is exactly what they feared. He was asleep on a pillow, being rocked by the ocean waves. The One Who made the sea, the One Who held the winds in His almighty grasp, lay asleep and permitted the wind and the sea to treat Him as though He were an ordinary man. What a wonderful sight! No words can ever describe the scene. In desperation they wake Him and this is what they asked, "Lord, do you not care that we perish? **DON'T YOU CARE?**" How could they even think that He was indifferent to their circumstances? I can imagine His saying, "Have I been so long time with you and you still don't know me?" They had completely lost sight of His love and His power. Yet do we not see ourselves reflected in this scene?

How often do we find ourselves in moments of trial and anxiety and we almost cry aloud "Lord, do you not care?" It may be that we find ourselves cut off from those we love, and our lives are filled with loneliness. It may be that we find difficulty in making ends meet financially. It may be that we are called upon to pass through deep sorrow. It may be that we find ourselves in sick beds, racked with pain, and in one way or another our tiny vessels being tossed about to and fro, and we are at the end of our tether. We feel as the disciples felt; we cry out, Lord, do you not care? Little do we realise that our unbelief and our doubts grieve the heart of the One Who cared so much that He went all the way to Calvary, to suffer, bleed and die. How then can we doubt His care for us? We forget that the more our faith is tried, the brighter it must shine, and this in turn produces praise and worship to our risen Lord and through Him to our God and Father. We are too ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of one difficulty or trial.

Briefly, in Luke 10, we have Martha asking the same question as the disciples in Mark 4, Lord, do you not care? It appears from Luke 10 that the house at Bethany belonged to Martha. (See verse 38). The Lord loved this family but tragedy struck the home. The beloved brother had died. Word was sent to the Lord but He did not come immediately. In John 11 the reason why He did not come immediately is given. Mary and Martha could not understand why He did not come. They did not know that every step of this blessed Man's pathway was to the glory of

God. The trials of these two sisters were used to the glory of God. Your trial and mine are for exactly the same reason, that God might be glorified. Remember this. Eventually the Master comes to Bethany. Naturally speaking it was too late. Lazarus was dead. Before He stretched out His hand to display His power over death we read these wonderful words, "Jesus wept". As the two sisters looked into that wonderful face, seeing the tears roll down His cheeks, Martha had her answer to her question, HE DID CARE.

Surely if we are called to pass through the deep waters of bereavement, trials and suffering of whatever sort, may we fall at His feet, and learn the sweetest of all truths that we can cast all our care upon Him, for HE CARETH FOR US.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA

HAZEL DIXON

HERE in my own new tomb I stand,
The rock shelf cold beneath my hand,
On which my Saviour lay.
The cave is dark ; beyond, green trees,
Sunlight, birdsong and fragrant breeze
Salute a warm spring day.

I, though a ruler, long had been
Serving the lowly Nazarene
Within my secret heart,
Till at His cross, grief made me bold ;
Homage I would no more withhold,
Nor play the coward's part.

I begged His body, this my vow :
No enemy should touch Him now—
Now He should have my best.
A friend brought spice and linen bands ;
We bound Him, with devoted hands,
And laid Him here to rest.

Heavy and slow, the Sabbath passed—
The Hope of Israel sunk at last,
Sealed with Him in this cave.
Then through the city came, next day,
News that the stone was rolled away,
Jesus had left the grave !

Arisen ! Arisen ! from this, my tomb !
(Yes, like a benison, the gloom
Still holds the scent of myrrh)
Arisen ! Death could not hold Him, then—
Spoiled is that ancient foe of men,
O strong Deliverer !

Now He has stood before our eyes,
His chosen band have seen Him rise,
Now, in the Spirit's power,

Boldly we witness, pray and praise ;
 Yet have I sought this silent place
 To muse alone one hour.

Command my service, risen Lord !
 If it should bring the tyrant's sword,
 Increase Thy fame the more !
 Or if in age and peace I die
 And in this place my body lie,
 Thou hast been here before !

Here, in the coward's tomb hast lain,
 In endless life gone forth again :
 So, now, liege man of grace,
 I leave its shades to serve Thy will,
 To love and honour Thee until
 I stand before Thy face.

NOT YEA AND NAY, BUT YEA ————— COLIN CURRY

(Some Aspects of 2 Corinthians)

The Background to the Letter

THE second epistle to the Corinthians is in some ways the most revealing of all Paul's letters. Paul and his companions had recently emerged from a time of acute peril. The details of their experiences are not gone into, but clearly they had been close to death and at a certain stage all hope of survival had faded. He attributes their escape to God alone, Who in some wonderful way had intervened to rescue and to comfort them. The after-effects of these harrowing experiences are discernible in the letter ; in the softness and openness of his manner with his one-time converts ; in his reflections on his lot as an apostle and his references to the physical wear-and-tear involved ; and in his allusions to the greater hope which lay ahead, and the fuller life which would more than compensate for the rigours of the present one.

It is clear too that there had been another kind of anxiety contributing to his trials. Throughout these exacting experiences he had also felt a deep concern, amounting to a real anguish of spirit, about these Corinthian believers whom he was now addressing. At a rather earlier stage he had intended visiting them again, but had then received news about them which greatly disturbed him. There was much that needed setting right at Corinth ; and along with this was an attitude on their part of estrangement from him, questioning his sincerity and his credentials. At considerable cost to himself he had deemed it wiser, in the circumstances, to postpone visiting them. He had written a serious letter instead. In 1 : 15 to 2 : 4 of the present letter he explains this, giving his reasons for the change of plan and for sending that earlier, severer, letter. 1 Corinthians could be the letter referred to, but this is not the only possibility. Since writing that earlier letter he had been deeply concerned to know what effect it had upon them. Throughout the time when the physical trial was at its peak this anxiety had been with him. The pro-

gress of his converts was of great importance to Paul ; and, even when life itself was at risk, doubt about the outcome of his efforts to help them weighed heavily upon him.

But now (as he writes the 2 Corinthian letter) most of those fears had gone. News had come to him through Titus that they had taken his earlier letter well, accepting the correction it contained (see 7 : 4-9). The sense of relief on hearing this good news predominates in this letter. It is pervaded by a sense of reconciliation ; he rejoices openly with his Christian friends, he is completely unrestrained in his manner with them. Recovery is on the way, and he hastens eagerly to make capital from this improved situation.

Recovery, however, was not yet complete ; and the attitude towards Paul of some at least of the Corinthian believers was not so unreserved as he would have wished (see 6 : 11, 12 and 7 : 2, for instance). There are indications that the spirit of bias against him was still alive. Perhaps it was confined now to a few rather forceful persons. We can see, however, that Paul feels this element to be dangerous, and he counters their criticism (of himself and of his mission) quite strongly in the later parts of this letter. Earlier in the letter, too, he stresses the genuineness of all his activities, with these critical persons in mind, it would seem.

Its Contents in this Context

The Spirit of God brings much good out of this complex situation. Soon after opening the letter we find Paul needing to insist that his ways with them had been firm and decisive, that they had been consistently transparent and on-the-level. He makes it clear that in all his dealings he had been totally and unashamedly involved, with their interests and the interests of his Master only in mind. He insists that there had been no fickleness, no unreliability, no insincerity in his intentions towards them. This alone would be consistent with the great Theme and Message entrusted to him, which it was his charge to propogate. And so, from assuring them of the straightforward good faith which he had always shown, he moves on to speak soon of what really prompted him to be like this. We find him referring back in thought to the great Light which had shone first into his own being, "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun", "the glory that excelleth", "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (Acts 26 : 13 ; 2 Corinthians 3 : 10 ; 4 : 6). The greater Light of the Christian revelation, the Light that streams down from the exalted Christ, is decisive and unambiguous in the absolute sense ; its glory supersedes and engulfs all else that could be considered glorious ; it is permanent and unsurpassable in its greatness and splendour. **This**, above all else, is firm and unequivocal in character, gloriously open and unquenchable in its magnificence. Here is the pattern and the stimulus for all spiritual activity which stems from it. **This** was the great motivation of his desire to help them. The proponents of the ministry of grace have qualities which are **like what they represent**. The thought that there should be inconsistency between himself and his message was utterly abhorrent to Paul. Grace has effects in lives which are under its influence ; this principle is illustrated here in a remarkable way in the person of Paul himself.

The special nature of Paul's commission from the ascended Christ, and his special function in the initial spreading and founding of the Christian faith, are of course clear. Much of what Paul writes in this letter, about the ministry of the new covenant committed to him, and about the attitudes which befit a person so entrusted, applies principally to himself and his close associates. It must however also have its lessons for us. All who are under the effect of this same ministry of grace must be prepared to face the implications of this teaching, whether they are passive recipients of that grace or active proponents of it (and surely a blend of both reactions must be the proper one). We may well ask ourselves whether the thought that we could seem to be inconsistent representatives of the Light we have received is as abhorrent to us as it was to Paul. The Corinthians, though on the receiving end of all that Paul as the Lord's servant had brought to them, were also in consequence "manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ" (3 : 3). So it was already, no doubt, but it was important that their reflection of Christ should remain a true one : and it is certainly quite as important for present-day recipients of such light and instruction from the Lord.

A Pattern to Follow

With this in mind we may briefly pick out from the letter some of the practical marks of Paul's manner of fulfilling the charge laid upon him. While allowing for the substantial differences between the apostle and ourselves, there are features here which are surely desirable still ; and it will be salutary to ask whether we match up to the pattern which this provides.

We must of course bear in mind that these features, if produced in our lives, will in reality be the product of God's own operations and initiative with us. This letter certainly makes this plain.

The light shines **in** before it can shine **out**. Only as engaged with Christ, beholding "the glory of the Lord", attracted and absorbed by what we see there, can a transformation into that likeness take place. Underlying all is the work of the Spirit, directing us towards that great Object, and writing His own living responses in our hearts. So it is that true progress in our lives takes place. But it is also evident that our own co-operation is part of the process. To be led by the Spirit of God involves a readiness on our part to follow : following is the evidence of the leading. These chapters have many features which show that Paul is no automaton in responding to the divine work within him. He considers himself and his companions as workers together with God (6 : 1). His whole mind and heart is engaged in willing commitment to his Lord ; there is whole-hearted participation in all that the Lord had planned for him. There is carefulness that all his actions and decisions should be right ones, suited in detail to the Lord Whom he serves and represents. Deliberation and forethought are involved in seeking to fulfil the will of the Lord. Decisions once taken are followed up with prayerful and thoroughgoing concern about the outcome ; there is relief and rejoicing when difficult matters are resolved in a right way. Mind and body are continually stretched in service for the Lord. This kind of life has few opportunities for relaxing, though it has great compensations too.

An important characteristic of a consistent Christian person, then, is **freedom from duplicity**. The apostle certainly knew this. There was nothing under-cover, nothing ambiguous about him. He did not say Yes and mean No ; there had been no blend of true and untrue attitudes. In all this was a reflection of Christ Himself, the perfect exponent of faithfulness to the promises of God, the Yea and the Amen, ready and able to complete all that rested upon Him. There indeed was the supreme example of unqualified assent to the purposes of God, and a faultless fulfilment of them. To be engaged with Christ, to be deeply involved in **His** interests, as Paul was, is to assimilate something of this firm and positive character. It should make a person incapable of double-dealing in any of his activities.

This **open sincerity** which Paul saw to be so important is a continuing theme in the first half of the letter. It was in this manner that he handled the divine message entrusted to him. "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God : but as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we of Christ" (2 : 17). Paul was no "pedlar" of God's word (the word "corrupt" in this verse has this idea underlying it). It was not something he used in a slick and easy fashion. He was under the eye of the Author of its message ; he felt its control upon his own life. Here surely is a vital lesson for readers today. Familiarity with the word of God is good, provided there is subjection to it ; there is need, however, to be watchful about easy-going use of scripture. Again this theme is revived in 4 : 2 ; "We. . . have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation (open declaration) of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God". His conduct had a sterling and undeviating quality about it : it was in close correspondence with the Message which he heralded forth, supporting it and taking character from it.

We may note too the **clarity and frankness** of Paul's words, whether written or spoken. Notice, for instance, his statement in 1 : 13 "We write none other things unto you, than what ye read and acknowledge ; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even unto the end". He claims that his approach could be seen to be straightforward ; his methods were direct and free from artful subterfuge. This was his general mode in spreading abroad the great theme of the glory of Christ. He avoided diffuse and elaborate words, which could so easily blunt the edge of such a message. His speech was clear and to the point, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (3 : 12). He spoke boldly and with conviction too : "According as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken ; we also believe, and therefore speak" (4 : 13). The same boldness and directness marked his ways with fellow-Christians whether they were new converts or those of longer standing. "Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you" (7 : 4). We could not imagine him satisfied with only a formal relationship with them ; nor with a cold submission on their part to his communications. He shows an open-hearted care for them and looks for a warm and frank response in return. "Men of Corinth, we have spoken very frankly to you ; we have opened our heart wide to you all. On our part there is

no constraint ; any constraint there may be is in yourselves. In fair exchange then (may a father speak so to his children ?) open wide your hearts to us" (6 : 11-13 NEB).

The lessons of all this for today are surely clear. The testimony to Christ is often masked by woolliness and indecisiveness in its presentation. Relationships between Christian people can easily become choked and sterile because of lack of openness with one another. Suppressed antagonisms and unspoken resentments are often allowed room to develop, instead of being recognised and dealt with as they deserve. Undercurrents amongst the people of God help only the cause of the enemy. We need to be alert to these possibilities, and these chapters help to expose them. The way to overcome these trends is indicated in a helpful way here too.

Though outspoken, Paul was also **tactful** and **careful** in all that he did. He does not dictate to these Corinthians in any sense. "Not . . . that we have dominion over your faith," he writes, "but are helpers of your joy : for by faith ye stand" (1 : 24). As with all those whom he seeks to help and win, he "beseeches" and "persuades" them towards the desired response (see 5 : 11, 20 ; 6 : 1). The love of Christ constrains him to act like this ; and through him its constraint on others is felt. He watches all his actions so that they may help in this direction. "Giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. . . by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned. . ." (6 : 3-6). A life dominated by the grace of Christ is well under control ; it has about it the marks of discipline, and of concern for the feelings and the well-being of others.

Finally, we may observe Paul's **confident** and **unflagging** spirit. Despite all the problems he was concerned about, and despite the tough experiences which filled his life, his spirit remained resilient and resolute. To be constrained by the love of Christ is also to be set free from much in life which might otherwise impair or dishearten. It fills a man with hope and vigour, giving him persistence, stability and patience. So it was with Paul, at least. With simple reality he writes "We are always confident", "we faint not". A daily inward renewal sustained and refreshed his spirit ; "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (4 : 1, 16 ; 5 : 6). Similar experiences should still be possible in the rough situations of real life which many Christians know today.

The comment of the apostle James may be quoted in conclusion. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (1 : 8). We have admired Paul's single-mindedness and the transparent and forthright characteristics which accompanied it. May we seek to draw upon the same supplies of grace as he did, so that we may follow as well as admire the model he presents to us.

TESTING TIMES**R. THOMSON****EBENEZER**

(1 Samuel 7)

SEASONS of testing are sometimes allowed in our lives that we may obtain spiritual profit thereby. Such instances are recorded for us in the Scriptures as when Job endured so great a loss to be more blessed at the end than at the beginning ; also Jacob wrestling with the angel who desired to bless him at Peniel ; and David testifying that it had been good for him in affliction to prepare him to learn God's statutes. Peter, in his day, had great testing at the hand of Satan, but when restored, through grace, became a pillar of strength to his brethren. Then, coming to our present circumstances, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12 : 6). When we are passing through this special testing we realize that "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12 : 11).

Coming to our chapter, 1 Samuel 7, we are confronted with the solemn fact that a time of deepest calamity had come upon the nation of Israel, nothing less than the capture of the ark by the Philistines. This great crisis was for a twofold reason. First, there was no king to govern them, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Also, they had cast off all godly order and restraint, following the times of the judges which had been divinely given them. Secondly, the priesthood under Eli was corrupted because his sons practised evil even in connection with the holy sacrifices. Realizing that God's judgment lay upon them they did not heed their father's reproof when he sought to restrain them, for they were sons of Belial and knew not God. This righteous retribution did come upon them for, "He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29 : 1).

The preparation of the Lord before the ultimate depths, that is, the loss of the ark, is very sweet to notice. There are Hannah, the barren woman in earnest prayer to Jehovah : Samuel, her divinely given son ; the willing surrender of him to God by Hannah ; and his opened ear to hear the word of the Lord. Jehovah's glory must be maintained, although the ark of God was to be captured by the Philistines. Let us always remember that we must not think of the ark as a mascot. It is always figurative of the Presence of God with His redeemed people, dwelling in their midst in holiness and love, and causing them to triumph in Himself. It was ordained to be the centre of gathering and worship, the symbol of victory as in the crossing of Jordan and the fall of Jericho. When captured by the Philistines and placed in their heathen temple, the idol Dagon must bow and fell from its pedestal. Also, the enemies of Israel are made to feel the hand of God to be very heavy upon them. For seven months the ark went from city to city, with the same catastrophic results and the Philistines were glad to send it back to Israel, on

a new cart accompanied by a present. In all things Christ must have the pre-eminence, and God will watch over all circumstances to bring this about.

The men of Bethshemeth looked into the ark, and many of them were smitten of the Lord. With the mercy seat lifted off, there must be judgment without mercy ; and it is recorded in Matthew 11 : 27 " No man knoweth the Son but the Father ". His perfections of Diety in *manhood are alone known fully to Him, and we can only go as far as the Scriptures reveal Him to our wondering eyes.* Who then will be willing to lodge the ark, finding room and shelter for it ? Those of Kirjath Jearim came forward and brought it to the house of Abinadab in the hill, setting apart Eleazar to keep it. Abinadab means Willingness, and Eleazar signifies, Help of God. This house was the resting place of the ark for twenty years. Here, dwelling in humble circumstances, the ark brought blessing and preservation to the household of Abinadab. A work of God was also seen in the nation, for there was a great searching of heart and a seeking after Him. How precious this must have been in His sight ! They did avail themselves of the divinely appointed way of recovery, which is by repentance toward God, and the effectual results of the sacrifice. " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness " (1 John 1 : 9).

Taking up this thought of recovery, let us notice the steps which follow one after the other. The prophet Samuel declared to ALL the house of Israel that if they were sincere in returning to the Lord, they must first put away all the strange gods and Ashtaroth (idols) from among them. This separation from idolatry and evil pursuits was absolutely essential ; for God is a jealous God, the only true God Who is able to fill and satisfy the heart. With this inward searching, the people must be prepared and willing to serve Him only ; and then He would manifest His power towards them for their deliverance from the Philistines (worldly religion). This they did, and a great revival and restoration began, bringing glory to God.

The word of Samuel was simple and clear, " Gather ALL Israel to Mizpeh ". Not one is left out, for there was recovery for ALL. The meeting place was Mizpeh, " The watchtower ", for the eyes of the Lord had been upon them for all the twenty years of their wandering away from Him. As thus gathered, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord ; an expression of utter weakness and helplessness. " For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again " (2 Samuel 14 : 14). Also, they fasted, and confessed their sins before the Lord. In this manner Samuel judged the people ; and it was a time of great heart searching for them and one of bringing glory to Jehovah.

Immediately they turned to the Lord, and gathered to Mizpeh, there was seen the opposition and power of the enemy, for the lords of the Philistines came against Israel to strike terror and fear into their hearts. Their resource, however, was in the mediation of Samuel ; and in their acknowledgement of the Lord as their God they seek His deliverance. Samuel's intercession was based upon a sacrifice acceptable to God, and, taking a sucking lamb, he offered it for a burnt-offering, wholly to the

Lord. This sacrifice was unique in that it would imply that the lamb was completely dependent upon another by suckling, and the fragrance of the ascending offering was altogether for God. By this means, the prayer and intercession of Samuel was presented for the people, and **the Lord heard him**. Thus the meaning of his name, Heard of God, was fulfilled.

Now we behold the climax, for as the burnt offering ascended, and the Philistines drew near to battle, the Lord wrought miraculously for the triumph of His people. The Lord smote the enemy with thunder and the Philistines were discomfited and completely routed. From Mizpeh, they pursue the terrified host as far as Bethcar, The Place of Pasture. Truly, the Lord had wrought a glorious victory by the blood of the lamb, and had brought His redeemed nation to the place of pasture. The prophet Samuel would have them continually to remember this, and erected a stone between Mizpeh and Shen, calling it "Ebenezer", Stone of Help, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us".

How good it is for us to raise up our Ebenezers, and see how the Lord has helped us for His own glory, and for our seasonable blessing! He is the Helper of the fatherless (Psalm 19 : 14) and He says, "I will help thee" (Isaiah 41 : 10). In our extremity we come boldly to the throne of grace, to find mercy and seasonable help (Hebrews 4 : 16), and prove that our God is truly our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46 : 1).

PSALM 40

ROBERT DAVIES

A Short Meditation

IN his "Reflections on The Psalms" C. S. Lewis has a chapter headed "Second Meanings in The Psalms". For present purposes we will use this phrase to indicate that though the psalmists wrote to be understood in their own day, behind the immediate sense there frequently lies a prophetic and—for us—more important meaning. This was recognized by the writers of the New Testament who quote from, or refer directly to the Psalms about sixty-three times, not counting more than one use of the quotation. It is clear from Matthew 22 : 41-46 that Psalm 110, for example, was generally accepted as Messianic. Moreover, the Lord Himself after His resurrection, speaking to the disciples about the fulfilment of the Old Testament, specifically mentioned "The Psalms" (Luke 24 : 44). It is therefore with the "second meaning" of Psalm 40 that we are primarily concerned and for this we have direct New Testament authority, viz the quotation from it found in Hebrews 10.

The precise circumstances in which the Psalm was written are not known to us, but it is clear that David had experienced the Lord's saving power. Passing through a time of wretchedness and poverty, the Lord had proved a Helper and Deliverer. His cry had been heard and when deliverance came it was like being pulled out of a pit of mire and brought to the safety of a rock. In this Psalm, however, as in many others, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and heart searchings of the faithful of all ages find expression. It can be argued that Christian experience is not

found in the Psalms but I think it is fair to say that we frequently find the experiences of Christians there, hence the special affection which many have for this portion of the Old Testament. Obviously the knowledge of the Father and the Son and the abiding of the Spirit are **not** revealed, but practical difficulties are recorded e.g. the apparent prosperity of the wicked, etc.

The quotation in the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever measure of obedience faithful men and women have rendered and to whatever extent they can be said to have pleased God, the Lord Jesus alone rendered perfect obedience and was wholly pleasing to God in all that He did. It is with particular reference to His carrying out God's will, eclipsing completely the offerings of a past dispensation, that Psalm 40 is quoted, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me : In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10 : 5-7).

It is well known that the Hebrew of the Psalm reads "Ears hast thou digged for me" rendered in the A.V. "Mine ears hast thou opened" (Psalm 40 : 6). This means that the psalmist's ears were opened by God to hear the Divine Voice : to listen to God's voice and to do His will was ever the Son's delight. It is this moral glory which lends force to the argument in the epistle. It was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins, because such sacrifices had no intrinsic moral glory. They could not lay down the foundation of eternal blessing for man. It was in complete submission to the will of His God and Father that the Lord Jesus laid down His life on the cross, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. . . This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10 : 18). This is in complete contrast to the Old Testament offerings, consequently the "first" order based upon these sacrifices is finished and the "second" order established. Under this "second" order the believer, by the one perfect offering made (as we have seen) in accordance with God's will, is sanctified—set apart, made holy—is released from uncleanness and guilt and enabled to enter into fellowship with God. "By the which will we are sanotified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10 : 10). "Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest" (Hebrews 10 : 19). "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Hebrews 10 : 9).

We notice that the quotation from Psalm 40 is introduced by the words "Wherefore when He cometh into the world". It is suggested that this refers to our Lord's coming down to earth from heaven and not simply to the start of His public ministry. His **whole** life was pleasing to God, "My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1 : 11). Nevertheless the verses which follow in the Psalm do suggest the **character** of His public ministry. In this, the epistle to the Hebrews helps us. We shall find that this epistle is of particular help in the understanding of the whole Psalm and in the unfolding of the "things of Christ".

"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation" : "I

have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation" (verses 9 and 10). "Salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him : " (Hebrews 2 : 3). We may also compare verse 10 with Luke 4 : 22 "I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (verse 10). "And all . . . wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth".

Verses 11-13 indicate that serious calamities have befallen the psalmist. There is a suggestion of his being isolated, his being cut off from human help. "Thou art my help and my deliverer ; make no tarrying, O my God" (verse 17).

Do the verses now under consideration bear a prophetic meaning, and if so do they apply to the Lord Jesus ? If we set alongside them certain verses from the Epistle to the Hebrews, we shall find the answer

"Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord : let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve me" (verse 11). "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me : O Lord, make haste to help me" (verse 13) (see also verses 14 and 17).

"In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5 : 7).

These passages lead one's thoughts to the Lord praying in the garden of Gethsemane a short time before His arrest. We know that on this particular occasion He was not delivered from death ; that bitter cup was not removed from Him—and the passage in Hebrews does not say that He was delivered—but He was heard. Luke 22 : 43 states that "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him".

What then of verse 12 ? Set in parallel with certain verses in Hebrews 9 it is of profound interest. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of mine head" (verse 12). "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time" (Hebrews 9 : 26, 28).

The verses in the Psalm emphasize the reality of our Lord's sin-bearing on the cross, the One "Who knew no sin" yet was "made sin" for our sakes. This is further confirmed by 1 Peter 2 : 24 "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" and again "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" (3 : 18). In his "Short Meditations on the Psalms" on Psalm 40, J. G. Bellett wrote "He (i.e. Christ) confesses the sins He had taken on Him. For such confession both vindicates God and is a gracious adoption of that which had been laid upon Him, that we may have strong consolation in knowing the reality of the imputation of our sins to His account" (the emphasis is J. G. Bellett's).

We may, perhaps, wonder at the apparent contradiction between

the verses we have just considered and those with which we began (quoted in Hebrews 10). The work of Christ has been likened to a precious stone with many facets, each of which has its own reflective powers contributing to the glory of the whole. We have here two precious facets of truth. The Lord Jesus was ever obedient to God's will and in the words of the Apostle Paul, He has "given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour". But He also "died for our sins according to the scriptures" (See Ephesians 5 : 2 and 1 Corinthians 15 : 3).

Verses 14 and 15 can be easily understood in their original context. David and other Old Testament worthies may well have expressed themselves in this way, but they cannot be applied to the Lord Jesus. He stands in complete contrast, "When he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Peter 2 : 23).

Furthermore these verses from the Psalm are out of keeping with the spirit of the present dispensation of grace, i.e. when God's unmerited favour is being proclaimed. Passages such as Romans 12 : 14,17 make this plain "Bless and curse not". "Recompense to no man evil for evil". The Christian in a difficult situation may be tempted to do the opposite, but this is the example which the Lord has given us to follow. (See 1 Peter 1 : 21). There is a similar passage in Psalm 69 and it is not unreasonable to compare these. Twice in John's gospel, Psalm 69 is quoted with direct reference to the Lord Jesus, verse 9 in chapter 2 : 17 and verse 21 in chapter 19 : 28. But in the epistle to the Romans verses 22 and 23 are introduced in a different context, "and David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap" (Romans 11 : 9).

The application is to Israel's moral and spiritual condition, viz. the people as a whole had not obtained the blessing for which they were striving. It was a "remnant" who had secured it through grace, (see Romans 11 : 5).

Also verse 25 of Psalm 69 is quoted in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles in connection with Judas Iscariot. If these verses in Psalm 40 have a "second meaning" perhaps we may take them as a warning of the ultimate confusion of those who reject the Saviour's claim.

We can now turn back to the beginning of Psalm 40. Here we have deliverance. There is no doubt that as applied to the Lord Jesus verses 1 to 3 speak of His glorious resurrection. "I waited patiently for the Lord ; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings".

We may say that like the Epistle to the Hebrews, Psalm 40 begins prophetically with the Lord Jesus Christ risen and exalted ; the Son Who "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1 : 3). In what sense can verse 3 apply to the risen Christ ? The answer is in Hebrews 2, where He is represented as leading the praises of His people, whom in resurrection He counts as "his brethren" (cf. John 20 : 17). "And He has put a

new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God " (verse 3). "For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee " (Hebrews 2 : 11, 12). The quotation from Hebrews 2 is, of course, from Psalm 22, not Psalm 40, but both Psalms bear the title 'To or for the chief musician' (AV). Scholars seem to be doubtful about the exact meaning of the Hebrew, but for the Christian the 'prophetic' application is plain. The Lord Jesus Himself is the "Chief Musician". "In the midst of the church Christ Himself is the leader of the praise which goes up in an unbroken stream to God the Father. That is descriptive of what has been going on throughout the Christian era" (The late Dr. T. Oliver in his "Meditations on the Psalms"). We must not, of course, take this phrase 'chief musician' too literally, but the realization that the Lord links Himself with His people in this way ought to be a great source of encouragement and would, I suggest, liberate the worshippers from what is merely conventional. If we enter into the spirit of this teaching and join 'the singing that He leadeth' then our praise cannot be other than acceptable to God. To meditate on this aspect of worship may help us to sing 'with the spirit and with the understanding also'.

Verse 3b can certainly be applied to this age : many seeing what God has accomplished through His Son have put their trust in Him, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies" (verse 4).

Joy and hope are an essential part of true christian experience according to the New Testament. See for example Romans 5 : 2, Hebrews 6 : 18, 19, 1 John 1 : 4.

The latter half of the verse is equally applicable today. Lies abound; Satan is behind them because he is the father of lies (John 8 : 44). Likewise there are many deceivers in the world (2 John 7) and those who are deceived and are "siding with rebels straying in delusion", as verse 4 has been translated.

Let us conclude this meditation on a positive note. Verse 5 undoubtedly expresses the spirit of christian praise. It sets the character of the 'New Song' viz, the greatness of the incomparable God and His wonderful works—"Many O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to usward ; They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee : If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered".

Since we have been thinking about singing, perhaps an extract from the metrical version of this Psalm is an appropriate note on which to end :

"He put a new song in my mouth
our God to magnify :
Many shall see it and shall fear
and on the Lord rely.
O Lord my God, full many are
the wonders Thou hast done
Thy gracious thoughts to usward far
above all thoughts are gone."

STUDIES IN THE REVELATION J. S. BLACKBURN

1. A BIRD'S EYE VIEW.

I. The inspired title and description.

Read 1 : 1-3

(a) The opening words show that this book came from the Lord Jesus Christ for the enlightenment of His servants. God gave it to Him. He made it known by signs by His angel to His servant John, who faithfully recorded all he saw. It is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and it tells of things which must shortly come to pass. The Lord had promised that when the Spirit was come He would not only bring to their remembrance His sayings to them, and guide them into all the truth, but He would also show them things to come. (John 16 : 13) The Apocalypse is the most complete fulfilment of that promise. It is God's will that to wean us from the world, and invigorate our witness to it, coming under such fearful chastisement, and to cause us to cleave to Christ, the glorious victor, we should know what is going to happen.

(b) Mark well, this Revelation is not intended to make us serene persons of superior knowledge, but it is instructions for toilers, so that those who have by the mercies of God and the love of Christ become bond-slaves of Jesus should have the additional incentive of the plagues ready for this wicked world, and the felicity in store for those who enter in through the gates into the holy city, to incite them to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

II. The vision of the Son of Man amidst the churches.

Read 1 : 10-13, 17, 18.

(a) Being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, John heard a trumpet voice instructing him to record what he was about to see, and to send it to the churches. On turning to see the speaker, he saw, first, the symbols of the seven churches and second, Daniel's Son of Man walking among them. The instant impression is that He who is soon to have universal dominion now confronts the churches. Judgment begins at the House of God. It is a terrible vision. His eyes were like a flame, His feet like burning brass, and His voice like the roar of the waters. All things are naked and open in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. His word is a sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. That sword is soon to be turned against the followers of the Beast and the False Prophet, but it now confronts the churches.

Nothing must be allowed to weaken the force of this terrible aspect, designed to inculcate the fear of the Lord. At the same time, when before

it John falls at His feet as one dead, the strengthening right hand is placed on him, and words of encouragement fall on his ear, assuring him, in order to banish fear, that it was the Same whose love he had known so long. "I am the Living One, and became dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."

(b) In the letters dictated to John by the Son of Man for transmission to the seven churches, the general lesson corresponds with the two aspects of the vision, of which details are prefixed to each letter. The two aspects of the vision are judgment and encouragement, corresponding to the goodness and severity of God. In general the churches, especially at the end, come in for judgment. In the first, the Lord threatens to remove the candlestick, and in the last to spue it out of His mouth. But in each letter there are gracious words of encouragement to individuals who are willing to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. It is in these special messages to the overcomers, who are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, that we have clear links between this introductory part of the Revelation, and the more distinctly prophetic parts. It is overcomers now, who have part in the book of life and the holy city. Remember this, that the conclusion of this book is cast in terms here plainly used of overcomers in the church period.

III The throne set and the Lamb sharing the Divine glory.

Read 1 : 19. 4 : 1-3 and 9-11. 5 : 1-7.

John had been told to write "the things he saw" (the vision of the Son of Man), "the things that are" (connected with the churches), and the "things that shall be after these." The latter begin in 4 : 1, as the end of this verse says. This consideration, together with the fact that the church is not mentioned on earth in the remaining visions, lead us to believe that the rapture of the saints according to 1 Thessalonians 4 : 17 must have taken place. Perhaps the words to John, "Come up hither" are intended to symbolise this. Certain it is that John, who received the messages to the churches on earth, sees the remainder of the visions as from heaven, although he visits in spirit special places for special visions.

(a) The first revelation to John in heaven is that God's eternal throne is unmoved and unmovable. What strength flows from this simple assurance ! In our times men ever more blatantly cast off the restraint of the acknowledgment of God. This behaviour will culminate in the assemblage of the nations at Armageddon to fight against the Lord. But we can rejoice in the certainty that none of this has dethroned God. He is still the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords, and in heaven the redeemed and the cherubim ceaselessly adore Him. His name in this chapter and context is "He that sits on the throne," and the subject is the glory of God in creation. To us He is the Father. But we are not robbed by this relationship of the stability which comes from the knowledge that He is also the sovereign Ruler of all things in heaven and earth.

(b) A further vision of the divine throne, after first filling John with sorrow, made him rejoice. He was shown that the Lamb who was slain now shares the divine glory ! When God's will required it, He was perfect in meekness and sacrifice. Now He is ready to arise as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He alone is worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll.

He alone has power to set in motion the execution of God's chastisements in the earth which will bring in the eternal blessing. The Lamb's title to everlasting glory and honour is that He was slain, and has redeemed us to God by His blood. We are now to learn what steps He will take to clear the earth of evil and then to rise upon it and shine like the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings.

IV. Judgments leading to Christ's world-kingdom.

Read 6 : 1-8, 9-12. 8 : 1, 7, 8, 12. 9 : 1, 13-5, 20, 21. 11 : 15.

In chapters 6, 8, 9, and 11 John's visions symbolised the judgments which lead to the world-kingdom of our God and of His Christ, "and He shall reign for ever and ever." We have been promised, "If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him." The destructive inflictions represented by these events are necessary before the glorious time when Jesus comes to reign. What becomes of the idea that the world is going to improve, either by the gospel or any other influence? What is to be the Christian's attitude to a world which in the past "knew Him not" and crucified the Lord of glory, and in the future, as we now learn, is to be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel? It still resists Him whose right it is to reign, and who alone is able to cause the nations to learn war no more, and to make the desert blossom as a rose. If **this** is to be the manner of the world's conversion how loudly it calls to us "the friendship of the world is enmity with God."

(a) The judicial inflictions which now appear in the visions are in two series. First, come those which follow the opening of the seven seals. Then appear those which follow the sounding of the seven trumpets. The former are the beginnings of sorrows, while the latter usher in the world's doom. The first series begins with the celebrated vision of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The inflictions which make up this first series are such, in nature, as the world has been acquainted with for centuries. Once and again these four horsemen have careered across the earth. They are providential inflictions, distinct from the evidently supernatural judgments which follow the seven trumpets. First some power emerges intent on conquest, (the rider on the white horse). Then war and bloodshed, (the red horse). This is succeeded by famine, (the black horse), and the result is always death on a massive scale, (the pale horse). This is the sadly familiar aspect the world will present, doubtless in an intensified way, when the light of prophecy again begins to shine on the doings of the nations. After this follow deaths by martyrdom, and the series closes with men so terrified that they think that the day of God's wrath has come.

(b) The opening of the seventh seal introduces the inflictions which follow the sounding of the seven trumpets. These are not only incomparably more severe than those following the seals, but they are manifestly the symbols of things supernatural. We no longer see familiar occurrences like war and the bloodshed and famine which are always in its train, but of hail and fire mingled with blood cast on the earth, and of a flaming mountain falling into the sea, and of the armies of the bottomless pit under its angel Apollyon tormenting men. A portentous distinction is here to be made. As, again and again the four horsemen have ridden across the stage, they have always been accompanied by

the voice of God calling men to repentance, and there has been joy in the presence of the angels over sinners repenting. Thus God has been taking out of the world a people for the name of Jesus. Then, all will be changed. Under the sixth trumpet a portion of mankind, after being tormented, is slain by the inflictions, and the "rest. . . repented not." On the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the first sequence of John's story reaches finality. Great voices in heaven celebrate the world kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. For the moment no details are given of the appearing of the Lord Jesus, nor of the setting up of the Kingdom of God.

(c) During the period of these events we have notices of saints and witnesses for God. (ch. 7) God's hand is on His people in suitable care, for His mercy endures for ever, but if our interpretation of the limits of the period be correct, then all this is subsequent to the Rapture of the saints, and these are not church saints, but either Jews, or Gentiles of those peoples and tongues outside the bounds of Christendom. It is therefore necessary to mention that during this period the Jews are again God's people on earth and their worship is recognised by Him. (11 : 1) During this period the Great Tribulation takes place. (7 : 14)

V. The Antichrist and his associates.

Read 12 : 1-5. 13 : 1-4, 11, 16-18. 17 : 1-6.

From chapters 6 to 11 the vision has recorded events in chronological order, (with interludes in chapters 7 and 10 : 1 to 11 : 12), up to the Millennium's beginning. But John learns in 10 : 11 that although in the days of the seventh trumpet the mystery of God shall be finished, this is not to be the end of his prophesying. Accordingly, in chapters 12 to 18 the story is retold with particular reference to the personages who will be leaders in the final uprising against God, the apostacy. In these chapters we see the results of the working of Satan, which has been going on in mystery during this gospel age, which will come to fruition in the times of the prophecy, and on which God's wrath shall be poured out destructively.

(a) First, the conflict of Genesis 3 re-appears, and is revealed as the underlying cause of the conflicts of the last days. It is the conflict between the Serpent and the Seed of the woman. These are the three actors of chapter 12 : the Woman, her Child, and the Serpent. In chapter 13 we read that in pursuance of this conflict, Satan gives his power to a personage who is symbolised as a Beast arising from the sea. He persecutes the Jews and rebels against Christ. A second Beast arising from the land, (later called the False Prophet), is the principal agent of the first, and is a religious, as the first Beast is a political power. One of these is the Antichrist named in John's Epistles, and described in 2 Thessalonians 2. He is the Lawless One to be **revealed**, the culmination of the **mystery** of lawlessness working since Paul's day. To refuse to worship the Beast or wear the number of his name will be the great test of piety in those days. When he has been permitted to flourish for 3½ years, God will pour on his kingdom the seven vials in which are filled up the wrath of God, leading up to the destruction of the Beast and the False Prophet by the brightness of the coming of Christ.

(b) Another evil system is described in chapter 17, after having been mentioned in chapter 14. This is a woman, called by the name of a city.

She is clothed in scarlet and is named Babylon. Her great crime is that she has seduced and made drunk the kings of the earth with her idolatrous allurements. The Roman Catholic Church bears many of the marks given here. At first, the woman rides the Beast which arises from the sea, but ultimately the ten kings who form the future power of Rome turn and destroy her. Her fall is the occasion of great rejoicing to the saints and of great lamentation to all those who have benefited by her commerce. This contrasted rejoicing and lamentation is the subject of chapter 18. The implication of all this is that the destruction of the Scarlet Woman is the sign of the beginning of the undisputed supremacy of the Antichrist. It continues $3\frac{1}{2}$ years (42 months or 1260 days). During this period Jewish disciples are in flight from Jerusalem, and we have another view of the Great Tribulation.

(c) This section is of vital interest at the present time, because what we see here revealed is now working in secret and we must beware lest we are on the one hand victims to the spirit of lawlessness, or on the other hand seduced by the allurements of Babylon.

VI. Jesus acts and the results.

Read 19 : 11-16. 20 : 2-4. 21 : 9-11.

From the moment when John was caught up to heaven, he has seen in his vision the earth entire spread out below him, and every new series of events down there determined by events in heaven. Now at last the time has come when the Lord Jesus puts forth His great power in personal intervention on earth.

(a) The scene preliminary to the Coming of Christ is the marriage of the Lamb in heaven. The Bride of Christ, the Church, has made herself ready. Christ Himself has cleansed her by the washing of water by the word, and now presents her to Himself, a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Her description is given later, under the form of the holy city, in contrast with the description of Babylon, which followed separately also, after a preliminary notice of her fall.

In 11 : 15 we were led up to the second coming of Christ, but no description was given of that greatest event. Now in 19 : 11-16 John sees the representation of that glorious appearing spoken of in so many parts of Scripture. He saw heaven opened, and the Word of God on the white horse of the Conqueror, with the armies of heaven in His train. He is seen by all to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. By the brightness of His coming the Beast and the False Prophet are consigned alive to the lake of fire, and the rest of the armies gathered to Armageddon are slain with the sword of His mouth.

Then follow, in rapid and presumably chronological sequence in chapter 20, the recital of events otherwise noticed in Scripture, leading up to the shores of eternity when all enemies shall be destroyed and God shall be all in all. There is first the binding of Satan, with the recital of all the names under which he has been known from the beginning of the Bible. Thus two of the three powers of allurement in opposition to God (the world, the flesh, and the devil) no longer influence men, and the glorious Kingdom of Christ, here only stated to be a millennium, (of 1,000 years duration), but described in the Old Testament, is now shared by those who have suffered for His name. Even after this millennium, there is a little season of further revolt, and after this Satan comes to

His final doom in the lake of fire. The last event in the scroll of time is represented by the dread vision of the last judgment, when the dead stand before the great white throne, and those whose names are not enrolled in the Book of Life find their final end in the lake of fire with the two Beasts and the Dragon.

In 21 : 1-8, the chronological sequence of the Apocalypse ends with a brief view of eternity. It is twofold. On the one hand is the new heaven and the new earth in which all distance between God and man is removed, and in consequence all sorrow. On the other hand there is the continuing doom of the wicked in the lake of fire.

(b) Just as, after the mention of Babylon in the sequence of events including its fall, the vision pauses to give John a detailed view of her, so, after the end of the chronological sequence including her introduction to endless felicity, John is given in 21 : 9 to 22 : 5 a more detailed view of the bride, the Lamb's wife, introduced as a woman, but described as a city. Some features of this splendid vision are as follows. (1) In it God is the light and the Lamb is the lamp, or light-bearer. The city sheds this light abroad on the nations of the saved. This is the fulfilment of John 17 : 23. A subsidiary conclusion is that the description refers to the millennium and not to eternity. (2) The prominent features of the city are precious stones and metal. The qualities which from time immemorial have made them precious are permanence and colour, (the manner in which they display the separated beauties of light). Thus, the part played by the saints is, in an unchanging way to enjoy for themselves, and to relay to others, the light of God, the "unveiled mystery." (3) In the vision of the city are concentrated the consolations promised the overcomers from the churches. Of the seven churches, the promises to five find their fulfilment in this description of the holy city.

VII Closing appeals. Read 22 : 8-21.

What shall be our response to these momentous revelations ? Do we not feel moved to the necessity of some immediate response, confirming and making clear beyond any shadow of doubt our allegiance to Christ ? The underlying causes determining the events of history now in the making are kept secret from the world, but in this Apocalypse they have been made to stand out clear and stark for the servants of Jesus. The great question is : Who is on the Lord's side ? From the moving words of this closing appeal, let us spotlight some of its directions.

(a) A great mistake often made is to give exaggerated regard to the preacher who brings word of these things. John's call is clear and simple. **Worship God.** Our homage is not to men or angels. It is to God alone.

(b) A repeated call is to **obedience** to His word. To keep His words and obey His commandments summarise, in returning us to the great principles of piety, what our response is to be.

(c) The Lord Jesus has appeared through this book in several characters. Now He speaks in a very personal way, "I Jesus. . ." And the Spirit, acting with, and moving the bride, replies "Come." To look up to the Lord and hear Him say, "Surely I come quickly," and to reply to Him, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," this is the response He looks for.

(d) In the power of that same Spirit, the true believer will be moved by the Revelation to turn also to the world and say "Come. . . take the water of life freely."

ORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY _____ **COLIN CURRY****Some aspects of 1 John**

IT is fairly generally agreed that John's writings are among the last-written contributions to the New Testament. His **letters** certainly bear evidence that they were written at a late hour, when spiritual problems of a new kind confronted the Christian church, and when error of a basic nature needed to be exposed and refuted. The **gospel** of John may be thought of as a positive statement (after a lifetime of meditation and Christian experience) of the fulness of the revelation of God in Christ which John had witnessed. The first epistle, on the other hand, sets this great truth against erroneous distortions of it which in effect denied it. It was a critical hour when John wrote ; and its character was to continue down the years. Deceptive teachings were abroad. False representations of Christianity were widespread. Already there were "many antichrists" (see 2 : 18, 19 ; 4 : 1). Pseudo-Christianity was on the increase ; opposition to Christ was alert and active though also well-disguised. John found it necessary to insist that **it matters crucially what one believes**, especially regarding Christ. **How one behaves**, too, is a revealing test of the genuineness of a Christian profession, just as clearly underlined in this letter. The link between a true Christian faith and the moral character that springs from it, and the vital importance of both, are clarified beyond misapprehension here.

John's manner of writing is well-suited to the importance of his themes. The great issues which are at stake are sharply defined in straightforward incisive language. He stands for the truth in a conflict which he knows to be a vital one, and urges his readers to think of the issues with the same concern. We too, in our day, need to be kept alert to the importance of these matters. Here is a message which is almost the last of all that the New Testament has for us, couched in terms which stress its fundamental and lasting significance. The tension between good and evil continues still to mount ; and the time is approaching when the great conflict will burst out into an open phase, and so come to its climax. It will be resolved decisively by the open action of Christ. John's other book, the Revelation, tells about this. But the developments which will then be judged are taking shape today, and these trends take place in subtle fashion ; so that the need for discernment of the kind the first epistle supplies is real and increasing.

First, we shall consider what the letter has to say about the method and the completeness of the New Testament teaching. It will be found that John strongly emphasizes "that which was from the beginning." He stresses the importance of **original Christianity**. Developments from this, including sophisticated and advanced versions of Christianity, are treated as questionable and false. It will be necessary, further, to enquire what this original Christianity is. We shall see that it is a declaration of God which is profound and fathomless, yet also complete. It imparts life (of a special quality) to its recipients ; a life which has well-defined characteristics, which are the evidence of its existence. We shall also see that, **tests** are provided, to which any Christian claim may be subjected,

so that its genuine nature or its falsity may be apparent. Genuine Christian people will in this way be put on guard regarding false trends within the pale of Christianity. They will be able to take stock of themselves, too, confirming the reality of their faith by the same criteria. As the wonder and fulness of the true faith is seen in such sharp contrast with all later distortions of it, their appreciation and practice of that faith must surely be stimulated.

Progress in New Testament Teaching

The introduction to the letter (1:1-4) is of great importance, dwelling as it does on the significance of the whole period of the incarnation of Christ. We are told of real happenings in the physical world ; of concrete, historical, observable occurrences ; of observers who actually witnessed these things, and who pondered on what they saw. We are told that these happenings were nothing less than a self-revelation of God ; a demonstration (and, to some, a communication) of the life and atmosphere belonging to the eternal realm. "We have seen. . . and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." We are told of the person of Christ, of His works and His words, as the substance of this revelation. What had been **seen and heard**, by specially chosen witnesses, was now reported and **handed on** to others in written form. We are told of a great fellowship, into which the original witnesses were in the first place drawn, in which the life which had been manifested and communicated to them was shared and enjoyed. The apostles, the eye-witnesses, the New Testament writers entered first into this experience ; but part of their function was to spread the knowledge of it further so that others, who accept their message, might share in it too. Thus John explains his aim in writing to his fellow-Christians.

Events of a tangible kind, real occurrences in human history ; followed by **writings**, making clear the significance of what had taken place, and perpetuating for later days the possibility of the experience which springs from it : this is the pattern of original Christianity which John lays down for us. The writer to the Hebrews puts it similarly, speaking of a great salvation "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Hebrews 2:3). Certainly, like John, the author of Hebrews spoke of the work of the Son as full, final and complete in itself, surpassing infinitely any earlier disclosure from God to men (see 1:1-3). But the significance of that work needed later to be amplified, and made real in the responses of others, and this is what the later parts of the New Testament are concerned with. Our Lord Himself told His disciples of a deeper understanding they were to receive, of truth and teaching they could not possibly assimilate until He had departed and His immediate work was done (see John 14:26 ; 16:13, for instance). From heaven, by His Spirit, through His chosen instruments (apostles and others) our Lord continued and completed His instruction to His people in a way which had new character and fulness. Thus it is evident that a great body of New Testament teaching develops the meaning of our Lord's work, all of which was inherent in that work alone, yet made good later by His Spirit so that it may be experienced by those who receive Him.

No Progress beyond the New Testament teaching

It is clear, then, that John (in his introduction) allows for certain developments in the transmission and understanding of the basic Christian message. These took place after the advent of the Holy Spirit, and particularly during the period of the completion of the New Testament. It is equally clear, however, that John is concerned to say that these developments were in no sense an addition to the fundamental revelation which centred in Christ. They were merely recalling it, explaining its meaning, bringing out some of the riches of its substance ; they were leading others into the good of it, prompting the sort of responses which it had the power to promote. Not only does the opening sentence say this, but the same point is pressed repeatedly throughout the letter. One or two sample verses may be quoted. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning" (2 : 7). "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (2 : 24). The thought of **abiding** in what had been received in Christ is frequently pressed throughout the letter, and the above verse is a good sample of many of this kind. There should be a constant drawing from the spring of life, a steady holding-on to the appreciation of its value (though others may depart from it).

Another frequently-recurring theme is that of the **knowledge** which each and every true believer possesses. There is a ring of confidence and certainty about the possession of this true knowledge. The closing verses of the letter show this in a special way. It is all there in Christ, and the indwelling Spirit is the power to explore it. No further teachings or revelations are needed to elucidate it or to add to it, though it needs going in for (see, in this connection 2 : 20-27). That this knowledge is the genuine article is evidenced by its accompaniments in the character of the person who possesses it. See, for example, 2 : 3 ; 3 : 14 ; 4 : 13. All this is said by John, no doubt, in the context of claims to knowledge of a superior kind by an élite group making much of their own discernment and advanced thinking. To claim to "know" and yet to pass beyond what was manifested in Christ, is to leave real Christianity behind. "Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God ; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John : 9 R.S.V. ; the A.V. obscures the meaning here). Such claims to knowledge are false, and their falsity tends to be reflected in the lives of the persons making them. It is not enough to claim to know God. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (2 : 4). The true Christian knowledge is marked by humility as well as confidence. It is common to all real believers, though there are stages in its appreciation. It has its beginning and its end in Christ, and finds its reflection in ways and attitudes which are true to Him.

We hope in the next issue to consider (in a little more detail) some of the marks of the children of God which the epistle picks out for us, and some of the distinctions between truth and falsehood which it makes.

TO HOREB

F. W. BOYD

THE words of our Lord to His Father in prayer on the night He was "delivered up",

"I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine. . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil "

The words of John,

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"

The words of Paul,

"Set your affection upon things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God "

(John 17 : 9-15 ; 1 John 2 : 15-16 ; Colossians 3 : 2-3)

We should distinguish between the physical earth and the world system which is characterised by evil, violence, lust and everything which is against God and His Christ. "The whole world lieth in the wicked one" (1 John 5 : 19). As to ourselves we are on earth until we die or are raptured away, but it is God's intention that even now we should be apart from the world system, and there is a divinely-given illustration of the issues involved, in the exercises of the people of God in their history in Egypt. There, without any stretching of the imagination, it may be seen that Pharaoh represents the god of this world who holds the people of God in a bondage which prevents them serving the Lord their God. In fact Pharaoh has directed their activities into building cities for the glory of Egypt. Israel was a people owned of God, shall we say converted but dwelling in the world whose master is Satan, a people no more able to please God than the man Paul describes in Romans 7. Deliverance must come from God Himself.

This deliverance does not begin with the Passover. It is in two main parts. The first is to learn the true character of the world. If this is not learned the soul will not be intelligent about, or may not even be desirous of leaving it. The second part is God's deliverance by judgment and by the effects of the cross. The first is illustrated by the plagues and the second by the Passover.

Before consideration of the plagues in detail it should be observed that what are plagues to Pharaoh are God-given signs to Israel (and to us). "My signs. . . and ye shall know that I am Jehovah" (J.N.D.) (Exodus 7 : 3-9, 14 ; 10 : 1, 2). Regarding God they are a revelation of His power and justice and compassion (for Israel) and regarding the world, of its condition. These two points are necessary features in type of what we should understand if we are going to progress in our souls away from the world.

The plague-signs appear in three groups of three, each group preceded by Moses' appearing before Pharaoh on his way to the river early in the morning, and further distinguished by the use of Aaron's rod, God acting by Himself and the hand of Moses (Exodus 7 : 14 ; 8 : 20 ; 9 : 13). The Passover stands by itself.

The first group of plagues shows the condition of the whole scene, that is, the water, the land and the air are all involved. What had been a fair enough place is now a place of blood—moral death and loathing. This characterised the whole land ; there is really no escape and no record of the river of blood being healed.

God's care for His own is in the second and third groups. He says, "I will distinguish in that day the land of Goshen in which my people dwell" (Exodus 8 : 22, 23). Goshen was the territory chosen by Joseph for the people to dwell in, where, "Thou shalt dwell. . . and thou shalt be near me. . . there will I maintain (nourish A.V.) thee" (Genesis 45 : 10)

Man's personal effects appear to be the main bearing of the second group. The result of the land's being infested with flies is corruption (Exodus 8 : 24, see also Ecclesiastes 10 : 1). In marked contrast the cattle (possessions) of the Israelite are needed later for God ; they are immune from the disease affecting Egypt. In the sixth plague corruption of the flesh is suggested by the boils. For the christian "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. . . and God sending his own Son. . . condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8 : 1, 2 and 4). On the other hand "the scribes could not stand before Moses by reason of the boils," neither can man in his sinful fleshly state stand before a holy God. As with the plagues in Egypt and their loathsome consequences, Romans 1 : 18 tells us that the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness of men and later in the chapter explains how this is worked out. Because man has turned away from God, he has been given over to sins, especially sins of a most revolting kind.

There is a terrible portrayal of barrenness and darkness in the final group. After the hail and thunder and locusts there is nothing worthwhile left. Solomon declared the present "vanity of vanities" and "the world passeth away and the lust thereof," says John. Darkness covers everything ; the only place where there is light is Goshen, the place where God's people dwell. Nothing is known of God elsewhere. As to man, he loves darkness rather than light because his deeds are evil, but God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. We are also to be the light of the world.

Let us see the world in relation to God and also remember that we, as well as Israel, likewise stand in relation to Him.

Now we turn to the Passover. It should be clear that in the Passover we have something very different from the offerings. In the case of an offering we have an offerer, a sacrifice and an altar. The offerer or the priest identifies himself with the offering by placing his hand on its head

and sometimes sins are confessed over the animal. The shed blood is taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on or before the Mercy Seat, or poured out by the altar, and sins are forgiven.

In the case of the Passover the people are already recognised by God as His own but are under bondage to Pharaoh. There is no specific offerer : "The whole congregation of the assembly of Israel shall kill it" (Exodus 12 : 6). The lamb is already known, having been with the household four days. None of the features noted in relation to the offerings is here ; in fact it is not an "offering", it is a "feast", though a solemn one.

There are two very important features in it,

1. The blood is sprinkled on the doorpost and lintel, not on any individual, not even the firstborn.
2. The roast lamb is to be eaten as a savoury food to give strength for the journey.

The lesson of the blood on the doorpost is explained in Exodus 12 : 12. First, Egypt and its gods are under divine judgment. Secondly, we also see that God will not involve His own in this judgment. As to this doorway, blood having been sprinkled, the destroying angel will not enter it, but any Israelite leaving Egypt must pass through it, solemn thought ! Paul says, "By which (the cross) the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world" (Galatians 6 : 14).

There are more unpalatable lessons to be learnt. God, in this instance, has not raised the question of sin, but they must eat the roast lamb, typifying our Lord as having died, appropriating it with the bitter herbs of self-judgment, then keep the feast of unleavened bread for the whole seven days. We know the meaning of this—do we observe it ? This feast continues after leaving the bondage of Pharaoh ; it does not cease with deliverance. So here we have not forgiveness of our sins, but deliverance from the world and its judgment. A personal experience before God !

So we pause and take stock of the situation. It is wonderful to leave Egypt in figure. But what now ? Where are we going ? We are going via the Red Sea to Horeb. Horeb was not God's ultimate purpose for His people, but it was their immediate goal, and several important events are connected with it. Horeb is where God met Moses at the burning bush. There He promised Moses that Israel would worship in "this mountain." It is where Moses later saw God's glory and where, still later, Elijah heard the still small voice. It is where God is revealed. It is also where God gave the living water which is Christ.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW? _____ J. STODDART

Job 19 : 23-27 & 2 Timothy 1 : 12.

IN modern days of high educational standards there may be many answers to the question, "What do you know?" It could scarcely be expected that answers to this question given centuries ago would bear much resemblance to those of our scientific day and age. It may be both surprising and helpful, therefore, to consider the statements of two great men who lived a long way apart both in time and environment as to what they knew and what such knowledge did for them.

We must surely agree that we have two such men in Job, whose well-known life story was probably woven in the days of Abraham, and Paul, the New Testament apostle, who lived approximately twenty centuries later. Fortunately for us, we have the most clear and unequivocal accounts from the pen of both these men as to what they knew. First of all then, let us ask the Old Testament worthy, Job, "What do you know?". Before hearing his answer, let us recall that he is the only man of whom it is written that, "he was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." (Job 1 : 1) Yet in one day catastrophe befell him causing the loss of his considerable wealth, his possessions and his entire family of seven sons and three daughters. Later, under the intensified campaign of Satan against this man, his own health broke down and he was smitten "with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (ch. 2 : 7). Little wonder his astonishing patience under such tribulation became proverbial, even under the constant jibes and taunting of his three unhelpful companions who pretended to minister to his comfort.

"What do you know, Job ; what makes you this kind of man ?" How ready he is with his answer. Indeed, in ch. 19 : 25-27 he would have his answer perpetuated for all time, and by Divine miracle his wish is granted in that every generation since his day could read his words in the sacred page, graven forever in what Gladstone loved to call "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." Here then is the clearest and most emphatic statement of Job's knowledge. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." What is so noteworthy here is that Job, who doubtless had a vast store of knowledge, puts the knowledge of a Person above everything else. And how true it is that such knowledge must infinitely transcend the knowledge of **things**. In the answer of Job to our question, therefore, three vital elements of knowledge are asserted—(a) **A Genuine Faith**—"I know" (such knowledge could only be gained by faith.) (b) **A Gracious Friend**—"My Redeemer liveth" (he knew that his many sins necessitated a Redeemer—see Job 13 : 23). (c) **A Guaranteed Future**—"yet in my flesh shall I see God" (after his death he had this most certain prospect of dwelling in God's presence.) How remarkable it is to find such assured knowledge at a time when, as far as we know,

there was no written Word of God. How often it is forgotten that two thousand years of the world's history had rolled by before the first book of the Old Testament—Genesis—was written by Moses. So if Job knew so much in a world without a Bible, how do we measure up to the question, What do you know?—we who live in this world where the complete Bible with its sixty-six books in hundreds of languages is still a best seller. What little excuse we have if we are more ignorant than Job who lived so many centuries ago! Do we have a Genuine Faith, a Gracious Friend and a Guaranteed Future?

Now let us turn over the pages of some twenty centuries of history to ask a man of the first century A.D. our question. Much has happened in the long passage of time. A universal flood has destroyed continents and caused the entire population of the earth to perish, with the exception of eight persons. Empires had risen and fallen, historians and philosophers had recorded their voluminous observations. Surely, we might think, the advancement of knowledge must produce a vastly different answer to the question, What do you know? Certainly the most world-shaking event of all time had taken place in the coming of the Creator God down to earth as a Babe in a Bethlehem stable. His life, His authoritative teaching, His miracle-working power appeared to have little effect upon the world at large until the religious and political leaders of His day sensed a menacing challenge to their status in His claim to be the Son of God. Ignoring His great kindness and love to men, they framed their lying accusations against Him and staged a mocking trial before Herod the king and Pilate, the representatives of the mighty Roman empire. Securing, without even the appearance of justice, the sentence of death by crucifixion upon Jesus, they raised their accusation above His cross, written in Greek and Latin and Hebrew. The universal significance of this event was intended for all to learn. Thus died the incarnate Son of God, and for three days the proud imprimatur of Rome's might sealed the stone securing His sepulchre. Triumphantly the third day, the stone is found rolled away, the tomb empty and Jesus, the Son of God is risen from the dead. He appears among and is recognised by His disciples, to their great joy, and after forty days is seen ascending up to Heaven from whence He had come. Subsequently the third Person of the Godhead had come down to earth to empower the witness to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and He has graciously remained here through the centuries till this day.

In this changed world of A.D. 66 we discover in a letter from Paul, the apostle, to his young friend Timothy (2 Tim. 1 : 12) the most forthright reply to our question. What do you know? This man, let us remember, had enjoyed the advantage of an excellent education and had access to the Old Testament Scriptures but little, if anything of the New Testament, apart from the epistles written by himself. In these epistles and his preaching recorded in The Acts it is abundantly clear that Paul possessed an unusually logical and well-informed mind, with a ready ability to quote contemporary writings and poetry if and when necessary. But to balance his immense mental equipment, he had been permitted to suffer much for his faith in Christ, and like Job, had learned the most valuable lessons in such suffering. We might imagine that his

answer to our question would be couched in vastly different terms from that of Job, two thousand years before him. But is this so ? Let us hear his eager reply from the verse quoted. "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." A very simple analysis of this statement would show that it consists of three verities which coloured the entire life of the apostle from the day of his conversion. (1) **A Genuine Faith**—"I have believed" ; (2) **A Gracious Friend**—"I know Whom" ; (3) **A Guaranteed Future**—"He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." A truly remarkable parallel to the vital statement of Job. Can the reader answer the question, What do you know ? with the same conviction and certainty as these two men ? Is Christ the Person in Whom you have a Genuine Faith ? Is He known to you as your Gracious Friend, Who laid down His life for you ? In this world of doubt and fear and strife, can you enjoy the peace of knowing a Guaranteed Future ?

Since Paul's day, almost two thousand years ago, knowledge has advanced with amazing rapidity and expertise. The Bible, the Word of God, replete with its sixty-six books has become available to the poorest of the poor in his native tongue. Thanks to the invention of printing some fourteen centuries after Paul's day, Job's plea for a printed book to contain his words has been realised and each succeeding generation in the last five centuries have been able to read his words printed in God's Book. Have the sophisticated discoveries of science in the realms of engineering, space research and medicine made the answers of Job and Paul untenable in this twentieth century A.D. ? Let the reader be well assured from thousands of living voices, from modern men of astute learning to the humblest of believers, that the most relevant and vital answer to the question, What do you know ? is precisely that of these two men of long ago. Without fear of being proved anachronistic or antiquated, the present day believer in Jesus can aver that the greatest knowledge that he possesses is that of a Genuine Faith (in Christ as Saviour), a Gracious Friend (in Christ as Lord and Master) and a Guaranteed Future (as expressly declared in the Lord's Own words in the familiar lines of John 14 : 1/6)

Dear reader, is this your answer to our question, What do you know ? Listen once more to the testimony of Paul in Philippians 3 : 8, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" Here is something (or rather Someone) to know, beside which all else we may possess can be written off as loss. If you cannot truly give this answer to the question, What do you know, our most earnest counsel to you is from the Book of Job 22 : 21. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace ; thereby good shall come unto thee." Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." (John 17 : 3).

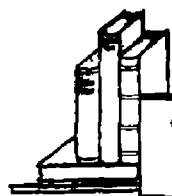
QUESTION.

Mr. W. Spencer Dixon :— Is the Lord's statement of Matthew 18 : 20 applicable to us today as His followers and members of the church ? If so, what form does His presence take ? Where members of the church meet together in His name, is the Lord actually physically yet invisibly present with them, or is He present in the person of the Spirit in the sense of Ephesians 2 : 22 ?

The promise of Matthew 18 : 20 ("Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."), is surely applicable today. The context is the Church (v. 17) on earth as distinct from its being in heaven (vv. 18, 19). This context, together with the emphasis on His having His own around Him during His last hours, seems to me to justify also a special application to the breaking of bread.

It is not possible for us to probe too deeply into the form His presence takes. If by 'physically' we mean 'bodily', then the Lord's body is in heaven, and although we cannot pretend to understand what that means, it excludes the idea of His being bodily present on earth. Nor can the presence of the Lord as promised in Matthew 18 : 20 be equated with the presence of the Spirit dwelling in the house of God according to 1 Corinthians 3 : 16 and Ephesians 2 : 22, since the latter must be true every moment in all parts of the church, whereas "there am I in the midst" is conditional on brethren being actually assembled together and can be separately true in many places at once. There is, however, another Scripture (John 14 : 16-18) where the Lord promises, relative to the time of His absence in heaven, "I will come to you" through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. This seems to confirm the thought that, although not exactly in the sense of Ephesians 2 : 22, it is by the Spirit that the Lord grants His presence to His disciples after His ascension to heaven.

Every Scripture underlines the Lord's desire for the mutual delight occasioned by His presence amongst His own. All the circumstances of the story of the Lord's last hours on earth join together to show how deep was His desire for the company of His disciples. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." (Luke 22 : 15). After the Supper was finished, and they had reached the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ; 'He said', tarry ye here, and watch with me. . . . And He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour ?" (Matthew 26 : 38, 40).



STUDIES IN THE REVELATION ————— J. S. BLACKBURN

2. THE LAMB

OF the several symbols used to represent Christ in the vision, the most frequent and characteristic is the Lamb. There are a number of other symbols, for example the Ancient of Days, the Man-child, and the Reaper, and these will be worthy of separate study. The appearances of the Lamb are not confined to one section of the book, but occur throughout, and they are interspersed among the other symbols, as we shall see. What are we to learn from the choice of symbols, and from the apparent confusion in order? Reflection on the appearances of the Lamb lead one's thought to Isaiah 53. In the Revelation we learn the results of His sacrifice. We learn how He shall see the results of His suffering, and this accords with Isaiah 53 : 7 and 11. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter", and "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied". When the Lamb first appears in Revelation 5, it is as a lamb fresh from that slaughter—"as it had been slain". Since the lamb is the most frequently occurring symbol of Christ in this book, then we learn that one of its principal purposes is to display the compensation which the Lord Jesus is about to receive for His meekness and the suffering which He has sustained.

Careful consideration of the choice of symbols seems to suggest clearly that whenever Christ is seen without and acting in judgment and power, then some other symbol is employed, as the Reaper in 14 : 14-16, or the Rider in 19 : 11-16. On the other hand whenever He is seen within, and receiving the praises of the various families of His own people, He is seen as the Lamb. A great conqueror and king is seen differently by the public crowds and by his own family. It might be said that the latter see him as he is, in the private character withheld from the crowds. This perhaps illustrates the meaning of 1 John 3 : 2, "we shall see him as he is." All this speaks to the heart as we turn to meditate on the five appearances of the Lamb in this book.

I The Lamb is the Lion.

Read 5 : 1-14.

Two key questions arise in this chapter.

(a) Who is worthy to open the book?

The answer to this question occupies vv. 1-10. The scene is set in heaven. Around the throne of God are also seated on thrones a complete number of saints, (the twentyfour elders), and the created beings who ceaselessly adore and execute His will, (the four beasts). It is to John and to this circle close around the throne that the Lamb first appears. There is in the right hand of God a book, filled to overflowing with writing, and sealed with seven seals. It afterwards appears that the book contains all

that is decreed to purify the earth and bring it into blessing. If none can be found to open it, how right was John to weep ! But he is immediately assured, "The Lion. . . hath prevailed to open the book". John's astonishment at the form in which the Victor appears is preserved in his wondering words : "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a lamb, as it had been slain." And thus appears enthroned in heaven the culmination of the long thread of glowing promise and fulfilment. It begins with Abraham's prophecy, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb", and finds its first great fulfilment at Calvary, where the Lamb was slain. Calvary is the place where He prevailed, that is overcame, or obtained the victory. This is the place where He redeemed to God by His blood out of every nation. That He was slain is His title to open the book and to loose its seven seals, and since the seals lead directly into the trumpets, and the trumpets issue immediately in the world kingdom of our God and of His Christ, His is the hand which starts the ultimate chain of victory, and His the hand which completes it, though others may be His agents between. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof : for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests : and we shall reign in the earth".

(b) Who is worthy to receive power and riches, glory and blessing ? To answer this question the widest range of voices is brought into the song, far beyond those actually present in heaven and in the things seen there. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angel voices join the chorus, and in the end it spreads to every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them.

Throughout history the world has found its men, and power and riches have been poured into their hands. And they have been corrupted by them. Even to a casual observer, it must sometimes appear that some cosmic intelligence is at work, casting up men in whom the vilest and most depraved of human characters are prominent, and so deceiving mankind as to induce them to commit power and riches, glory and honour to them. In the end power, riches, wisdom, strength, and honour, glory and blessing will be found in the right hands to bring glory to God and blessing to man. The fact that it is **the Lamb** who receives these distinctions is to teach that it is He, because He has already brought honour to God and blessing to man, by being slain.

(c) At this point, we must give special attention to one of the prophecy's chief disclosures. It is that the Lamb is sharing the honours of the divine throne. He is receiving the honour due to God alone. He is being worshipped. The first disciples may well have pondered the question, What happened behind the cloud which received Him out of their sight ? Here is the answer. He passed from the world where scorn and dishonour, sorrow and grief had been his lot. He passed into a world where He is ceaselessly adored by the hosts of heaven. He is 'in the midst of the throne'. Two Persons, in this view, are equally joined in receiving supreme divine honours ; they are (v.13) Him that sits upon the throne, and the Lamb.

Surely one of the dominating purposes of our receiving this Revela-

tion of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His servants, is that we might, here and now, both individually and in the midst of the Church, render the tribute of our allegiance, glory and honour, worship and blessing, to the Father and the Son.

II The Lamb is the Shepherd.

Read 7 : 13-17.

The original, and perhaps the best known form of a familiar hymn is, "My Shepherd is the Lamb". For of this innumerable crowd out of every nation we read in v. 17. "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them". This is not a Church company, for we read in v. 14 they have been preserved through the Great Tribulation, but this is no reason why Christians of the Church period should not derive the greatest comfort and strength from the view of our Saviour here presented. Jehovah is the Shepherd of Psalm 23, an expression of the faith and piety of ancient Israel, but this has not prevented Christians of all shades of opinion and in every period from finding nourishment for their faith and love in that Psalm.

Let us pause and reflect especially on the significance of the description beginning v. 17, in the Shepherd context of this chapter : "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne". That He is now in the midst of the throne, means that all power in heaven and earth is in His hands. It means that nothing that power can do is not available to His sheep. No conceivable trial which can afflict His people but is subject to His almighty control. No enemy's might can approach the power of this Friend. But He is still the Lamb ; and this brings in, over against the unapproachable height of the position He now occupies, the unimaginable depths to which He once came down. The downstooping of Bethlehem, completed by that of Calvary is vividly presented by the fact that He is the Lamb. In this Person, this Saviour, is One who has reached down to the deepest depths of suffering love, and now occupies the highest heights of divine and victorious power. What miracles of sympathy and deliverance may we not expect from such a Shepherd ? What need or sorrow His people in any age can meet is outside the scope of His capability ? What deeps of need could call unanswered to the deep of His love ? What giants of despair are above the victory of His throne ? The particular message of this part of the interlude is that the power adequate to set in motion the forces needed to purge the world which so long resisted God, and the throne which will soon be seen to bring final triumph for its own good ends, are in the meantime engaged with His sheep. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them".

In Psalm 23, one of the most precious images is that of the waters of quietness : "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Here in Revelation 7 we have again the waters by which the Shepherd leads His sheep. He "shall lead them unto (the) fountains of (the) waters of life". The water of life will be found in the city emerging as a river from the throne. Before that finality is reached, we find at this point the Lamb leading His own sheep to the very sources of that water of life, which are in God. To know Him is to reach the source of that river which throughout Scripture, from the rivers flowing out of Eden, by the river ever available to the righteous planted by it, and the river which makes glad the city of our

God, will be found in the end issuing from the throne. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes". In this promise we have again something promised of old, (Isaiah 25 : 8), and to be seen finally fulfilled in eternity.

III The Lamb is King.

Read 14 : 1-5.

Although the Lamb is mentioned in 12 : 11 and in 13 : 8, the next appearance is in this chapter, which begins, "a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand". They sing a new song ; they are redeemed from the earth, and they are the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. This company are assembled to the Lamb, therefore, in the associations of Mount Sion, and not of the Church. There can be little doubt about the place occupied in Scripture by mount Sion. Sion is an Old Testament word. It is used seven times in the New Testament, and five of these are Old Testament quotations. Sion or Zion was originally the hill which formed the first nucleus of Jerusalem, and the name first occurs in 2 Samuel 5 : 7 ; "David took the stronghold of Zion, which is the city of David". Review of Old Testament use shows clearly that it came to denote Jerusalem in joy, beauty, praise and salvation, the centre of Messiah's reign. This is true particularly in the Psalms, where many beautiful passages testify to the unique loveliness and sanctity of Zion. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion ; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision : I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation : and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud : I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame : but upon himself shall his crown flourish." (Psalm 132 : 13-18) "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. . . . Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever : he will be our guide even unto death". (Psalm 48 : 2, 11-14) Psalm 2 is a prophecy of the very days of which we read in the Revelation, when the "kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed." (vv. 2 and 3, and compare Revelation 17 : 12-14 and 19 : 19) Here is the Lord's answer : "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". "The Lamb on mount Sion" unmistakeably suggests, therefore, the Lamb as God's Son, reigning in mount Zion, having the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

In Revelation 14 we have, in distinct paragraphs like flash-views of the things God is doing during the development of the activities of the Beast, empowered by the Dragon, and abetted by the False Prophet, as portrayed in chapters 12 and 13. The vision of 144,000 with the Lamb

on mount Zion is the first of these. The Lamb, fresh from His suffering, is going to be the universal King. And after the Church has been taken to heaven, God will gather a company for Christ as King, redeemed from among men, the first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

IV The Lamb is the Bridegroom.

Read 19 : 7-10.

The marriage of the Lamb is evidently not witnessed by John in the vision, but its joy is celebrated. Attention is not concentrated on its glory and display, but upon the inner joy occasioned by it. Here we begin to see more clearly in what manner the Sufferer is going to be satisfied.

What justification can be found for thinking of this scene as one of intense personal joy to the Lord ? In the parable of Matthew 22 : 1-14 we have the parable of the marriage feast. The King made a marriage "for his son". The purpose in all that was done was for the pleasure and honour of the Son. In Ephesians 5 : 27 we find a phrase bearing a shining light on our question. In this passage dealing with the love of Christ for the Church, the phrase is, "that he might present it to himself". For His own special joy in the final result, He loved the Church and did all this in view of this final presentation to Himself. In no scene more clearly than this one is to be seen that the Lord is presented as the Lamb when He is within, and amongst His own. Amidst so much which presents events of immense and universal bearing, and issuing in the highest honours being accorded to Him, here is an occasion so personal and private that it is kept out of sight. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The Lamb's wife had made herself ready, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Every action pleasing to Christ is part of the Church's preparation for the marriage rejoicing.

It is interesting to notice the place occupied by the Church throughout the Revelation. Doubtless in some ways John himself represents the Church ; notably in that he is taken to heaven before commencement of the things which must shortly come to pass, and sees them from heaven. The seven churches of chapters two and three must be remembered, but it is in this marriage scene, and in the vision of the city, which is the bride, the Lamb's wife, and therefore unquestionably the Church, that the position of the Church in prophecy really comes to light. The twentyfour elders are often taken as representing the Church, perhaps together with other saints, but I sometimes wonder whether a more consistent view would not be obtained by taking the elders as representing the Old Testament saints alone. After all, they are already well established dwellers in heaven before John is taken there, and the number twentyfour is very distinctly attached to the courses of the priesthood in the Old Testament temple.

V The Lamb is the Lamp.

Read 21 : 22 and 23.

This is not the place to enlarge on the beauties of that great city, the holy Jerusalem, with its streets of gold and its gates of pearl, except at one point, which is the light which lightens it. The latter part of v. 23 reads more exactly ; "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb the lamp thereof". Here we have fulfilled the Lord's request to the

Father in John 17 : 22, 23. "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". In the city, God, in unveiled glory, is the light : and that eternal light is in the Lamb as the lamp or light-bearer. In glory, perfection and unity, God is in the Lamb and the Lamb is in the city—"I in them and thou in me".

Another scripture speaks of the glory of God in a vessel' : "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels". (2 Corinthians 4 : 6, 7) In the city we have the glory of God, no longer in earthen vessels, battered and broken, but in a glorious vessel composed of all the saints in visible and perfect unity, and shining out on the nations of the saved. "But who that glorious blaze of living light shall tell, where all His brightness God displays, and the Lamb's glories dwell ? God and the Lamb shall there the light and temple be, and radiant hosts for ever share the unveiled mystery."

The final reference to the Lamb in the city and also in the book, is in 22 : 3, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it ; and his servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face". Notice in this last reference the Lamb for evermore sharing the divine throne and its honours. Notice also in this, the beatific vision, the final end of the chain of the faith of the righteous. It begins with Job, "in my flesh shall I see God," and passes by Isaiah, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." (Isaiah 33 : 17).

ORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY _____ COLIN CURRY

(Some Aspects of 1 John) (continued)

The Children of God

IT is apparent from the letter that there **is** reality and there **is** pretence in the things of God. The genuine link with God is contrasted again and again with what is false and deceptive. If we pick out what is said about those who are "born of God" the following main features are clear.

Faith is one of the outstanding marks of a child of God. It is a faith which is selective in what it believes (4 : 1). It centres upon the person of our Lord, believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (5 : 1, 4, 5, 10, 13). This is more than assenting to propositions **about** Him ; it is a response which finds its strength **in** Him. It is a moral response to the person of Christ, receiving and relying upon Him, entering into the revelation of God (the knowledge of the Father) which He has brought so near. It is the common faith of all Christians ; John speaks of it as "our faith" (5 : 4). Yet it is the separate faith of each Christian ; "whosoever" believes in this way is born of God (5 : 1). The content of that faith is critically important (see the solemn contrasts between confession and denial of it in 2 : 21-23, and again in 4 : 1-3).

In speaking of the essence of that faith as the confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh" John summarizes it in a brief but profound way (4 : 2, 3). This phrase contains within it the recognition of the perfect and real humanity of our Lord. Yet it also speaks of His coming into that condition, entering into it from outside. It includes the truth of the pre-existence of the One Who came in flesh. He Who **was** (and **is**) God **became** flesh and dwelt among us (see the gospel 1 : 1 & 14). Here is a mystery too profound to understand, and yet it underlies the true faith in an absolutely fundamental way. Other verses separate the elements of this belief. Believing "that Jesus is the Christ" (5 : 1) seems to entail the recognition that Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament expectations, that He is the Man designated by God to carry through all His intentions, and to crown all that He had planned. The belief "that Jesus is the Son of God" (5 : 5) involves His Deity. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, in Him we see God revealing Himself, declaring His innermost nature. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1 : 18).

A true faith is possible, no doubt, without the need to be well-informed about these matters. Indeed, these are matters too profound for any adequate understanding. Nevertheless, it is the Person Whose glory and greatness is enshrined in these verses Who is the Object of true faith. Such a faith finds its life and its reason in Him, and a deepening knowledge of Himself would be expected to ensue. There could be nothing about a true faith which would be untrue to the statements made here about our Lord.

Other hallmarks of the children of God lie more in the realm of conduct. Corresponding to the confession of the incarnate Saviour, and the appreciation of what He has disclosed about God, are features consistent with this in the realm of action. The strength for these responses lies in the content of the revelation received. One aspect of the message passed on by the apostle, seen and heard in Christ Himself, was that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 : 5). Another part of what he had seen and now testified was that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (4 : 14). The great truth that God Who (in His essential nature) is love has manifested that love in the gift of His Son lies at the centre of the whole message about God now disclosed (4 : 8-10). The effect of all this on persons truly receiving it is that it begets what is like itself. An organic relation must to some extent exist between a person's belief and the character of his life. Active love must be connected with a proper recognition of its Source, and will show itself in ways which are consistent with that Origin. Hence we find **righteousness, love, obedience, absence of constant sin** in the life yet **sensitivity** about proneness to sin, picked out as marks of those who are truly in the light of God revealed in Christ (as sample verses see 1 : 10 ; 2 : 5, 29 ; 3 : 7, 9, ; 4 : 7). Absence of such features raises questions about claims to faith. John insists that saying without doing is of little value, and his words are direct and challenging still (see, for instance, 1 : 6, 8, 10 ; 2 : 4, 6, 9 ; 3 : 18 ; 4 : 20). Orthodoxy of belief is not enough. The truth of Christianity may be denied actively, by the frontal attack, undermining and questioning its very essence, opposing the truth of the person of Christ. It is a serious thought, however, that practical denial of its truth

is possible even by persons who seem to hold it. Untrueness in the attitudes and character of persons professing Christianity must in reality indicate non-appreciation of the doctrine to which they subscribe. The "walk" of a person, the dominant and continuing manner of his way of life, is a test of the reality of his link with God.

The letter makes it clear that God's children are what they are because of the **life** which they possess. The quality of the love of God, and the marvel of the way in which it has been directed towards us, moves the recipient to responsive love. All the initiative is with God ; we love because He first loved. And yet the children of God require prompting, in directions which will please Him, as is clear from several other parts of the letter. Such verses as, for example, "Let us love one another. . .", "love not the world. . .", "keep yourselves from idols" (4 : 7 ; 2 : 15 ; 5 : 21) certainly do not suggest that Christians have no need to be told these things. Amongst other things, the Christian life consists in bowing to the authority which the content of our faith brings to bear upon us. There is an element of "commandment" in the Christian revelation, and this is recognized by those who are properly affected by it. John does not hesitate to make a point of this, and to refer to it repeatedly (see 2 : 3-8 ; 3 : 23, 24 ; 5 : 2, 3).

These commandments (unlike the demands of the law which only discovered our strengthlessness) are "not grievous" (5 : 3). The word of the One Who in love asks for our response imparts the strength and the readiness to act aright. Nevertheless the authority of His love over us is clear, and it is a matter of **obedience** to please Him.

Finally we note the characteristic of the children of God referred to in 5 : 4. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world". Our faith provides the key to **victory** over the world. Earlier passages have referred to "the world" as the rebel order which is against God. It has been shown that the spirit of the world finds its echo in the tendencies towards self-indulgence, acquisitiveness and pride so commonly seen amongst men (2 : 15-17). These propensities are latent in every human person, and true Christians ought to be first to recognise their existence within themselves. We must beware of an "unworldliness" which is merely separatist in character and perhaps has a taint of **spiritual** pride about it. True unworldliness is a matter of **inward** spirit and outlook. Our faith can provide an entrance into another realm altogether, where the substance and spirit of the eternal world (the world of the Father and the Son) are enjoyed. The things of **that** world can outbid all else in their claim on our interest and devotion. Our sense of values can thus be righted, and discernment of things in a true light can be promoted. The desires and postures of "the flesh" (though it is within us all) can be seen in their unworthiness, and judged accordingly. The hollow and transient nature of purely material objectives can be recognised, and more spiritual aims can be pursued. A persistent devotion to the will of God can in this way find its strength to survive and overcome in a world which has much to deter and divert us from this objective. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith" (5 : 4).

Tests of Reality

The epistle has a strong note of caution for its readers. Again and again John seems to say : be on guard, test everything, do not be misled

by appearances, go in for what is real, look carefully at all sham and shallow kinds of Christianity. Reality in Christianity is not a matter of progressive and flexible thinking, neither does it consist in carrying on in a well-worn groove in a lifeless way. It is not to be equated with a facile use of terms, nor with easily-made claims. Such phrases as "If we say", "He that saith", "Hereby we know" occur frequently. Reality in Christian things is open to test, and these tests look at what we **are** rather than what we say.

It will suffice in this connection to look briefly at chapter 4. Here John contrasts in the sharpest way what is of God and what is not of God. He provides tests which distinguish between truth and error at the most fundamental level. First, there is the test in the realm of **belief** to which we have already referred (4 : 2). The Spirit which gives honour to Christ, recognizing the importance and the mystery of the incarnation, holding to all the essential elements of that great truth, is **of God**. Many spirits are abroad which fail to confess the Person of Jesus, and which are **not of God**. Secondly, there is a test in the realm of **authority**. "We are **of God**", says the apostle, "he that knoweth God heareth us : he that is **not of God** heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (4 : 6). The contrast between the false teachers of verse 5 and the true teaching in verse 6 is plain. John is saying that whether or not a person is "of God" is determined by what he listens to, by what he takes as his authority. Including the New Testament writers with himself, he states that **this** teaching is from God. This gives the Scriptures a special place as a criterion for discerning the true and the false within the Christian profession. A true person really submits to the biblical teaching, allowing it practical authority over his life.

Finally, the chapter points out the crucial test in the realm of **behaviour**. Aspects of consistent behaviour are pin-pointed separately elsewhere in the letter, but here all is condensed into one all-embracing test. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is **of God**. . . He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (4 : 7, 8). The contrast between the two classes could not be sharper. A loveless person shows no evidence that he has been affected by the love of God. Dwelling within the love of God, being moved by its wonder, quality, and vastness, **must** change the spirit of a person. The effects will be observable in his actions. This test is not the least searching of the three we have discussed, though needless to say it is not disconnected from the others. The possibility of meeting it follows from belief in Christ, and from the recognition of the full display of the love of God which centres in Himself. Love, if it appears at all in our lives, is a response to the **marvel** of the love of God towards us.

The True God

Today doubtful versions of Christianity are plentiful and anti-christian trends are becoming increasingly apparent. Orthodox Christianity also often seems lifeless and lacking in moral weight. In short, it is a **day** when the teaching of this epistle is more relevant than ever. In the face of all these false developments John directs us back to the unchangeable truth of God revealed in Christ. He calls us back from illusion to reality, from substitutes for God to "the true God". He **wishes** us to take hold again on the splendid certainties of our faith. In the last

chapter particularly he has one or two statements of a vigorously confident kind, which seem to pick out the unique value of what Christ has done and to re-assert it in the face of every possible challenge.

Verses 6 to 10 are a profound summary of the effects of the coming (the whole completed work) of our Lord, and the reliance that can be placed upon it. He "came by water and by blood". Cleansing **from guilt** is available because of His death, and the shedding of His blood. This is an essential part of what the Saviour came to provide. But there is **moral cleansing** too, which takes place in those who properly receive Him and the message about Him. His coming. His incarnation, His whole period on earth has been characterized by dealing with these matters, providing what is needed to cleanse us in both these ways. The witness to the truth of this is firm and unequivocal. **God's** witness to His Son is to be heeded more than any witness of men. What Christ has provided stands, and is made good in our experience too by the indwelling Spirit. (It should perhaps be noted that the understanding of this section is helped by the omission of some spurious material. Almost any other translation will show that verse 7, and a little more, ought to be ignored).

Finally, the last verses of the letter are difficult to match in their confidence and directness. "The Son of God is come". This is history, this is truth, whether or not people believe it. This exhaustless story is of infinite value in its own right. The concrete, objective side of Christian truth needs to be reiterated again and again. But, also, "**We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding. . .**". Here is this great truth known about, and something of its meaning and wonder appreciated. Here is knowledge and life of the highest character, given to us, possessed and experienced by us. "We may know him that is true and are **in him** that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Let us **be** as those who have this knowledge. Let us be watchful lest other things take priority and control in our lives : even the best of these must be empty and third-rate as a substitute for God.

HOW WEAKNESS IS OVERCOME ————— ROBERT THOMSON

"**H**E worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff". These words concerning Jacob, give us the secret of how to overcome physical weakness. There are twentyfive chapters in Genesis which describe in measure the birth, life and death of Jacob ; and yet in Hebrews 11 : 21 the Holy Spirit gives us in one verse that which is of the greatest importance in the sight of God. "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph ; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff". In this act of faith, not only did he overcome his physical weakness, but knowing the will of God, he did it, and delighted in the One Whom he knew so well.

Reviewing his life in addressing Pharaoh, he described the days of

his pilgrimage, as "few and evil" (Genesis 47 :9) though one hundred and thirty years. Yet God, who loved him, had ordered all his circumstances in grace and discipline. His name Jacob, means 'supplanter'; and having obtained both birthright and blessing from Esau, by guile and deceit, he had to flee from home and the wrath of his brother.

God's eye was upon him ; and at Luz where he had his first night away from home, the Lord spoke to him by a dream. Jacob saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. The Lord stood above it and said to him, "I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac". Promises were given of God to Jacob concerning the land, his posterity, and divine preservation throughout his wanderings, finally to bring him back to this place. What amazing kindness from God to such an unworthy object ! Jacob awaking from his sleep, renamed the place Bethel, saying, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven". Yet, despite his fears and bargaining, the Lord dealt with Jacob in grace and faithfulness, for from his loins must come the nucleus of the twelve tribes of Israel.

It was after the birth of Joseph, twenty years later, that Jacob spoke of returning to his own land again. On the way there, he had the experience of the unique wrestling at Peniel, where his thigh was put out of joint. God was dealing with his servant in such a fashion that he might have no confidence in the flesh, and full trust in Him. He crosses the ford at Jabbok, having received the blessing and the new name of Israel. Now, he is declared to have power with God, and with men, despite the physical weakness of his shrunken thigh.

Upon reaching Bethel, Jacob built an altar to 'God, of the house of God', Whom he has to learn practically as the God of resurrection. In one chapter, Genesis 35, we have three deaths, (Deborah, Rachel and Isaac) and one birth is recorded, the son of Rachel, named by her Benoni. Truly Israel is on the path of victory, for he changes Benoni (son of my sorrow) to Benjamin (son of the right hand). Sorrow and power are brought together in the same person ; and the promise of these names is perfected in Christ Who was once the Man of sorrows but is now raised to the right hand of God, the Centre of all the power both in heaven and in earth.

In his son Joseph, Jacob knew much of both sorrow and gladness ; and coming now to the termination of his earthly life, he rises to the height of his triumph. Knowing the will of God, he does it ; for it is written, "The elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25 : 23). Therefore, deliberately crossing his hands, he blesses Ephraim with his right hand, and Manasseh with his left. Joseph attempted to rebuke his father ; but in the energy of faith Jacob answered, "I know it, my son, I know it." Thus, after a life of grace and discipline, Jacob found his everything in God. He was at that moment a worshipper who knew His mind. Now leaning upon the top of his staff, his weakness apparent, he rejoiced in the God of power and blessing Who had enabled him to be an over-comer.

"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH" ————— C. O. GUNN-RUSSELL

Matthew 16 : 18 ; 18 : 17-20 ;

Ephesians 1 : 22 ; 2 : 16,20-22 ; 5 : 25-32.

IF you were to be asked, 'What is the Church?' no doubt you'd be able to answer very well: 'that the Church is the company of all those who have trusted in Christ from Pentecost till the Lord comes to take His own home to be with Himself at the Rapture'.

We have been taught these things by men of God who have studied the truth of God and passed it on to us. We have a goodly heritage. But suppose you were asked: Where would you turn in the Word of God to show that these things are so?

We need to have the truth directly from the Scriptures themselves, and alive in our souls, not merely hold it because we have been taught it by our parents and those who have gone before. So let us turn to the inspired Word of God itself and learn what it has to say.

I will build

Firstly, in the verse which we read in Matthew 16 : 18 the Lord says: 'I will build My church'. 'I will build'—obviously, the church was not in being then; it was not composed of old testament saints, nor even of the disciples. It was future: 'I will build'. We shall see later how this came about. Then He calls it 'My Church'. Men have formed many churches, but there is only one true Church, composed of all His own who confess Him, like Peter, as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

In My Name

Now if we look in Matthew 18, we find the church mentioned in verse 17; then in verse 20 we have the words 'where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them', so we learn here that the Church, or Assembly, is composed of those who gather in His Name, or 'unto His Name'. He Himself is the Centre. They gather around Him. Peter must have pondered much on these sayings of the Lord. In his 1st Epistle, he says, 'unto whom coming, as unto a living stone - - ye also are built up' (1 Peter 2 : 45). There again He is the Centre; we come unto Him, and 'are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ'. Here we learn another thing: that the Assembly is a place where praise and worship ascend to God—a place where God can receive His portion from His own as they gather together unto Christ.

We can also see this in other scriptures. Look at Ephesians 3 : 21 'Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages', and again in Hebrews 2 : 12 where the Lord, in resurrection, says: 'I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee', where once more we see that He is in the midst, the centre. So we see: that the Church is Christ's own Church, a company of those who confess Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, who are built up by Him, into a spiritual house, a company of which He Himself is the Centre, and where praise and worship can ascend to God.

Pentecost

Now see Acts 2 : 42-47, where we have a picture of the Church in Jerusalem at the beginning, after Pentecost. We read that 'all that believed were together'. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, etc. They were characterised by 'gladness and singleness of heart, praising God'. Now it says also : 'the Lord added to the Church daily, such as should be saved'. In Matthew 16 : 18 He had said : 'I will build My Church'. It is the Lord Himself who adds to His Church. It was not the disciples or apostles who chose those who should be admitted to the Church. The Lord is the builder. He it is who adds to His Church all those who trust in Him.

A spiritual house

Again, in this connection, we can turn again to 1 Peter 2 : 5, where Peter says 'ye are built up a spiritual house.' It is common to think of the Church as a building of stone and lime. But Peter by the Spirit makes it clear that it is a spiritual house, composed of living stones, who are also a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Moreover in Ephesians 2 : 19, 20, 21, 22, Paul speaks in similar language, saying : 'ye. . . are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'. 1 Corinthians 3 : 9, too, says 'ye are God's building'. Here Paul, speaking of the local church or assembly, goes on to mention the building and work of man ; and consequently he has to talk of the possibility of failure and faulty workmanship, the Lord's servants sometimes using wrong materials which will be burnt up.

However the Lord's work will stand, as we read in Matthew 16 : 18 —'on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it'.

His Body

Now let us turn to some verses in Ephesians. In ch. 1 verses 22, 23 we read 'He hath put all things under His feet' ; and also, 'He gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all'. These statements refer to the future ; but meantime just note that it declares that the church is His body, (see also Colossians 1 : 18, 24). Then in ch. 2. 16 we read, 'that He might reconcile both unto God in one body'. This refers to the fact that in Christ Jesus, in resurrection, Jew and Gentile are united together in one body. Read the whole passage. Ephesians 2 : 13-22.

How and when was the church formed ?

We have read that the Lord Jesus said, when at Caesarea Philippi, when He was still on earth, 'I will build my church'. However we have to wait till after His resurrection and ascension before this takes place. We must turn again to the beginning of the Acts for this. Look at Acts 1 : 5 ; and we will link this verse with 1 Corinthians 12 : 12, 13. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost—not many days hence" (Acts 1 : 5) and 'all the members of the body being many are one body, so also is the Christ, for also by (or in the power of) one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit' (J.N.D.'s. translation).

Thus the body of Christ was formed by the one Spirit coming upon and indwelling the believers, as we can see occurred at Pentecost. (Acts 2). 'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit', etc. And note what happened : 'the Spirit gave them utterance', and those listening to them could say : 'we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God'.

The first thing that happened, then, when the church was formed by the Holy Spirit, was that they began praising God, many tongues being called into service to praise and glorify God by speaking of His wonderful works. They were not preaching the Gospel—(Peter did that afterwards). Thus the first and supreme activity of the Church is to be a place where God can dwell by His Spirit, and where He can receive the praise and worship of His own.

My Church

Now we can turn to Ephesians, 5 : 25–32, where we see the full meaning of Christ's words, 'My Church'. It tells us that 'Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word ; that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish'.

So, the Church was formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit sent down by the Lord Jesus, from the Father, subsequent on the Lord's incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, as Peter declares plainly in Acts 2 : 22–33 ; (which occurred at Pentecost) ; it is composed of **all** those who confess Jesus as the Christ the Son of the living and true God, and who own Him Lord, Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God in one Body, and builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, by whom they have access to the Father, and worship Him : and the Lord Jesus Himself, who said : 'I will build my Church', and who also 'loved the church and gave Himself for it', will finally come to receive His own glorious church to Himself, to be for His own pleasure and glory for ever. (1 Thessalonians 4 : 15–17)

All His own

I trust the reader has taken note of the little word **all** in the previous paragraph. When the Lord comes for His own, to claim them for Himself, He will take away to Himself every one of His own blood-bought people, redeemed by His precious blood (1 Peter 1 : 18–20) : not one shall be left behind ; His church will then be all complete, perfect, all-glorious ; nothing less would suit His heart ; He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Several scriptures will make this plain. Firstly, Ephesians 5 : 30 says, 'we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones' ; and verse 31, speaking of Adam and Eve as a type of Christ and the church, says, 'they two shall be one flesh'. No division of Christ's church is possible. Well might we say, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 1 : 13, 'Is Christ divided ? ' ! Impossible !

Then in 1 Corinthians 15 : 51 we read, 'we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed'. That is, when Christ comes for His own, as also 1 Thessalonians 4 : 15–17 describes, all His own, both those who have died, and those who are still alive at that day, will be changed, to be for ever with and like our Lord Jesus Christ. 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is'. (1 John 3 : 2 ; Philippians 3 : 20, 21). Again, in 1 Corinthians 15 : 22, 23, 'as in Adam all die even so in Christ

shall all be made alive — — Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming'. He will certainly not leave behind even one of those for whom He has died ; every one will go because every one has been cleansed and redeemed by His precious blood.

In The Old Testament

Now while the church was not actually mentioned in the Old Testament directly—(it was a mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit—Ephesians 3 : 4-6—also see Colossians 1 : 26, 27)—still God has given us some beautiful pictures and types of Christ and the Church. In Genesis 1 and 2 we find Adam and Eve. It is really wonderful that, at the very beginning before sin came in at all, God gave us this type foretelling His wondrous plan for this earth—that He would have a Man ruling over it all for His glory, (that is, God's Man—Christ). In Genesis 1 : 26 'God said : let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion. . . so God created Man. . . male and female created He them. . . and God said unto them : be fruitful. . . and have dominion—'. Note carefully that when Man was put in dominion Eve was with him—a beautiful type of Christ being set 'as Head over all things to the church' (Ephesians 1 : 22, 23). Also in Genesis 2 : 18-24 we are given another amazing picture, showing us in type how the church was formed by the sacrifice unto death of our Lord Jesus Christ, who 'gave Himself for it' (as Ephesians 5 : 25-32 states, drawing our attention to this very passage, so we have definite scriptural warrant—for seeing in these O.T. stories, divine illustrations of N.T. truths). Next we might look at Genesis chapter 24, one of the most beautiful chapters in the Word of God, whether looked at as an adventure story, a character study, a love-story, or in the most wonderful way of all, —as a type of Christ and the Church. It tells us how Abraham's servant was sent away by Abraham (the father) to go into the far country to obtain a wife for Isaac (the son), and how he found her and brought her home to Isaac, caring for her all the way, as he showed her and spoke to her of the glories of Isaac, his master's son, till at last he presented her to Isaac, saying : 'My Master'. What a delightful picture it is that God has given us of how the Holy Spirit of God was sent down by the Father to be a Comforter, a Helper, for the saints, to build up and lead on the Church, till the Lord comes for her, when the Spirit joins with the Bride at the close of the Book of the Revelation saying : 'Come'. (see : John 14 : 26 ; 15 : 26 ; 16 : 13-15 ; Acts 2 : 4, 33 ; Revelation 22 : 17). At the end of the chapter (Genesis 24 : 67) Isaac receives his bride 'and she became his wife and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death'.

As we study the truth of the church ; we must always remember that she is for His pleasure and comfort. Paul could say of the Corinthians : 'that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ'.

Another type given to us in Genesis 41 might be mentioned. Joseph had been rejected by his brothers and slain by them (in intention anyway) and carried away to Egypt, humiliated there among the Gentiles and put in prison ; and now he has been raised up and put in authority over all the land of Egypt by Pharaoh—every knee had to bow to him ; he was made absolute ruler, and Lord of all—a wonderful type of Christ

in resurrection and glory, exalted among the Gentiles in the day to come. But note that, when Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt, he was not alone. Pharaoh had given him a wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah priest (or prince) of On. Thus also Christ will be exalted as Lord of all ; every knee will bow to Him ; every tongue will have to confess Jesus as Lord. But in that day He will not be alone. His church will be with Him, and will shine in His glory. 'We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him' (1 John 3 : 2).

BOOK REVIEW

The City and the Sign.

An Interpretation of the Book of Jonah

Geoffrey T. Bull.

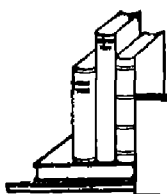
Hodder and Stoughton, 1970 (£1.75)

THIS is a conscience-stirring book. From some sources a message of this kind would be less acceptable ; but years of communist imprisonment, and a knowledge of the Lord gained in these indescribable experiences, have stamped on Mr. Bull's writings a spiritual quality which is self-evident. Though this particular book will search and humble every honest Christian reader, it has a message which ought to be heard, and it cannot fail to bring spiritual gain if it is accepted.

Certainly this is not a one-sided interpretation of the book of Jonah. Rightly, most of the lessons are drawn from Jonah the man ; from God's handling and schooling of the errant prophet who so misunderstood Him. He had so much to learn about himself as well as about God. We see our own reflection here, mirrored again and again in the Word, in all too lifelike fashion. Mr. Bull lets the edge of the message be felt ; there is much that is right on target for today. But he does not neglect to touch on other aspects of the book. He speaks for instance of its prophetic significance. Jonah (like Israel) out of the current of his God-given commission, yet through this means the Gentile mariners come to know Him : Jonah revived and recommissioned (like Israel in a future day) the means of blessing instead of judgment for the repentant Gentile Ninevites : the parallel with Romans 9 to 11 is helpfully made. Again, the thought is developed of "the sign of the prophet Jonah" to which our Lord referred. **As** Jonah, **so** the Son of Man (see Matthew 12 : 39, 40). Though we might question a phrase or two here and there, there is a moving chapter on the sufferings of our Lord, based on chapter 2.

There is an unfortunate printing error in line 11 on page 25. All in all this is a book of a rather special kind. It would have been a loss to have missed it.

COLIN CURRY.



THE MESSAGE OF 2 and 3 JOHN ————— COLIN CURRY

JOHN'S second and third epistles are a pair of short personal letters with a strong link between them. They are concerned with practical matters arising out of the important teaching of the first epistle. In particular the two letters make clear the attitudes which should be shown, first towards those who undermine the truth of Christianity, and secondly towards those who support it actively and seek to disseminate it.

There is an appropriateness about the **persons** addressed in the letters and the kind of advice which each receives. The second epistle is directed to a Christian lady (and her children); one from whom kindly and tolerant qualities could naturally be expected. The advice to **her** is to combine caution with these good qualities, so that she may recognise in their true character any who might be purveyors of false Christianity. She is told to refuse to give any kind of support or help to such people. The third epistle, on the other hand, is addressed to a respected brother in Christ, Gaius; who (being a man) might normally be expected to be sharp-eyed in his scrutiny of persons who purported to serve the truth. **He** it is who receives unreserved approval for his open-hearted and unquestioning support for those who truly serve the Lord, though not always well-known to him. To heighten our respect for Gaius, and to encourage the same spirit in ourselves, this third epistle has a contrasting figure in the background. In Diotrephes we are shown the ugliness of the spirit which calls its own tune in matters of recognising other Christians, in a way which feeds its own sense of importance, and which is narrow and un-Christlike in the extreme.

The two letters seem therefore to stress the following main lessons. First, there is a need to be uncompromising on essentials, refusing resolutely all that vitiates the heart of Christianity. Secondly, it is equally important to be generous and co-operative with all that is clearly on the side of truth, supporting it readily, with no sense of adherence to a party line in such support. The letters encourage decisiveness on both these lines. On the other hand, as a third and subsidiary lesson, it is clear that there are areas where decisiveness can be ill-judged and unhealthy, where restraint rather than boldness is the mark of the Christian spirit. We are shown (towards the close) the unsavoury character of persons who make arbitrary and inflexible decisions in relation to other Christians, decisions which have less to do with principle than with whim, jealousy, prejudice, or even well-established habit. The type of person who readily forms this kind of judgment is cut down to

size in these verses for our warning.

The relevance of these lessons will be recognised by many readers of "Scripture Truth"; they are especially appropriate in their own kind of situation today. Because their teaching is so important we shall enlarge a little on each of the points.

Guarding the Truth

The expression "the truth" is prominent in these letters. Christians are those who "know the truth" (2 John 1). John seems to use the term as a description of all that has been revealed in Christ, all that is contained and involved in His incarnation and work on earth. He shows too that the great content of this truth stamps its character upon those who receive it. Its recipients are aware of the importance of "walking in truth", that is to say of conducting themselves in a manner consistent with the truth and controlled by it. There is cause for gratification when this is seen to be happening (2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4). John speaks of loving these fellow-Christians in the truth (2 John 1; 3 John 1). He seems to mean more than that he loves them truly, but that he loves them as fellow-believers, as those who appreciate along with him what has been embodied in Him Who is "the Truth" (John 14:6). This common bond of love exists not only between the writer and his readers, but amongst "all those who have known the truth" (2 John 1).

The main theme of the second letter, then, is that this knowledge of Christ is of such paramount value and importance that it must be preserved from all that would weaken it. For its own sake (verse 2) the truth which centres upon the person of Christ must be guarded in the face of all that may oppose or belittle it. The opposition is deceptive and well-disguised, and the possibilities of being misled are high. Even a lady and her children must be vigilant about this. Teachings and teachers which are false to Christ must be detected; they must neither be welcomed nor supported in any way. Tolerance in this field is dangerous; the very corner-stone of Christian truth is at stake.

The direct instruction comes in verses 5 to 11. Already John has noted the effect of "the truth" upon these people; he has spoken with approval of their mutual Christian love, and has seen it to be the outcome of what they believed. Now he urges them to continue in the same, and warns against those who would divert them. Deceivers and anti-Christian movements were abroad and active; they must prevent all inroads from these sources. The means of identification of what is anti-Christian have been developed in the first epistle (see an earlier paper in "Scripture Truth"); here he recapitulates the essence of the matter in brief. The confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh" is again said to be crucial. The mystery of the person of Jesus; His perfect and real humanity, that He is the Christ, that He is also God, manifest in flesh, the Son of the Father, Revealer of the nature and love of God; these are fathomless matters. Yet they are also **basic** matters; Christianity stands on their truth. The deniers of these things deny all. To pass beyond these stupendous truths is to leave Christianity behind, in however sophisticated form it may be done. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the

Son. If any one come to you and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not" (verses 9, 10 R.V.). The importance of this remains today. It is of course those who are active in undermining the Christian revelation who are to be denied a foothold for their operations. Those who are uninstructed are not envisaged here: these clearly **must** not be rebuffed.

The advice of this letter is clear. All true Christian readers must "look to themselves" (verse 8) lest the loss and the confusion which result from adulteration of the truth should be theirs. In deed as well as in belief they must be on the side of John (and the New Testament) in witness to the truth of the incarnate Saviour and all that He has disclosed about God. This is an urgent matter today, when compromise on basic Christian truth causes little concern in many quarters, and the spirit of compromise is easily shared by all.

Supporting the Truth

If the second letter discourages any semblance of help for the opponents of the truth of Christianity, the third letter, on the other hand, shows clearly who **should** be supported. By real interest in the work of those who disseminate the truth, and by practical aid where possible, the channels for the progress of God's work must be kept wide open. Active support for **any** who are God's true agents, given without stint or question, is wholeheartedly approved here. John saw it and commended it in Gaius; but in the process we too are taught what God approves in this matter.

Again it is loyalty to "the truth" which is the strong bond between the writer and his immediate reader. That loyalty made Gaius a man of action in the line he saw to be right, without waiting for a lead from others. Indeed it is the more to his credit that he did this when those who took the place of leaders in his Christian community were restrictive and unhelpful. John supports Gaius without reservation. His only wish for him is that his physical health might match his spiritual health. His only advice is to continue in his good work. The importance, indeed the obligation, of being "fellow-helpers of the truth", after the manner of Gaius, is the obvious lesson for all other Christian readers. John does not hesitate to call it a duty (verse 8) to welcome and help the kind of people Gaius was assisting, and we may be sure he would not moderate his advice today.

We can see that Gaius was both discerning and generous-minded in what he did. His criterion in selecting those he would support was a basic one, which he did not allow to be confused by other issues. Recognising those who acted "for the sake of the Name" (verse 7, R.V.), he gave them his full backing on that basis alone; and all who were in that channel of activity were welcome to his home. Persons impelled to uphold and spread the truth concerning the Lord Jesus, putting His honour first and foremost in their thoughts, could be recognised by their very purpose in devotion to Him. The absence of self-regard which accompanies these kinds of aims, was a further indication of the reality of these people. Such persons ought to be received because they prove Whom they serve by what they **are**. Gaius was a **faithful** brother in acting on this principle (verse 5); and still, in the 20th century, these

are good grounds for receiving and supporting people. The principle extends to persons who are at an earlier stage than this, too. If the name of Jesus kindles a response and a desire to please Him, such persons are fit subjects for all the help they can be given. They should be readily received and assiduously fostered in their desire to be true to Christ. Any rebuff for such people, or coldness towards them, would be seriously out of line with the spirit of this letter.

Misrepresenting the Truth

One critical principle underlies the advice to the lady and to Gaius. The key factor is the honour of Christ. Those who oppose or belittle the Christ upon Whom the whole of Christianity centres are to be refused. Those who are devoted to His Name, and anxious to communicate its value in as wide a field as possible, are to be supported without hesitation. Decisions of this kind must always be based on what is essential, and there is danger when other criteria take the place of the crucial ones. Acceptance or rejection of people based on less essential considerations is fraught with more possibility of misjudgment. Decisions of this kind are sometimes made on the basis of relatively trivial distinctions; they can even be made for unworthy reasons, such as a sense of authority and importance in the persons who make them. Decisions which are the product of this kind of spirit can, needless to say, be vastly wide of the mark: they can completely misrepresent the truth which their authors purport to champion. Such lines of action do not stand up to biblical scrutiny in any degree.

We see this sad possibility, in all its starkness, in Diotrephes, of whom John speaks in his closing paragraph. Ruling the roost in the local assembly to which Gaius belonged, suppressing a letter to the assembly from the elder himself, not ready to receive the apostle in person, who was the last living eye-witness of the truth which it was so important to preserve. And the basic reason underlying his attitude was that Diotrephes was full of self-regard; he loved to have the pre-eminence. **That** attitude leaves no room for the Lord Jesus to be supreme, and completely misrepresents the truth. Diotrephes has had his successors down the years, and has them still. May we seek to avoid gravitating, even slightly, towards the spirit (and the kinds of judgment) embodied in Diotrephes.

Happily the letter does not end on that note. One other individual, Demetrius, receives special notice (verse 12). Though less prominent by far, perhaps than either Gaius or Diotrephes, his conduct evoked all-round approval in its steady consistency with "the truth". It is indeed agreeable when the truth itself supports a person's conduct, stamping its character upon it. The final sentences of both letters are similar. Face-to-face interchange will be better than writing. Those who have learned to set great store on the truth revealed in Christ know the meaning of fellowship and fulness of joy **now**. They are confident too that there are fuller experiences ahead, though of the same kind as they already know.

JESUS THE LORD

 ROBERT DAVIES**A Study based upon Acts 10 : 34-43**

IT seems salutary to look at the early preaching of the apostles, and in particular at Peter's address before Cornelius and his company (Acts 10 : 34-43) and study the presentation of the Lord Jesus by one who had witnessed His power, death and resurrection. This we will endeavour to do under eight "propositions", but first of all, let us look briefly at the context of Peter's address.

This was the first time the gospel was preached to a Gentile company : Peter was here privileged to open the door of the Kingdom to those beyond the bounds of Judaism. It was, therefore, a day of great significance. It was also an occasion where the great antecedents of blessing are apparent : viz, a prepared speaker and prepared hearers. Without divine preparation Peter, as a strict Palestinian Jew, would never have set out on this mission. The Lord spoke to him in a dream while the apostle was upon the house-top in Joppa. Peter had to learn that God has no favourites, "For the LORD your God . . . regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:" (Deuteronomy 10 : 17). Believing Gentiles were destined to share fully in the richest blessing of God. Those whom He had cleansed, whatever their race or nationality, must not be regarded as "unclean".

Cornelius is described as "one that feared God with all his house". We meet other God-fearers in the Acts of the Apostles—see, for example, Paul's opening words in Acts 13 : 16. The expression describes a man who attended the synagogue, observed the sabbath, kept the Jewish food laws, but lacking circumcision, was not a full convert to Judaism. There is no doubt that Cornelius and his house had sought and they had in a measure found but, obeying the instructions given to Cornelius in a vision, they were soon to find in a richer way (see Matthew 7 : 7).

The first "proposition" is found in verse 36. The Lord Jesus was the fulfilment of God's word sent to Israel. This had been promised in Old Testament times and now it has come to pass. God has fulfilled the covenant made with Abraham nearly two thousand years before, whereby in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. It is good news of peace. Peace (Shalom) was the traditional Hebrew greeting. It meant more than the absence of hostility. According to some authorities, the original meaning of the word may have been "well-being" or "prosperity". Without peace, one can hardly enjoy true well-being or prosperity. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Christ is our peace. He has "gospelled" peace to those "afar off" (i.e., Gentiles) and to "them that were nigh" (i.e., Jews). (Ephesians 2 : 14, 17.) There is no "hostility" on God's side : His purpose in the gospel is blessing not judgment. The way is open to all—Jew and Gentile—through faith in Christ into spiritual well-being and prosperity.

Our second "proposition" is that Jesus is Lord of all (verse 36). Jesus, God's messenger of peace, a Man, is nevertheless Lord of all, the Lord of all creation. Writing to the Corinthian Christians, Paul reminds them that in the Gentile world there were many "gods" and many "lords" but to them, as believers, there is but "one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and **one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by Him**" (1 Corinthians 8 : 6).

This leads to our third "proposition", namely, His names and titles. He is Jesus Christ, the Lord. Jesus is His personal name; it means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Saviour" and He is what His name implies for we read at the beginning of the New Testament "and thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1 : 21). Earlier in the Acts of the Apostles Peter had boldly declared before the Sanhedrin that it was only through Jesus that men could find salvation, "For there is none other name . . . whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4 : 12). This personal name is often linked in the gospels and the Acts with Nazareth, the town in which Jesus was brought up—not a town of high repute apparently, because Nathanael could say "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1 : 46). Hence in verse 38 Peter speaks of Jesus of Nazareth. We do well to remember, however, that Jesus is the name which God is delighted to honour and it is His decree that to this Name every knee should bow. (See Philippians 2 : 10, and compare with Isaiah 45 : 23.) "Christ" (though commonly used as a name) is the Greek equivalent of "Messiah"—the Anointed One—the expected King and Deliverer. "Lord" clearly indicates His authority. It implies obedience to His will on the part of those who use this title. It is true that the New Testament word translated "Lord" can apply either to God or to a man as a polite form of address. In the Authorised Version it is rendered by "Sir" thirteen times. For example in John 12 : 21 the Greeks address Philip "Sir, we would see Jesus" and in the fourth chapter of the same gospel, the Samaritan woman (not at that stage knowing who Jesus was) addresses Him as "Sir" three times, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with". Nevertheless, there can be no doubt whatsoever of the unique significance of the title as used by Thomas when Jesus spoke to him after His resurrection, "My Lord and my God" (John 20 : 28), nor later when the "disciple whom Jesus loved", recognizing the figure standing on the shore of the lake, cried to Peter "It is the Lord" (John 21 : 7). "Lord" has been described as "the habitual designation" of the risen Saviour. He is the Lord through Whom we and all things exist as we have already seen, and He will be confessed as such by all, to the glory of God, the Father (Philippians 2 : 11).

The next "proposition" is in verse 38, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost". The synoptic gospels describe how Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist and how the Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. This was accompanied by a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3 : 17; Mark 1 : 10, 11; Luke 3 : 22). No doubt these words embrace two important aspects of the Person of our Lord, the "Son" and anointed "King" of the second Psalm, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (verse 7), and the

Servant of Jehovah found in Isaiah's prophecy "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (42 : 1). Luke's Gospel alone tells of Jesus preaching in the synagogue at Nazareth and how He applied to Himself the prophecy in Isaiah 61 : 1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to preach deliverance to the captives". "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4 : 18, 21.)

This leads to our next and fifth "proposition" that is, the purpose of this anointing. The second half of verse 38 tells us how Jesus "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil;" ". . . this man, the Son of God, full of the Holy Ghost, in order to proclaim the mercy of a God who is faithful to His promises and to comfort and lift up the bruised and poor in spirit" (J.N.D.'s Synopsis).

Acts 10 : 38 has been called "Mark's gospel in miniature" and it certainly is an excellent summary of Mark's account of the Lord's public ministry. The second Gospel is a gospel of action. It has often been remarked how frequently the words "immediately" and "straightway" occur in it. It is meaningful action. The power and character of the Kingdom of God are demonstrated in opposition to that of the powers of darkness. The sick were healed and souls rescued from the devil's clutches, as Peter had himself witnessed. The strong man's goods are spoiled, because a Stronger than he, has come (Mark 3 : 27). In some circles, it is unfashionable to speak about Satan's power; but it is there all the same and in the New Testament the Christian is warned of it. There is a large element of truth in the suggestion that if some claim to know nothing of Satan's opposition, it may well be because they are going more or less the way he wants them to go. When Christian (having left the City of Destruction) was determined to continue his way to the Celestial City, "Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way . . ." (The Pilgrim's Progress). The apostle John writes that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one, and the reason for the Son of God's coming into this world was to destroy the devil's works (1 John 3 : 8, 5 : 19).

Our sixth "proposition" is His death and resurrection. He was taken and slain by hanging on the tree. To Peter, the cross of Calvary is the tree. See Acts 5 : 30, "whom ye slew and hanged on a tree". Later in life, Peter was to write, "Christ . . . who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2 : 24). Here, however, he simply states the fact and manner of the Lord's death. We know that to the Jewish mind the cross was a great stumbling block. Perhaps the question passed through the mind of Cornelius too, that if Jesus really were God's Anointed, why did He die such a death? The immediate answer is that God raised Him from the dead, thus setting the seal of divine approval upon all that Jesus did and vindicating His Sonship, "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1 : 4). Peter emphasises the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. He and the other disciples (chosen witnesses of this mighty act) had eaten in the presence of the risen Lord. Luke records that Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish and in the last chapter of John's Gospel we find the disciples breakfasting with their risen Master on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. The passage in Luke's Gospel is of special interest

because on this occasion the disciples were startled and afraid. They thought that they had seen a spirit or ghost, but Jesus reassured them, "handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have . . . he showed them his hands and his feet" (Luke 24 : 39, 40). Their eyes were **not** deceiving them; they were **not** seeing a ghost; it was the Lord Himself, the same Lord Who had died, bearing the marks of His passion, and He was now alive for evermore.

The seventh "proposition" is in verse 42, "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead". This is consistent with what Paul told the Athenians, namely that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness; and the Man ordained to be Judge is the Lord Jesus and the proof of this ordination, His resurrection (Acts 17 : 31). This reminds us of the Lord's words recorded in John 5 : 27. The Father has "given him (the Son) authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man". This solemn truth corrects any tendency to sentimentality. The gospel is not a sentimental story, but presents a choice of life or death. The **Saviour** will one day be the **Judge** and in one of these offices all men must meet Him. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil" (Deuteronomy 30 : 15).

The eighth and final "proposition", is the unequivocal offer of remission of sins to those who believe in His Name (verse 43). This is an essential part of the Christian gospel, "Be it known unto you therefore . . . that through **this man** is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13 : 38). "Sin" and "sins" do not perhaps figure so prominently in people's thoughts today as they did in days gone by, but their effect, namely guilt, is inescapable. Guilt still casts its shadow over human experience. A Christian psychologist has spoken of the "guilt of doing" and the "guilt of being", that is, a person feels guilty because of something he has done and because he is the kind of person who does such things. The answer to this dilemma is in the good news of God and the glorious promise of full and free forgiveness to everybody who believes in the name of Jesus. "His (God's) dear Son, in whom we have redemption . . . the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1 : 13, 14). Before Peter had finished speaking, the Holy Spirit descended on the listening company, proving beyond all doubt that God had granted to the Gentiles "repentance unto life" (Acts 11 : 18).

Such then is the Saviour as presented by the apostle to Cornelius and his company. Let us not forget that Peter had spent three years or so in the Lord's company and had been, with the other apostles, specially commissioned to be His witness. Our study is not, however, an academic exercise; it is one of great **practical** value to the Christian. We may enumerate briefly a few of the ways in which this can be so :

Use 1. To honour the name of Jesus and to aim at a more **practical** acknowledgement of His Lordship in obedience and service.

Use 2. To study the public ministry of the Lord Jesus and strengthen our Christian life by feeding on the Bread of Life (John 6 : 48).

Use 3. To rejoice in the knowledge of a **living** Saviour.

Use 4. To make known the promise of remission of sins through faith in Him.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST ————— T. S. DAVISON

2 Corinthians 5 : 9, 10

EVERY believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is deeply affected by the truth of the Judgment Seat of Christ : which therefore should claim our earnest attention, not only in relation to the Judgment Seat itself, but with regard to the present moral and practical effect on the believer's life and conduct in this world.

When as a young Christian I became aware of this particular truth I regarded the subject with a certain amount of uneasiness and misgiving, and it may be that these feelings are shared, to a greater or lesser extent by others, particularly by the newly converted. It is clearly the responsible life of the Christian which is in question, and which will come under the Lord's review and righteous assessment at the Judgment Seat, so that everyone of us, when manifested before the Judgment Seat (where our responsible pathway will come under review) will be there as the subjects of the sovereign grace of God in all the value of the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary and in all the acceptance of His person—accepted, or taken into favour, in God's beloved One. We shall be part of that mighty host composed of sleeping saints raised incorruptible and living saints changed, all with bodies of glory like unto His glorious body, caught up to meet our Lord and Saviour in the air and forever to be with and like Him. We shall have left behind forever everything connected with the sinful flesh which is within us and with the old creation and shall be only and altogether what the grace of God has made us in Christ. It is, in fact, only that free and sovereign grace which will bring any one of us to that day of manifestation before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Apart from that grace we would inevitably be numbered with the multitudes of the unbelieving, unsaved dead who will stand before the great white throne, and Him Who sits upon it, and are judged every man according to his works, with the result that all find their everlasting portion in the lake of fire. In this connection, note the vital distinction between those who stand before the great white throne and those who are manifested before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The former are judged according to their works, that is, they personally come under judgment. The latter, however, are stated to receive the things done in the body, according to that which has been done, whether it be good or bad. That is, the believer's actions come under the Lord's discriminating and righteous judgment, but not the believer's person. The believer's person will never come under judgment. The Lord Himself made this abundantly clear when He said "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, **and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.**"

In the all-revealing light of the presence of God, every step in the believer's responsible pathway through this world will be seen as our

Lord sees it. Every thought, every word, every action will be clearly seen in its true colours and proportions when He brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes manifest the counsels of the hearts. How comforting and encouraging to read that "then shall every man have praise of God." But how sobering is the statement made by our Lord to His disciples when warning them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, in Luke 12: "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." This is figurative language, no doubt, but the meaning is sufficiently clear.

On the other hand, circumstances in our pathway which seemed at the time to be very grievous, involving us in sorrow, disappointment, or bitter adversity, will be seen in that perfect light to have been the loving, tender, and wise provision of our Lord for our blessing, preserving us from the subtle devices of the great enemy, and bringing us into greater moral conformity to Himself. The Psalmist knew something of this when he wrote "in pressure hast thou enlarged me" (Psalm 4:1).

Will the reader now please turn to 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. Although the Judgment Seat of Christ is not specifically mentioned therein, I am persuaded that it is relevant to our subject. My reason for thinking so is the occurrence of the expression "the day", and the references to "reward" and "loss." In verse 9 the apostle uses two figures of speech—"God's Husbandry" and "God's building." It is the latter conception which is pursued in the following verses. The apostle himself, according to the grace given him by God, as a wise master builder, or architect, had laid the foundation, Jesus Christ, at Corinth. He was the pioneer missionary who first came to Corinth with the gospel and continued there for eighteen months, preaching Christ to the unconverted, and ministering the truths of Christianity to the saints, thus laying the foundation. He did not remain at Corinth. He moved on, under the Lord's guidance, to other fields of service, and others built on the foundation he had laid. Hence his warning words, "let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon", and "if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." That which God builds cannot, of course, be subject to failure. What He does, He does forever. But it is clear that in that which is committed to human responsibility there may be built on the one foundation not only divine materials, gold, silver, precious stones, but spurious material, described here as wood, hay and stubble. Wood is often used in buildings in this world, and has its uses, as have grass and straw (J.N.D.'s translation) but in the context of these verses, and of the Judgment Seat of Christ, these materials, spurious because issuing from man's thoughts and not from God, will not abide the test of fire, viz. the Lord's righteous judgment. The solemn feature of this is that a genuine Christian may, through ignorance or self-will, build with false material which shall be "burned" in the day of manifestation,

and the builder shall suffer "loss." His work will be destroyed but himself saved, but "so as by fire." A further case occurs a few verses later, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." Here both the servant and his work are false and both are destroyed. Gold, silver and precious stones are materials frequently met with in Scripture, particularly in the tabernacle and its furniture. In their typical significance they speak of Christ, the all-varied glory of His person and the perfection of His sacrificial work. He Himself said while here in manhood, "I am the truth." All truth has its centre in Him. His servants who preach and teach Christ, whether in the gospel to the unsaved, to the children in Sunday School, or in ministry to the saints, as directed and empowered by the Spirit of God, are building with divine, and therefore indestructible materials, which in the words of 1 Corinthians 3 will "remain" in that day of manifestation, to the glory of Christ and the due reward for the servant.

This portion of Scripture does not, I think, preclude the thought that the Lord may permit partial, intermediate, or anticipatory testings during the earthly history of the Church, such testings being described in Scripture as "fiery trials." See, for example, Peter's warning to those to whom he wrote in his first epistle, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you*" (1 Peter 4:12). In times of persecution throughout the Church's history, such "fiery trials" have often exposed and purged out what is false, but have also demonstrated the reality of what is according to God in the Christian profession. Nevertheless, the final test of all that has been done in the believer's responsible pathway is reserved for the coming day of manifestation at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

We must not overlook what the Scriptures bring before us as to the present and practical moral effect that the truth of the coming day of manifestation should have upon our responsible everyday lives. Romans 14:10-13 deals with influences tending to split apart two naturally diverse elements in the assembly, viz. the converts from Judaism, born and brought up under the Mosaic law and still influenced by its enactments (particularly as to food and holy days), and those out of Gentile paganism who had no such scruples of conscience. The latter tended to despise the former and the former to harshly judge the latter, a situation the enemy was not slow to exploit. The solemn fact of the Judgment Seat of Christ, where each shall give account of himself to God, is therefore the basis of the exhortation "Let us not therefore judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Similarly, regarding the passage in 1 Corinthians 3, already considered in some detail, the exercise of every servant of the Lord should surely be as to the nature of the material he is building on the one foundation. Is it divine material? Will it emerge unscathed from trial by fire? In 1 Corinthians 4, the apostle speaks of his own attitude to criticism, or the judgment of others. It is evident from the latter part of his second letter to the Corinthians that he was subject to much hostile criticism from a certain element in that assembly. But in the light of the

Judgment Seat he considered it a small matter to be judged by them, or by "man's day." He did not even judge himself, and though he did not know anything by himself (meaning, I suppose, that his conscience did not accuse him of anything wrong) yet he was not therefore justified but, said he, "He that judgeth me is the Lord." The practical conclusion drawn, applicable not only to the Corinthians, but to all saints at all times, and therefore to us, is to judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. Finally, referring again to 2 Corinthians 5:9-11, the apostle speaks of the present practical effect upon himself of this truth he was inspired by the Spirit of God to put on record in the word of God. Verse 9, as translated in the Authorised Version, tends to give a false impression. The acceptance of the believer does not depend on his "labour" or "endeavour." The true sense as given in the New Testament is "Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to Him." Enoch walked with God for 300 years, and the Spirit's comment in Hebrews 11 is, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; . . . for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." To please God, to be agreeable unto Him, is surely the sincere desire of every normal believer. This was the personal desire of Paul the apostle, in view of the coming day of manifestation.

But there was yet another effect produced on this pattern-Christian. In view of the solemnities of the Judgment Seat of Christ, his thoughts travelled to that other dread tribunal revealed in the word of God, the judgment of the great white throne, described in awe-inspiring detail in Revelation 20. Hence he continues, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men." It is to be questioned whether the warning of judgment to come is sufficiently emphasised in modern gospel preaching. May the words of this verse 11 be a salutary challenge to all our hearts, and may the truth of the Judgment Seat of Christ, which has occupied our attention, though in a fragmentary and partial manner, be fruitful, not only in intelligence as to what is revealed in Scripture, but in causing us to live and act in the light of that day of manifestation.

STUDIES IN THE REVELATION ————— J. S. BLACKBURN

3. OTHER VIEWS OF CHRIST

I The Ancient of Days.

Read 1:11-18.

The principal features of this vision take one's mind to the book of Daniel. In Daniel 7:9-14 there appeared to Daniel "in the night visions" two persons separately, named in that passage respectively the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man. The Ancient of Days occupied the divine throne from which the final judgment was decreed, and the name seems

to be the picturesque Old Testament way of saying an old, old man. In Old Testament thought there would be nothing in the least derogatory about such a description, which would certainly represent to readers the ideas of the most venerable wisdom. It is most right and fitting that the final judgment of men and nations should be in the hands of such venerable wisdom. In Daniel's vision the details he saw included a garment white as snow, the hair of his head white like pure wool, and a fiery stream issuing from the throne. The first figure seen by John in the Revelation is invested with features closely similar to those of the Ancient of Days. He saw the long garment, the white hair and the burning flame, and to these are added details about the eyes, the feet, the voice, the hand, the mouth and the countenance, all designed to sum up to a vision of irresistible purity, stability, power, glory and victorious might. All these added features exclude from the impression created all possibility of weakness or decrepitude, and leave the central thought to be the wisdom and honour associated in the Old Testament with an ideal old age. "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding" (Job 12:12, 13). "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man" (Leviticus 19:32).

The other person separately represented in Daniel 7 is "one like the Son of Man", who was seen coming "with the clouds of heaven" and to him the Ancient of Days gave the kingdom which shall never be destroyed. The phrase describing this person is exactly the same in Revelation 1:13. The identity of the two descriptions is even more striking when we note that in both cases the article is missing; "one like a Son of Man." While without the slightest doubt this expression denotes our Saviour who takes the name "the Son of Man" in the Gospels, the absence of the article shows that in the Revelation the title is taken directly from Daniel and not immediately from the Gospels. Perhaps in the imagery of Daniel the thought is "a human figure" in contrast to the many bestial monsters which cross the stage of those visions. The light cast upon the Revelation from Daniel 7:14 therefore is very plain. The person seen by John, and the Speaker of the mighty voice first heard by him is the One destined to possess universal dominion. The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man are combined in one Person in the New Testament vision, and this is in full accord with the distinctive New Testament revelation of the fulness of divine and human glory which combine in Him.

How strengthening, how reassuring, how stabilising it is to faith to feel with John, when we fall at His feet, the hand of love laid upon us, and to hear, with John, the words surely intended for all His own who come under the power of this vision: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

II The Man-Child.

Read 12:1-15.

The immediate characterisation of this "man-child" in v. 5 is that He is

born destined to "rule the nations with a rod of iron." The meaning of this characterisation is readily known from its occurrences elsewhere in Scripture. In Revelation 19:15 we learn that Christ, at His coming in the clouds will do just this; He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. Also in Psalm 2, God's King anointed on Zion, His Son begotten in time, as well as in eternity, when He takes the heathen for His inheritance, will "break them with a rod of iron." Thus we are left in no doubt that the person here appearing in symbol is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ. What is distinctive here is the form of the appearance, as a new-born babe. We cannot but contrast this with the aged man taken from the Book of Daniel in chapter 1. A new-born babe in the purely natural sense, is one who has come into a specially vulnerable condition, and yet, if he can survive the dangers of such a position, has all the potentialities of the life he possesses before him. How accurately does the position of this new-born child present to us some of the features of our Saviour! He stooped so low that it became possible for the hands of sinners to be laid upon Him, yet He is destined to occupy the highest place. All the power, wisdom, sympathy for the human plight, and all the love displayed during His earthly life in hands and feet, voice and eyes, are not lost to man, but destined to re-appear and be applied, first to break the power of evil in the nations, and then to serve them on the throne.

The mind runs to the story of the nativity in Matthew, "when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king." In those days came wise men from the east, and asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Here was the Man-Child born of Israel, and here was the cruel power of the dragon ready to devour Him. The same three parties to the same conflict are seen on the earliest page of Scripture, when God gave the first gospel promise: the woman's seed shall bruise the serpent's head, but it shall bruise His heel.

In an earlier chapter of the Revelation (2:27), it is promised that the overcomer in the church in Thyatira shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. It thus seems clear that in a secondary and derivatory sense this description, primarily belonging to Christ, is given to the believer. It is perhaps in a similar way that we are to understand the sequel in chapter 12:5, "her child was caught up to God and to His throne." In this declaration it can only be suggested that Christ and His Church are joined together in one ascension—the ascension of Christ in the past and the rapture of the saints at His second coming. The word raptured is used in Revelation 12:5 exactly as it is in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. This may be confirmed by the fact that the events of the last days follow immediately on this rapture.

III The Reaper.

Read 14:14–20.

The scenes appearing in the vision in these verses are the Harvest and the Vintage, and the Person who acts is again identified in Daniel's language as "one like unto a Son of man." Also He appears in the same way, "on a cloud." What are the events described as the Harvest and the Vintage? We have already observed that chapter 14 appears to reveal in brief glimpses (mostly expanded later in the Book), what

God and His servants are doing while the stage has the appearance of being dominated (chapters 12 and 13) by the baleful actions of Satan and his two principal agents. These glimpses begin with a view of a band of Jewish disciples standing in the same relation to the Lord as the disciples in Matthew 10 and 24, and named the **firstfruits**. The series of Revelation 14 ends with the **harvest** of which these Jewish disciples of the future are the firstfruits, and the vintage, which portrays the unmixed destruction to follow. Verse 15 describes the signal from God which causes Christ to begin this harvesting: "another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

There is a very close similarity between the language here and in Joel 3:13, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe", and this might lead us to think that the harvest is one of destruction. I take the view, however, that the connection with the firstfruits in 14:4 requires the conclusion that this harvest is one of gathering in for God, and therefore to divine favour. On the other hand, the vintage, is explicitly in this place (14:17-20), and in others (see Isaiah 63:1-6), "the winepress of the wrath of God."

The light in which our Saviour appears in this passage, therefore, epitomises the message of the Book. His hand, and no other, is equal to bringing in a world on which the light of divine favour can shine. Only He can destroy the evil in the vintage, and garner the good, in this harvest. And this is expanded later in the Book, when we see the evil which has blighted the earth summed up and eliminated when the dragon and his agents gather together the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of Almighty God, but "the nations of them that are saved" will be found walking in the light of the Golden City. This leads very naturally to the last appearance of Christ in this series.

IV King of kings and Lord of lords.

Read 19:11-16.

All the names of the great enemy gathered from the whole of the Word of God are assembled at the moment of his fall from heaven, in order to identify beyond doubt who is the person whose ultimate destruction is now put in hand. This is found in 12:9; "the great dragon . . . , that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan." By contrast, towards the end of the Revelation all the names and forms under which Christ has appeared are assembled together to show beyond a shadow of doubt who it is who is King over all kings and Lord over all lords. In 17:14 the Lamb is King of kings and Lord of lords. In 19:11-15 He is Faithful and True from 3:14; the Ancient of Days from 1:13-16; Ruler of the nations with a rod of iron from 12:5; He who treads the winepress of the wrath of God from 14:20. He is departing from heaven for His second coming to earth; He is riding the white horse of victory, and on His head are many crowns. Let us pause a moment on this unique distinction our Saviour will wear at His coming. A coronation indicates that the person crowned claims rightful royalty. Every right of royalty belongs to Jesus, and at this moment every eye shall see that it is so. Many qualities

have been held to bestow a right to reign: birth and lineage; character and gifts; conquest and power. All these, and every other right to reign sit like diadems on the head of Jesus. Moreover, there is here, as there must be at this climax as at every other time, the reminder that underlying every right to rule that comes within human powers of understanding, there is a majesty beyond the mind of man; His written Name "no man knew."

There seems to be in all these revelations more than a hint that it is because of the deception of Satan exercised over the nations that they amass armaments, that is, learn war. By the same token, the armaments must in the end be employed against the Lord, and against His Christ. How utterly incongruous all this is, can be seen from vv. 13 and 15. One of His names is the Word of God. The armaments employed are such as operate in a dimension to which no conceivable human armament of whatever sophistication possesses any relevance; His sword is His Word; it proceeds out of His mouth.

In this war, unique in so many ways (it is really in righteousness, and it really will end war), He is not alone, for His saints are with Him. "They that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (17:14).

Heaven.

Heaven, as opened to us in the Revelation, is very differently minded and occupied from the heaven presented to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In each case we have, for instance, a throne and a temple, but the contrasts between them are very solemnly preserved. In Hebrews, the throne is a throne of grace, and whatever our present time of need and sorrow may require is found there. In the Apocalypse, the throne is one of judgment, and the instruments and agencies of wrath and vengeance are seen to be lying before and around it. In Hebrews, the temple is occupied by the High priest of our profession, the Mediator of the better covenant, serving there in the virtue of His own most precious blood. In the Apocalypse, the temple gives fearful notes of preparation for judgment. Lightening and earthquake attend the opening of it. The altar that is there is not the altar of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the heavenly priesthood eat of the bread of life, but an altar which supplies penal fire for the earth. The believer has passed from death unto life. He rises not to judgment but to life. But he ought to know, that in the progress of the divine history of the earth judgment precedes glory. In the Revelation it is Christ rejected by men, and not Christ accepted of God for sinners, that has become its thought and object. But it is my leading thought that it is the **same** Person that is kept before us, and to be known by us, in each and all of the stages or periods of the same great mystery. We are still, at whatever point we may have arrived, in company with the **same** Jesus. He sought and claimed a kingdom when He was here, and when He was here desired the sympathies of His saints. A kingdom, however, He is receiving now in heaven, and it will be His glory and joy. It is called 'The joy of the Lord', for He will say to them who share it with Him, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Have we, beloved, any power in our souls to rejoice in the heart of the Lord being thus satisfied.

Adapted from J. G. Bellett.



TOWARD BABYLON

ANDRE GIBERT

ON OECUMENISM

(translated from the French by Dr. R. E. Williams*)

THERE is much talk these days about unity among Christians. It is clear, however, that the majority of those who talk about it, even if they do recognize the authority of the Scriptures, have not grasped what they have to say about it. No matter how praiseworthy the intention, the many attempts that are being made to find a remedy for the divisions in Christendom tend to promote a confusion that will find its consummation in the Babylon of the Apocalypse.

1. UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS DOES EXIST IN SPITE OF THEIR FAILURE TO DISPLAY IT

Nothing is more precious than this unity, but it is in no way an ideal which we must seek to achieve, it is a positive fact which Christians must make evident by rejecting all that man has built up or wishes to build up outside of it. The unity of Christians **exists**. It embraces all true believers and **them alone**. No matter how they may be mixed in with lifeless profession in the so-called Christian world, "the Lord knows those who are His" (2 Timothy 2 : 19). Let there be no doubting the comforting certainty which this first side of the seal, put on the solid foundation of God who remaineth, gives to the faithful in these troubled times.

Unity of the family of God.

God has His children within the great masses as well as in the very small groups scattered throughout Christendom, and "they are one" in response to the prayer of Jesus in John 17, because, being "born again," they possess the same life as Christ, one nature with Him. Their unity will be manifested in glory to the eyes of the world (v. 23) but it is effective now, "that the world may believe" that Jesus was sent by the Father (v. 21). We do not have to create it, we have to give the world proof of its existence. This unity of the family of God is indeed outside of this world. The world is urged to believe and as it refuses to do so, it will know in that day when the believers are "perfected into one" what it refused to believe previously. In its very essence, then, this unity is the act of those who "are not of the world, as I, says Jesus, am not of

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the world", (vv. 14, 16). Thus, contrary to what is commonly asserted, it is only as strangers to the world, whilst being in the world, that believers may bring the divine message to the world.

The unity of the Church, the body of Christ.

From another point of view they constitute the Church (or Assembly) of God, "which he purchased with the blood of his own" (Acts 20 : 28). This Church has been established on earth since Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to baptize the believers "into one body" (1 Corinthians 12 : 13) and it will remain on earth until the Lord comes to take it to be with Him in heaven. This unity of the body of Christ, like that of the family of the Father is perfect and unchangeable. "There is one body and one Spirit" (Ephesians 4 : 4). All believers are linked by the Holy Spirit to the Glorified Head, Christ in heaven.

If we wish, then, to bring about a unity which already exists, are we not denying that it does exist ? To labour to bring about unity among Christians is to fail to understand the work of God. This unity is to **be lived** and to **be manifested** because they **are** one.

The faithlessness of Christians and the faithfulness of Christ.

For it is only too obvious that this unity is not apparent, and the fault lies with the believers, and it has not been apparent for many a year, if not since the early days of the Church here below. If the Assembly were in its normal state, such as it was at the beginning of Acts, all the believers (and they alone) would display the same life, they would express the unity of the body of Christ at the Lord's table and the Spirit would act in power in the midst of them. This is no longer so. The Christians have failed in the testimony that they should bear. It is no less true that each bearing a testimony that he will render according to the life that is in him, all are members of the family of God, members of the body of Christ, they are interdependent and are exhorted to "keep the unity of the Spirit" because "there is one body."

"The body of Christ, which is the assembly"* He loves it as His Bride, He gave Himself for this Church which is one, He cherishes it, He feeds it, He purifies it. Nothing is more refreshing when the labours and the struggle would wither the heart than this thought of the love of Christ for the Church. He is constant, faithful, full of care and truth. The Church continues to exist only because of this unchanging love. "How is it, a dear servant of God asked more than a century ago, that several can ask, Where is the Church of the living God ? It is because Christ has not forgotten it" (G.V.W.). For it He has vanquished death, Satan, the world, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. He sees it just as He is going to present it to Himself. Let us be filled with the Spirit of Christ in such a way that we see in every believer a child of God, a member of the body of Christ, and let us love him as such.

*See Ephesians 4 : 3, 4 : 5 : 22, 27 ; Colossians 1 : 24.

“Keep the unity of the Spirit” and show that “there is one body.”

Thus we shall keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” This does not imply that we can support one another in doing wrong but that, on the contrary, we are to encourage each other to obey together. Nor does it imply that we should recognize as Christians those who manifestly have neither the life nor the Spirit. The apostles Peter, John, Jude and Paul also, strongly denounce the false Christians, the “false brethren brought in surreptitiously” (Galatians 2 : 4) who “got in unnoticed” (Jude 4.). In the present confusion, however, it is not always easy to expose them. This is where the second inscription on the seal comes in, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2 : 19). The certainty that the Lord knows those who are His can in no way permit us to use the “unity of the Spirit” as a pretext for bringing together good and evil, truth and error. The separation from evil is individual (“let everyone”) but the faithful one is invited to “follow after justice, faith, love, peace, with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”. Love will suffer from not being able to walk with those who, although certainly Christians, do not obey the injunction to separate themselves from evil, but it would be to deny that very love to encourage them in the “iniquity” from which they should withdraw. Let us take heed to 1 John 5 : 2.

There is no other path, for God does not wish there to be any communion between light and darkness (2 Corinthians 6 : 14). Those who obey are on a foundation which will last. They have at their disposal all the resources and the instruction of the Word given for all time to the Church. Whether they be a couple or a hundred or millions in no way changes the privileges and responsibilities of this Church which, even when numbers are small, has to bear witness that it exists. The unity of the body of Christ has essentially its expression in the “one loaf” at the Lord’s table (1 Corinthians 10 : 17). Those who break bread bear witness in doing so to the existence of the body of Christ, even though they are conscious that they are not the only members of it. Their responsibility is to walk accordingly, in obedience to the Word. By this symbol they express the unity which exists, which does not have to be created. It is up to them to show it practically, in love and in truth.

(to be continued)

COMMUNICATION_____ J. STODDART

Some thoughts on Hebrews 13 : 16.

ALLIED to the modern so-called “generation gap” are the problems of the “communication gap”. So far as it is possible to penetrate the meaning of such terms they are understood to refer to the disparity, the kind of no-man’s-land, that lies apparently between youth and maturity. Valiant efforts are frequently made to conquer this territory from one side and the other but lasting results are elusive, and the problems remain.

In our responsible Christian lives this situation is (and always has been) commonly encountered, not only between young and old, but among members of the household of faith generally. The exhortation contained in the above verse (and many other Scriptures) recognises this and we are enjoined "to do good **and to communicate** forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The context makes it clear that such communication is not confined to written or spoken words (although they may be included) but involves sacrificial giving, maybe in time, effort or substance or all of these. The result is seen to be pleasing to God as well as beneficial to the recipient. Surely the need abounds for this kind of communication on all sides to-day. How often the loneliness of sick and aged saints is forgotten and the needs of labourers bearing the burden and heat of the day in far-off fields neglected because of the lack of communication. Yet the Lord Himself tells us the humble cup of cold water given to one of His little ones shall in no wise lose its reward. In denigrating mere "do-gooders" let us remember Peter's inspired comment on the service of the Lord Jesus on earth, that "He went about doing good" (Acts 10 : 38) Here is the evidence of communication at its highest level ; not only in words, the like of which no other man ever spake, but in goodness imparted to the needy sons of men.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commends them for having communicated with him in his prison affliction at Rome. Sadly he remarks that no other church had communicated with him concerning giving and receiving, but they alone, and they had done so repeatedly. (cf. Philippians 4 : 14/16) It was not only letters of comfort and sympathy which they sent by the hand of one of their most valued members, but Epaphroditus had personally hazarded his life to deliver the goods which were their love gift to him. What joy this brought to the imprisoned apostle, but surely "with such sacrifices God is well pleased." When others had forgotten to communicate or were unwilling to do so, the Philippian church had remembered with real affection the hardship of their beloved apostle. Paul's appreciative reply to the Philippians is in itself an instructive study in communication and has thus been endeared to the saints of every generation for its uplifting character.

The writer was impressed in a lecture by Prof. J. S. Whale in Edinburgh to hear the able Greek scholar say that in his judgment neither modern translations of the Bible nor highly organised evangelistic crusades were the most effective methods of communicating the Gospel to the indifferent masses to-day. His conviction was based upon 2 Corinthians 3 : 2 where the apostle says, "Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men." No communication could be more effective than the message of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God in the life of a Christian. We need only recall the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 13 to appreciate the futility of eloquence or great gift in communicating the truth if love is not the dominant voice that is heard. "Speaking the truth in love," is the secret imparted in Ephesians 4 : 15 to ensure spiritual growth and progress. Is there any wonder, in the light of this, why so much learned and didactic ministry in our day fails lamentably to communicate God's truth ?

It would be quite untrue, of course, to suppose that words, written and spoken, were unnecessary in spiritual communication. Why, the

whole revelation of God has come to us through the written Word, and the Lord Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6 : 63.) Such words are indispensable, and we must ever be grateful to God for the scholarship of men through whom they have become available to us in our native tongue. The important distinction is made in 1 Corinthians 2 : 13 between "the words which man's wisdom teacheth" and those "which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The skills of argument and logic are employed by men to persuade and convince each other of their views, but the servant of God relies upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit to communicate the truth. Sometimes it is asserted, or at least inferred, that words are not important in Christian service, based upon a false understanding of 2 Corinthians 3 : 6, "not of the letter, but of the spirit : for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." If the context is read it is clear that "the letter" refers to the **demands of the law**, which were a "ministration of death", whereas the message of grace, making no such demands, imparts life by the Spirit to the believer. The wise King-Preacher of Ecclesiastes (ch.12 : 10) "sought to find **acceptable** words (preachers of to-day please note !): and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. . . which are given from one Shepherd." Is this not an excellent recipe for effective communication and enhancing our preaching and teaching ?

The studied and subtle use of words in propaganda, fiction and advertising is familiar to us all and communication of this kind can be highly damaging to the mind. Warnings abound therefore in Scripture as to "evil communications which corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15 : 33). Their intention is to deceive and to distort the truth and thus weaken its effect upon life and conduct. Doubtless those who taught that there was no resurrection of the dead would couch their error in the most eloquent and persuasive language to lull the unwary to sleep. The plain, unequivocal words used by the apostle in refuting their falsehood, "But now is Christ risen from the dead," are in themselves a perfect example of effective communication worthy of our study. To the most deeply taught church at Ephesus Paul had to exhort, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth ; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Alas it is all too possible that "out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing (James 3 : 10) ; to which he adds, "My brethren, these things ought not to be so." Even in our ordinary conversation does it not become us to ask ourselves before we speak, "Are my words likely to be edifying and helpful or will they minister harm and discouragement to those who listen ?" The Psalmist, aware of the power of communication for good or evil, utters a fervent prayer at the end of Psalm 19 which we could profitably emulate at the commencement of every new day, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer." No offensive word would then escape our lips and the value of such discipline would result in imparting help and blessing to others. This is strongly endorsed by the Apostle James when he says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a **perfect man**, and able also to bridle the whole body." (ch. 3 : 2)

Perhaps someone somewhere at this moment is waiting for a word or deed from you and me that would bring uplift and encouragement to a drooping spirit. Shall we keep in mind the injunction of Hebrews 13 : 16, while "offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name. But to do good and to communicate forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

THE MERCY OF GOD

ROBERT DAVIES

"Our God is merciful" Psalm 116 : 5

IF justification for considering this subject were needed, it could be found in Romans 12 : 1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service". It is not our purpose to consider this verse in detail, but simply to note the fact that the appeal is based upon knowledge and experience of "the mercies of God".

Mercy withholds the penalties we deserve, while grace gives the gifts we do not deserve. Mercy has been defined as a good-natured act for which a sincere and heartfelt thankyou can be said. It is something done out of goodness of heart without any thought of gain to the one who does it. It is, without doubt, closely akin to love and pity. Mercy is a word of great beauty. For many this is linked with poetical associations. It is, however, a prominent and important biblical word in both the Old and the New Testaments. It is a grave misconception to think that God is presented as merciful only in the New Testament. Consider this key passage in Exodus 34 : 6, 7 "The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" and again in Psalm 103 : 8 "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

The word translated "mercy" in these passages (CHESED) occurs about two hundred and thirty-five times in the Old Testament. Over one hundred of these are found in the Psalms. In the Authorised Version the most common translation is "mercy", but the word is also rendered by goodliness, goodness, kindness, loving kindness, merciful kindness, pity, etc. It has been rightly said that the great design of Scripture is to present God as merciful. He is plenteous in mercy, rich in mercy ; His mercy is abundant. He is the "Father of mercies and the God of all comfort".

Let us return to the passage in Exodus 34 and consider its context. Moses desired to see God's glory and in so far as this was possible for mortal man, his wish was granted. The LORD promised to make all His goodness pass before His servant. "And he (the LORD) said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee ; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy" (Exodus 33 : 19). It is suggested that the repetition of the verb "I will" is associated with the Name "Jehovah" or JHVH, which can be interpreted "I will be what

I will be". See Exodus 3 : 14 where the significance of the Divine Name is revealed to Moses.

There is no doubt that mercy suggests that the person shewing mercy is in some kind of superior position over the one to whom it is shewn.

In human affairs there may be a conflict between mercy and justice. If law and order are to be maintained and society preserved, must not evil be restrained and law-breakers punished ? We cannot allow ruthless people "to get away with it" ! It is without doubt necessary for the stability of the social order that justice be done and be seen to be done, but is it not also desirable that justice should be tempered with mercy ? What then of God's justice and mercy ? The conflict at human level is real enough, but there can be no such conflict with God. His attributes do not clash one against another. God is just without being unmerciful and merciful without being unjust : "a just God and a Saviour" (Isaiah 45 : 21). Nowhere is this more fully portrayed than in the cross of Christ. "Mercy and truth unite," sin is judged but there is mercy for the sinner. If we consider for a moment our Lord's public ministry, which terminated at the cross, we can view it as a mission of Divine Mercy. His miracles were acts of mercy. He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil". Do we, like Moses, desire to see the Glory of God ? In Christ, God has caused all His goodness to pass before us. Does not the apostle Paul speak of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" ? (See 2 Corinthians 4 : 6)

Let us now endeavour to look more closely at the character of God's mercy. It has been said that when God dispenses His wrath, it is poured from a bowl, but His mercy is like a flood. The seventeenth century preacher to whom this is attributed, was no doubt referring to the angels with the vials in the Revelation (16 : 1 and following). He certainly did not intend to under-estimate the severity of God's wrath, but rather to emphasize the magnitude of His mercy. Its quality is not strained. It is not dispensed drop by drop ! The Psalmist writes "as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Psalm 103 : 11). God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. Human life, says the psalmist, is short ; it is like the grass in the hot Palestinian summer : "As for man, his days are as grass." "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Psalm 103 : 15, 17).

In the foregoing quotations the phrase "them that fear him" is very important. There is no doubt that God's providential mercy is upon all. As the Lord reminded His disciples, their heavenly Father causes the sun to shine and the refreshing rain to fall upon the land of the evil man as well as upon that of the good man (see Matthew 5 : 45), but the richness of God's boundless mercy is only enjoyed by those who "fear him", that is by those who reverence His name and seek to please Him. For them, His mercy endures for ever (see Psalm 136). God is not like many men. If they have granted **one** favour, that is enough, but of the Lord it is written : "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end ; they are new every morning" (Lamentations 3 : 22, 23) R.S.V.

Mercy may be said to "sweeten" God's other attributes. How could we meet a holy and righteous God if it were not for His mercy? In Revelation, chapter 4, the rainbow surrounds the throne (cf. Genesis 9 : 13). By analogy, man could not live under "pure law". In the book of Leviticus the **ceremonial** law is given to meet human frailty : "If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD" (Leviticus 4 : 2). The justice of God is seen at Sinai, when even Moses did "exceedingly fear and quake" but in Exodus 25 : 21, 22 the Mercy Seat is introduced "And thou shalt put the Mercy Seat above upon the ark. . . and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat." Again in Exodus 30 : 6 "before the Mercy Seat. . . where I will meet with thee." The book of Leviticus begins with the LORD speaking to Moses "out of the tabernacle of the congregation"—doubtless from the Mercy Seat—and this indicates something of the character of the book, i.e. as we have already seen, provision for human frailty. For the Christian today, Christ is the living Mercy Seat. God's mercy has opened to us three doors of blessing. First, that of salvation ; in the Epistle to Titus the apostle states plainly that it is not on account of our own works of righteousness, but "according to his **mercy** he saved us" (Titus 3 : 5). Secondly, in the opening of Peter's first epistle, it is of God's abundant **mercy** that we are "begotten . . . unto a lively hope" or as Moffatt renders the passage "By his great **mercy**, we have been born anew to a life of hope." Thirdly, in the Epistle to the Ephesians it is God's life-giving power operating in us, "But God, who is **rich in mercy**, . . . when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." (Ephesians 2 : 4, 5)

In the light of these passages, there is no room for human boasting : our own merits can never fit us for these blessings. We need to lay hold of God's mercy. "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever" (Psalm 52 : 8).

It is of profound practical interest, that even in most adverse circumstances, the faithful have spoken of God's mercy. The godly man, mourning the destruction of Jerusalem in the Lamentations, can say "his compassions fail not. . . great is thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3 : 22, 23). In 2 Corinthians 1 : 3 where Paul speaks of God as "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ;" it becomes clear, a little later in the same chapter, that the Apostle had passed through grave perils, probably greater than any he had faced hitherto ; but God "which raiseth the dead ; Who delivered us from so great a death," Paul believed, would yet deliver (see 2 Corinthians 1 : 9, 10). This, says Paul, was ordered of God in order that they should not trust in themselves but solely in God. Moreover, they were now able to comfort those in distress with the Divine comfort they had themselves experienced.

There are, without doubt, people to whom the idea of asking for mercy is repugnant. The cry "Lord, have mercy upon us" offends their pride. It is plain that nothing puts a man outside the mercy of God like self-righteousness. The Lord told a simple parable about those who trusted in their own righteousness and despised others—(see Luke 18 : 9–14). It was the tax gatherer who prayed "God be merciful to me, sinner that I am" who was accepted of God rather than the Pharisee. To put ourselves under Divine mercy, we must be sensible as to our needs.

We cannot plead our own merits, but always Christ's. It has been said "God has treasures of mercy : prayer is the key that opens these treasures ; and in prayer be sure to carry Christ in your arms, for all mercy comes through Christ. ' Samuel took a sucking lamb ' (1 Samuel 7 : 9) ; carry the lamb Christ in your arms, go in His name, present His merits".

Self-righteousness and spiritual pride can creep into the Christian life with unhappy results. In whatever form they manifest themselves, self-righteousness and spiritual pride are a **practical** denial of the basis upon which God has dealt with us.

It is possible not only to reject mercy, but to abuse it. Do men make God's forbearance and goodness an excuse for sinning ? Forbearance is **not** forgiveness and those who make this mistake do so at their peril. As the Apostle Paul explains in the Epistle to the Romans, God's forbearance and goodness afford an opportunity for repentance. Those who make mercy an excuse for sin are storing up for themselves Divine wrath in the day of reckoning which will inevitably come (see Romans 2 : 4, 5, 6). " Suck not poison out of the sweet flower of God's mercy. . . To sin because mercy abounds is the devil's logic. He that sins because of mercy, is like one that wounds his head because he has a plaster". (Thomas Watson)

There is yet another way in which we can put ourselves within the enjoyment of God's mercy, a way of vital practical importance for the individual and for the public testimony. It is by being ourselves merciful. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that the God of mercy desires His people to be like Him in this attribute. " Thus speaketh the LORD. . . shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother " (Zechariah 7 : 9).

The people of God should be a people much given to mercy. In the Old Testament the emphasis is probably upon the Divine attribute, though in Psalm 112, the righteous man is "gracious and full of compassion" and in Hosea's prophecy God is represented as desiring "mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6 : 6). This verse is twice quoted by the Lord Jesus in Matthew's gospel (Matthew 9 : 13 ; 12 : 7). In this context "sacrifice" clearly means "religious observance". The danger of maintaining outward observances and missing the root of the matter is ever present. The practice of mercy is plainly enjoined in Luke 6 : 36, " Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful". One of the beatitudes reads " Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5 : 7). From the parable of the unmerciful steward (Matthew 18 : 13 following) the immediate lesson is that because God has forgiven us so great a debt, we must shew mercy and be ready to forgive those who offend us. The enormous difference in the amounts quoted is no doubt intended to emphasize this lesson.

Too often those who profess Christ's name have ignored this lesson. Cruel things have been done in the name of "religion". In this connection we do well to heed what James says " For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy ; " (James 2 : 13) and to remember that "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" is a principle of the Kingdom (Matthew 7 : 2). One reaps what one sows. God is not mocked.

The teaching about forgiveness and mercy, which we have found in the Gospels is reinforced in the Epistles, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love;" (Romans 12:10). "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Ephesians 5:1, 2). "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13).

One cannot escape the conclusion that without a forgiving and merciful spirit one cannot walk in communion with the Father and enjoy the privileges of membership of His family. If we are vindictive, unforgiving, nursing grievances against our fellows, we cannot enjoy the Father's forgiveness nor can we have true liberty in worship. This is in line with the principles laid down by the Lord Himself "first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" and "if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matthew 5:24; 6:14). We cannot ignore these "Kingdom principles" and escape the practical consequences. I do **not** refer here to the unequivocal promise of the forgiveness of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which is proclaimed in the gospel, as, for example, in Acts 10:43 and 13:38, 39, but to the privileges within the family of God. By way of analogy, if in a human family the children are estranged one from another, then their relationship with the parents will be adversely affected. The children do not cease to be members of the family, but they are not enjoying the privileges thereof.

Finally, to understand God's mercy sets our feet upon Gerizim, the mount of blessing. In the context of Deuteronomy 27:11-13, it is the blessing of the people. The Christian should bless or "speak good" to his brethren and to all men. "Bless and curse not" (Romans 12:14). He should be, to borrow the metaphorical language of the Epistle of James, a refreshing fountain of sweet water. (see James 3:9-11) We shall also be found blessing God. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:" (Psalm 103:1, 2) or in New Testament language "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "Giving thanks unto the Father" (1 Peter 1:3; Colossians 1:12).

When the faithful Israelite brought his offering of firstfruits, he began with the words "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" (Deuteronomy 26:5 following). The purpose was, no doubt, to remind the worshipper that he owed his position of favour to God's sovereign mercy and not to his illustrious ancestry. We have, therefore, come full circle. The mainspring of true Christian living is having one's eyes open to the mercies of God. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."

(2 Chronicles 17-20)

Discipline and Deliverance

JEHOSHAPHAT, the son of Asa, was king of Judah, and he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. "Them that honour me, I will honour", is a promise from a faithful God ; but also, "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Samuel 2 : 30). This twofold principle is clearly seen in Judah's king, for the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand, giving peace and prosperity so that Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly (2 Chronicles 17 : 5). It is good to see the hand of God in blessing upon those who seek His face, and delight to obey His word.

However, such times of prosperity are to many of us seasons of great testing, lest we should become self-sufficient, and do things that are not pleasing before God. "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee" (Deuteronomy 8 : 11). After a few years of prosperity, we are told in 2 Chronicles 18 : 1 that Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab, king of Israel, which was a retrograde step, seeing that Ahab worshipped idols, and was wicked in the sight of God. Let us be mindful that we love not the world, neither the things that are in the world ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2 : 15). We have been delivered from this present evil world by the sacrificial work of Christ, (Galatians 1 : 4) and should in no wise turn again to it, or practise its evil pursuits. Ahab made a great feast for Jehoshaphat, and persuaded him to share activities with him in war. To his question, "Wilt thou go with me ?" the distressing answer was, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people ; we will be with thee in the war". What a striking contrast to the words of Ruth to Naomi, which were for good (Ruth 1 : 16, 17) and of Rebekah to Abraham's servant (Genesis 24 : 58). How easy it can be through lack of watchfulness, to be turned aside into associations where the Lord is not honoured, and from which we have finally to be delivered by the mercies of God. This appears after the death of Ahab when Jehoshaphat escaped involvement in his defeat and returned to Jerusalem in peace (19 : 1).

In 2 Chronicles 20 we see another severe testing come to Jehoshaphat after he had enjoyed a season of blessing under the good hand of God. A great army from beyond the Dead Sea came against him to battle causing the king to be greatly afraid. However, he did the right thing in the sight of the Lord when he set his face to seek after Him ; and he proclaimed a fast throughout Judah. It was a time of deep concern to the people who had gathered together to seek the Lord, and to ask help of Him in this time of crisis. The king then gave the lead to the nation, for in the new court of the house of God he acknowledged God's authority, power and might so that none could withstand Him. In supplication he spake of Abraham being God's friend for ever, and how the land was given by promise to him and his seed. This is all very sweet

to notice, and he then implores God to judge the adversaries. "We have no might for this great company that cometh against us ; neither know we what to do : but our eyes are upon thee " (2 Chronicles 20 : 12). All Judah was then standing before the Lord, with wives and little ones, all waiting for divine deliverance. What a sight to behold !

The word of encouragement was quickly given by the prophet of the Lord, Jahaziel, who exhorted them in this manner "Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid or dismayed by reason of this great multitude ; for the battle is not your's but God's." Furthermore he said, "set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem : fear not, nor be dismayed ; . . . for the Lord will be with you" (verses 15, 17). He will give deliverance ; but they must obey His word. This obedience is of the greatest importance, as the prophet Samuel had to remind king Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry " (1 Samuel 15 : 22, 23).

With this blessed word of assurance from the Lord, little wonder that the king bowed his head to the ground, the people worshipped, and the Levites stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high. As the company moved forward early next morning, the king encouraged them with seasonable words "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper". It is well to notice that when the king is in right relations with God, he is a good leader for his people, reminding them of the unfailing resources of God for His own, and thus consolidating their faith in Him. Also, they were to believe the word of the prophets concerning their present need and their godly prosperity. Singers were appointed to praise the beauty of holiness, and they went before the army to proclaim, "Praise the Lord : for his mercy endureth forever". Surely the ways of God are past finding out ; for all things are under His control, always working out His purpose of blessing for those who trust in Him.

When the praises went up to God, His mighty power was manifested toward His dependent and obedient children for their deliverance and enrichment ; and also was shown against the adversaries for their complete destruction. Truly the battle is God's, and how He works we cannot fully understand : but we do know that He wonderfully gives us to share the victory wrought by Christ for His glory. Ambushments are set against the enemy, and they fight one another until all of them are utterly consumed. Who can fully estimate the value and importance of trusting the Lord ? Job cried, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," (Job 13 : 15) for he was trusting in the God of resurrection. Another wrote, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee : because he trusteth in thee " (Isaiah 26 : 3).

From the watchtower in the wilderness, Judah could see the dead of the slain enemy, and none escaped. Then for three days there was the gathering of riches and precious jewels, more than they could carry away ! Assembling in the valley on the fourth day, they blessed the Lord, calling it "the valley of Berachah", the vale of blessing as it is unto this day. With Jehoshaphat at the head, they returned to Jerusalem

with their hearts filled with the joy of the Lord, and gathering themselves to the House of the Lord they praised Him in a most worthy manner. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet ; for his God had given him rest roundabout. When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ?

Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

STUDIES IN THE REVELATION ————— J. S. BLACKBURN

4. JOHN'S POSITIONS

SOME ambiguity surrounds an exact understanding of the positions taken by John in the course of his visions. Did he descend to earth in 10 : 9 and 11 : 1 ? In 13 : 1 there is some support for the translation, "and he (that is, the dragon) stood upon the sand of the sea". These, however, are only possibilities, and we are left with four certain locations where John stood ; 1 : 9, Patmos, 4 : 1, Heaven, 17 : 3, the Wilderness, and 21 : 10, a High Mountain. These four are further distinguished by the occurrences only in these places of the phrase, "in Spirit" or "in spirit". These sights can be seen only by persons spiritually in these positions.

I. Patmos.

Read 1 : 9, 10.

John's bodily position is very full of meaning. Patmos was, and is, a small, barren, rocky island in the south east Aegean Sea, remembered only for John's sojourn there. He was there as a prisoner, banished by either Nero or Domitian. Another Christian, banished later, writes that John was in the mines or quarries. He was banished for confessing Christ, so that he could have escaped it by renouncing the Lord. He links the churches with him as companions in tribulation, as well as in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Thus the two principal writers of the New Testament were prisoners, and this character is stamped on the faith. Their experience was only, in an intensive form, the position of every true Christian, separated from the world because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It is all the more important to remember this when so many throughout the world are suffering like tribulations for their faith. For our present purpose the important point to notice is that a clear view of the glory of the Lord can only be given to those who are separated from the world, and in the Spirit.

II. Heaven.

Read 4 : 1, 2.

The Book of the Revelation is analysed in 1 : 19 ; “ Write the things which thou hast seen, (section one), and the things which are, (section two), and the things which shall be after these. (section three). Section one, the vision of Christ, occupies chapter one. Section two is found in chapters two and three. In 4 : 1 we learn that section three begins at that point : “ Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be after these.” The primary application of the letters to the seven churches is therefore to the present Church period. Similarly, the primary application of the Book from 4 : 1 is to events after the Church period. Between the two John is caught up to heaven, and it is from his position in heaven that he sees the major portion of the ensuing visions. John remained on earth while the Revelation was dealing with things in which as a member of the Church he was himself involved. He could only be shown the world’s last convulsions from heaven. There is surely a suggestion of the Rapture here, and the main point is that every event thereafter on earth is let loose by an event in heaven. These events will appear very differently to the people on earth who are not aware of the determining events in heaven. How different will the Euphrates cavalry appear to those threatened by this calamity and unaware that their release was calmly determined by the sounding of the sixth trumpet by one of the seven angels standing before God. What a different aspect will the rise of the Beast bear to those threatened by his appearance, or deceived into honouring him, in the absence of knowledge that the cause is the casting of Satan out of heaven down to earth.

The two details of importance, therefore, in the fact of John’s location in heaven are, first that he has been kept out of the hour of trial now coming on all the world (3 : 10), and second, that he is being made aware, and every enlightened reader through his words, that nothing is happening but what is directly controlled by God and His Christ, and that the sure issue is the world-kingdom of God.

The thought is perhaps connected with, but rather different from the saints’ seat “in heavenly places in Christ”. Their activity in Ephesians 2 : 6 is to look abroad on the “breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ”, and this activity belongs to an eternal present. John, and perhaps those whom he represents, look down during the period of the end of the age, through the progress of that precise period, and such looking ceases when the events of the period are completed.

III. The Wilderness.

Read 17 : 1-5.

The word wilderness or desert means a waterless and uncultivated place. Its symbolic meaning is the world in its character as a place where there is nothing for the true pleasure and food for God or for His people. This symbolic meaning arises first in the narrative of Exodus and

Numbers. The details of such a view are recounted in Jeremiah 2 : 6, the Lord "led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death." The Old Testament opposite is found in Song of Solomon 4 : 12-15. "A garden inclosed. . . ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits ;. . . with all chief spices : a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and springs from Lebanon". The wilderness was the suitable viewpoint for seeing the Scarlet Woman, for the wilderness was her true environment. Her adornments displayed everything designed to seduce men by intensified appeal to the senses and lusts. "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls," but it was a Mystery, a secret meaning, and the secret was that all this consummate display was intended for seduction. But her place revealed her character in the eyes of God. It was the wilderness. While there was everything to seduce man, there was nothing for God, or for His true people. The lesson is that in divine things we must be guarded by increased vigilance in face of everything presenting a strong appeal to the senses.

The woman's mystery name is Babylon, but her real name is Rome, as we see in 17 : 18. "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth".

IV. A High Mountain.

Read 21 : 10.

The mountain scenes of Scripture are very instructive. In some respects parallel to Revelation 21 is Ezekiel 40 to 43, where the prophet is "set upon a very high mountain." From it he sees a vision of the literal city and temple of the future, and the Lord sends a message to the house of Israel "that they may be ashamed of their iniquities", and, being ashamed, might receive a new vision of that temple. The Transfiguration provides the best-known example of the vision possible "on a high mountain apart."

Since in Revelation 21 : 9, 10 the framework repeats exactly that of 17 : 1-3 we should surely contrast the location to which the angel carried John in the two cases. These are the only clear instances in which John moves from his general position in heaven. If the wilderness was the place suitable for perceiving the true character of the Scarlet Woman, so "a great and high mountain" was the place appropriate for perceiving the sublime glories of "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." A place not only apart, but in spiritual elevation above the earth and its concerns and standards, is the only viewpoint from which its light most precious and the glory of God can be discerned.

How can we take these positions ? Being in the Spirit, John was available to God for the reception of these illuminations, and was moved where it was necessary to be located to see them correctly, and this was in each case in the Spirit. If the attention we give to this book is of the quality which accords with being in the Spirit, then we shall perceive these things for ourselves, and God's purpose in giving the visions will be fulfilled to us.

IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH

Adapted from S. E. McNair, 1895.

AT the beginning of Life's journey what a world of possibility opens out, full of promise and expectation. One life—only one. No return to correct mistakes, no tearing out blotted pages. Each day registered as it is lived in the Book of Remembrance.

May you, my reader, never face the perils of life with the blind guides—the world, the flesh, the devil—nor yet trusting like a fool to your own heart. From the resurrection side of the grave Jesus said "Follow thou me". Today He is saying the same to you.

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"Young people must have their fling" I am told. I read nothing in Paul's counsel to young Timothy about "having his fling". Manly and wise letters, full of tenderness, they are. If you must have your "fling", take care what you fling into eternity. Not surely, your conscience, nor your character. Not one priceless hour thrown carelessly away for the devil to stain with sin, and taunt you with to your continual sorrow. Not energy of body or mind. Your Redeemer bought the entire stock at Calvary, paid the full price in anguish and sealed you with His Spirit as His very own. Every hour you filch from His service is deliberate robbery and an outrage on the rights of God.

"You are not your own, you are bought with a price". This solves a hundred questions. The doubtful friendship, the worldly association, the un-Christlike habit, will be quietly laid down in Another's strength.

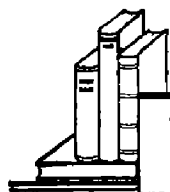
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"But must we never enjoy ourselves without feeling that the Spirit is grieved?" Many young Christians are tripped up by such specious questions. Enjoyment is wrong when it is your object, but not when it is incidental. As I look at men of the world I think that, "I have set MYSELF always before me" is a poor motto.

The Lord "pleased not Himself". But those Elims in the desert we can accept from a Father's hand, and thank Him for them.

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I must remind you that the Captain of our Salvation expects unqualified obedience from the youngest recruit. It is a mistake to think that His discipline is lax with young soldiers. Often we find them put on half rations because they assumed that being young, they had licence to disobey. So the Word seems dry and empty, spiritual joys fail, while they learn that God is not mocked ; no, not even by the youngest.



CERTAINTY

J. STODDART

New Year Reflections on Proverbs 22 : 21 & Luke 1 : 1/4.

IS it possible to face the New Year of 1972 with any degree of certainty? In our experience of the year that has passed is it possible that we may be rather less certain of a positive answer to that question? Truly, the mind-shaking events of recent times have, for many, blunted the conviction that any kind of certainty about anything is relevant to this day. Disillusionment has abounded over the collapse of some industries hitherto regarded as unassailably secure, while projects hitherto thought to be unattainable have met with astounding success, notably in man's sustained exploration of the moon and now beyond to Mars. These and many other world-surprising events have challenged the credibility barrier for even the most shrewd and far-seeing people. Will there be further invasion of seemingly impenetrable boundaries of achievement in the days that lie ahead? This cannot be outruled, and the question arises as to the ultimate limits of human possibility beyond which no surprise or unheralded happening from man's side can occur.

The old and rather caustic proverb, "Nothing is certain but death—and the taxes," is quite untenable. For a whole realm of certainty opens up to those who believe such Scriptures as quoted above. Solomon's inspired wisdom not only relied for himself upon the "certainty of the words of truth" but urged him to write these for others, for you and me, to guarantee that which can never be superseded or surpassed. This New Year opens with a challenge to us all as to our acquaintance with this fascinating world of certainty, the very Centre and Sun of which is the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. How we need to explore this limitless territory, which brightens the prospect of every New Year and offers the greatest satisfaction to every trusting soul. The "excellent things in counsels and knowledge" of which the Preacher-King wrote are contained in all the Scriptures and were shown by the Lord Jesus to His disciples as "the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24 : 27). What gracious certainty pervaded His words, to the astonishment of all in the Nazareth synagogue and equally so the Temple Guards who abandoned their attempt to arrest Him because "never man spake like this Man." (see Luke 4 : 22 and John 7 : 30 and 45/46).

Never in the vocabulary of the Son of God were the words "perhaps" or "it may be so" related to His pronouncements or predictions. On the contrary, how frequently He prefaced His most telling statements of

truth with the words, "Verily, verily," or truly, truly. When the world of to-day is beclouded with the vague and mostly unreliable statements of its great men, to say nothing of the dire results of propaganda and twisted language, how cheering, how elevating it is to bask in the realm of certainty and divine assurance. Luke, "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4 : 14) and writer of the third synoptic Gospel, was evidently not one of those who companied with the Lord Jesus in His lifetime, but being a scholar had acquainted himself with the facts concerning Him from the most accurate sources.

Thus he writes his Gospel "with method" to assure the most excellent Theophilus (and every other reader) of "the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." It was clearly a matter of very great importance that there should be no uncertainty about any single detail. How grateful we should be that he took such pains to ensure this and, submitting all to the Spirit's inspiration, to produce a Gospel, the sheer beauty and power of which is unrivalled. Theophilus, presumably of high rank, may have had some reservations as to the accuracy of some details of the story of Jesus. On receiving Luke's account how he must have thrilled to the "certainty of the words of truth" it contained, as in every other God-breathed writing.

Recent studies in the Revelation in the writer's area and the current series in this magazine have deepened our conviction that God is engaging the hearts of His Own with the sphere of absolute certainty in the "things which must shortly come to pass." In precisely these things the world around us wallows in the grossest uncertainty and it is evident that leaders are without that vision in the absence of which "the people perish." (Proverbs 29 : 18) "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world", said the Lord to His unsure disciples only moments before His arrest, trial, scourging and shameful death. Was He quite unaware of what would soon happen? Most surely not, but He knew that the issues were certain and sure, and He could thus cheer His Own, not with optimism or bravado, but with "the certainty of the words of truth." Victory is ever in His Hands however desperate the situation may appear to be, and as at Calvary so to-day He leads us into the enjoyment of certainty as to things that are yet to be. "Be of good cheer," He would say to us at the beginning of 1972, a year which may be fraught with alarming situations and unpredictable happenings. Gerhardt's majestic hymn (L.F. No. 55) breathes the very essence of Scriptural certainty in these lovely verses :—

Through waves, through clouds and storms
 God gently clears the way ;
 We wait His time ; so shall the night
 Soon end in blissful day.

He everywhere hath sway,
 And all things serve His might,
 His every act pure blessing is,
 His path unsullied light.

We comprehend Him not,
 Yet earth and heaven tell
 God sits as sovereign on the throne,
 And ruleth all things well.

Finally, a word of warning may not be inappropriate in this context. There are things which may rob us of the enjoyment of our certainty, and we can be sure that Satan is right behind all these. One of these, encountered by the writer recently, is the current vogue, perhaps particularly among young Christians, to buy and accept every so-called new translation of the Bible in modern language as superior to the King James I Authorised Translation of 1611. The result of this is to become uncertain of many things which conflict with the Authorised reading, with consequent loss of joy and certainty about everything. Let it be said loud and clear that many of these so-called modern translations are merely versions, i.e., not transferred from the ancient manuscripts, and are little, if anything, more than a paraphrase suited to the thinking of the individual writer. Great care is therefore necessary in stressing the language of some of these modern publications, particularly relating to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ Who must forever remain the Touchstone of all truth for He and He alone could say, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

May this New Year from first to last find you and me, dear reader, more filled with that certainty which derives from "that which is noted in the Scripture of Truth" (Daniel 10 : 21)

TOWARD BABYLON _____ **ANDRE GIBERT**

ON ŒCUMENISM

(Continued)

2. THIS UNITY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE EFFORTS OF ŒCUMENISM

WE like to think that the truths which we have just recalled are familiar to the majority of our readers. They must be held on to with increased vigilance at a time when the efforts of which we were speaking have been stepped up with the aim of regrouping the numerous bodies into which Christendom is split up. The great current of the "œcumenical movement" is sweeping along the majority of the Protestant churches and congregations, the Anglicans, the Eastern Orthodox churches, all of whom belong to an œcumenical council of Christian churches founded in 1927, and though there has been no effective collaboration as yet this council is attracting the interested and at the same time anxious attention of the Roman church.

Legitimate wishes and inconsequential plans

These efforts look very good. They wish to answer the need for unity felt by the majority, a need which is accompanied by a sincere feeling of confusion and sorrow at the splitting up of Christendom.¹ The promoters refer to passages from Scripture, in particular to the "priestly prayer" of John 17. Many have a certain notion of the existing unity which includes all the true believers and them alone, what they call the invisible Church, and they willingly recognize that all individual Churches are "guilty of the sin of division."

Let us go yet further. This movement is taking advantage of what is an undeniable work of the Spirit of God to make believers conscious that the coming of the Lord is near and to encourage them to wait for Him. The echoes of the midnight cry are prolonged. "Let him that hears say, Come." The unity of the Church is going to be consummated in the glory and we can say Amen to the prayer of the Christian who asked God for a powerful action of His Spirit in the closing days in view of the coming of the Lord, adding, "It is necessary for the glory of Thy Son that when He comes He should find a people waiting for Him".² How can we not desire that the true children of God should be effectively united as strangers on the earth, ready to enter into their land and living their ineffable destiny in love, faith and hope ?

It seems that the only thing to say would be, "We are one, let us drop all those separations which have been erected by man between believers and let us carefully keep on the contrary, together, the divine truth, in the separation of believers from the world." And this is where the strangest inconsistencies would appear.

A member of the body of Christ and a member of a church, two very different concepts.

The first inconsistency is to say, "Let us seek to be one, whilst retaining our respective individuality as a group, whether or not it mixes believers and those who just claim to be so." We solemnly declare our desire for union, but we do so as Reformed church, Orthodox, Anglicans, Methodists, etc. and Roman catholics if they consent to it. This is so true that we vigorously protest against any "proselytism," taking this to mean an attempt to persuade a person to move from one group to another. An obstinate short-sightedness prevents them from seeing that the very existence of Churches contradicts the unity of the Church. Those who talk most of breaking down the barriers between the groups never cease

1. In many circles the prayer of the Abbé Couturier is repeated : "May the visible unity of the kingdom of God come, as Christ wishes it, by the means that He may wish". Pope John XXIII, announcing the meeting of the Vatican Council II, spoke of "the generous and increasing efforts made on several sides to re-constitute the visible unity of Christians, according to the wishes of the Divine Redeemer" (Bull Humanae Salutis, 25th December, 1961).

2. "Echoes des Conférences de Vevey", Nov. 1902, p. 157.

to put their own churches forward, each with its own "faith" not to say rites.

Never has it been more necessary to distinguish clearly between persons (laymen or ministers and priests of all ranks) and the system to which they belong. Let us recognize the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in bringing souls to life and the blessed effects of grace in making them walk in a path of active devotion and personal holiness. God is not unjust to forget what is done for Him. But the concept of "members of the body of Christ" ("Now ye are Christ's body, and members in particular") is not taken into account,¹ the individuals are only considered to be "members of a church", or if they are considered as members of this body of Christ it is only through the intermediary of a church. It is the churches who have to come to an agreement among themselves! According to one of the most authoritative voices of œcumenism, the objective would be for "each church to recognize in the communities from which it is separated true churches of Christ". In other words, one is to make one's way toward unity by consecrating—in the strongest sense of the word—the division first of all. Probably the leaders of the œcumenical movement hope in the long run to merge the protestant denominations and later to unite them in a vast ensemble with the Orthodox and Roman churches but with mutual tolerance of their different view-points, which would be tantamount to preserving the divisions whilst suppressing the labels, or else, and this is a further inconsistency, to present as unity this amalgam of irreconcilable elements.

The unity of the body of Christ is neither the external unification of visible churches, nor the holding in common of certain convictions at the expense of the fundamental truths of Christianity.

Whence come the divisions if not from the fact that the spirit of man has supplanted the action of the Spirit of God? The "Christian faith" has been interpreted by some in one way, by others in another, each denomination having its own particular conception of it. And now, seeming to "be as ardent in reconciling themselves as they once were in splitting up" as one Catholic publicist puts it, these churches say, "Let us come together, let us hold in common as many of our convictions as possible whilst at the same time retaining those particularities which separate us at present." Now those particularities touch more often than not on the very foundations of Christianity: no matter, as long as the various groups collaborate in an external unification!

The most enlightened, it is true, admit that there is one truth and that it must be held in common. But the truth is Christ as the Holy Spirit makes Him known through the Word of God. Now to further this reconciliation, they are willing to agree to the coexistence of divergent opinions on the divinity of Christ, on His humanity, even on His historic

1. "For also the body is not one member but many" is what is said in 1 Cor. 12 v. 14. Several members, but not several bodies! It would be meaningless.

existence, as well as on the reality of His resurrection, on redemption, on the inspiration of the Scriptures, on the meaning of the cross, on eternal judgment. Furthermore, they will do their utmost to “present the truth in such a way that it is accessible to all”, which is justifiable but which exposes it to the danger of deformation. The truth is, whether we like it or not, that all is done by compromising on the truth of Scripture. Let us quote here a militant of the œcumenical movement, an Orthodox : “Those who seek communion in prayer and unity in love. . . become brethren united in love though **divided in their faith.**”¹ We reply with Scripture, in letter and Spirit, “Is Christ divided ? ” (1 Cor. 1 v. 13) and again, “. . . until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4 v. 13). Are we then no longer to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) ? Is the Word of God no longer the truth (John 17 v. 17) ? “Shew honour to all, love the brotherhood” (1 Peter 2 v. 17), yes, certainly. May God grant that we do so, that œcumenism is permanent. It has always been ordained that “all things ye do be done in love”, but also, and even first of all “stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16 v. 14, 13). To shatter the faith so that men may unite on the ruins, to aspire to a better life by drying up the very sources of life, to place the speculation of man on the same level as the truth of God, to discuss and dissect His word instead of subjecting oneself to it, is this what a true Christian would wish to subscribe to ?

Doubtless one proclaims boldly a desire to unite “all those who call upon the only Lord of a universal Church”, but how many ambiguities there are in this very invocation ! The apostle Paul enjoins Timothy to join with all “those who call upon the name of the Lord from a pure heart.” Not that their heart is any better than that of others, not that they claim to be superior, they are simply those who obey the Word by withdrawing from the iniquity which has been manifested. The ambiguity is elsewhere, and let us come back to it for a moment, in the very meaning of the Church, that universal Church of which they speak in a very vague fashion and in which we see but an external body using the name of Christ in the world, but which He could not recognize as His body, which is a heavenly body. They do say that there is an invisible Church and visible churches and they wish to unite the latter, but to what purpose ? And what about this invisible Church ? Here we have a clear contradiction and in any case we are far from the true Church. Some speak of churches to be federated, perpetuating the division whilst proclaiming this “invisible Church”, others tend to group the churches in an authoritarian super-church, yet others wish to blend all into a vast synthesis, without it being any longer a question of an invisible church. But the effective, present-day unity is steadfastly left to one side. It is as if, while lamenting that they have allowed the water to become polluted in various ways in different canals full of waste from all sources, they were making all sorts of plans to recover pure water by combining all of the polluted waters instead of going back to the source.

(To be continued)

1. The emphasis is ours.

2. JOHN

APOSTOLIC work was to lay the foundations of the Faith. When the Apostle John writes his short epistle to the “elect lady” churches were existing in many places and appropriately he does so from the status of an “elder”. As we gather from other Scriptures, elders were, in fact, older Christians, mature in the Faith ; the job assigned to them was oversight. They took surveillance in maintaining sound doctrine and reformed in matters of irregular conduct. John clearly belonged to that kind of elder worthy of double honour in that he laboured in ministry also. These preparatory remarks give us understanding of his address in this epistle, not as an apostle but as an elder—“The elder to the elect lady.”

Not indeed that this Christian sister required rebuke but rather she is one well esteemed. She was “loved in truth” ; she and her children were “walking in the truth” and she carried out the Lord’s command “that ye should love one another” with all her heart in consistent practice. Truly in her the word of Christ dwelt richly. It is, however, John’s purpose to alert her to the danger of being beguiled (Eve-like) by “deceivers” of which there were many. To this end she is given instruction—and it is for us—as to the application of a test which, fearlessly and faithfully applied, would unmask these antichristian, false, itinerant preachers. Moreover (see verse 8) such repulse of the enemy would react to confirm the apostolic work in the fundamentals of Christianity and secure for them the Lord’s full (undiminished) reward “on that day” (see Revelation 11 : 17, 18). Now the test is, what do these men “bring” ? What is positive is required, not what they avoid to aver ; without the positive they could have the mere appearance of being orthodox. The Scripture is “They do not confess **Jesus Christ** come in flesh.” Unequivocal avowal of the truth of the person of Christ is demanded. This is the doctrine of Christ and “if any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not”. The double negative requires a positive assertion of adherence to this teaching or doctrine concerning the holy and eternal person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a **Shibboleth** of vital importance (Judges 12 : 6). He that abides in the doctrine, **he** has both the Father and the Son. If any come and do not bring this doctrine the elect lady is instructed to “receive him not” and to turn him away from the house without any greeting of any kind.

It seems the Lord is saying to us today “Whom do ye say that I the Son of Man am ?” Let every true heart reply as did Peter, “Thou art **The Christ the Son of the Living God.**” Undoubtedly there is inscrutability attaching to the person of the Son, nevertheless we know Him come in flesh ; He spake the words of eternal life : we believe and are sure that “Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6 : 68, 69). We know His own declaration “I came forth from

(with) the Father and am come into the world : again, I leave the world, and go to the Father". (John 16 : 28). This, apprehended by faith, is **THE TRUTH**. Like Nathanael, John is without guile. This we remark to refute the idea that the "elect lady" is a cryptic designation of some local church. The Apostle John's ministry is ever to record the wonders of divine life manifested on earth. "The Word was God. . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us".

In Acts 16 Lydia (or the Lydian from Thyatira) is certainly an "elect" lady, for the Lord Himself opened her heart to receive the gospel. She takes at once Christian ground for herself and her household by baptism. Counted faithful she lodges Paul and Silas. One can believe that as she had begun her Christian and godly course, so she would continue. She kept house and hospitality available for the servants of Christ. Is it possible she had been imposed upon ? Here is a human situation and some such could well be the circumstances which provoked this epistle. Quite natural, too, that relatives still resided in Asia (where John was) whose greetings he appends. We only cite the possibility of Lydia being the elect lady as an illustration, not to state that she was. The address is non-specific and hence the important instruction of the epistle is for us all today. One final word : if the Truth dwells in us we can be vastly cheered to learn it shall be with us "unto eternity."

REFLECTIONS ON THE FOUR GOSPELS ————— **ROBERT DAVIES**

SOME of the most challenging and heart-searching words in the whole of the New Testament are found in the four gospels. They may be likened to the holy waters of Ezekiel's vision in which one might be content to wade but ankle-deep, or find them as "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over" (Ezekiel 47 : 5). Children can learn the simple gospel stories, whilst mature Christians acknowledge that there are depths they have not fathomed.

Of the four gospels, it is apparent that the first three have much in common and can be viewed together, whilst the fourth is different in style and vocabulary, but in no way contradictory. Many of the events in the first three gospels are set in Galilee, whilst much of the fourth gospel is set in and around Jerusalem. It would be a legitimate exercise to consider the chronological order of the events recorded in the gospels, and in this way a "life of Christ" could be compiled based entirely on the words of Scripture. Indeed I have such a "Life" in my possession. Valuable though it is, there is great profit in considering each gospel as a composition in its own right and enquiring as to the writer's purpose and for whom he was writing. Did each evangelist view the Lord somewhat differently and present Him as he saw Him ? I believe that, under the Spirit's guidance, they did and also that in recognising these differences, I am travelling a well-marked pathway. There is an old tradition associating the four evangelists with the cherubim seen by Ezekiel in his

vision by the river of Chebar, "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, . . . and they four had the face of an ox. . . they four also had the face of an eagle." "And I knew that they were the cherubims" (Ezekiel 1 : 10 ; 10 : 20). The commonest form of this tradition takes Ezekiel's order linking the man with Matthew, the lion with Mark, the ox with Luke and the eagle with John. I should like to consider these four symbols and apply them, not in Ezekiel's order, but in that given in the Revelation 4 : 7 RSV. "The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle."

Lion. We have a clear and direct reference to the Lord Jesus as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Revelation 5 : 5). I would associate this presentation with the first gospel.

Ox. The ox suggests strength in service "Where there are no oxen there is no grain : but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox" (Proverbs 14 : 4 RSV). The epistle to the Philippians reminds us that our Lord "took upon him the form of a servant" (2 : 7). I believe this to be brought out in Mark's gospel.

Man. This suggests compassion. God's care for His people Israel is expressed thus : "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11 : 4). Again Philippians gives us a direct statement, "Christ Jesus. . . was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man" (2 : 5, 7 and 8). He partook of flesh and blood (Hebrews 2 : 14). This presentation, I suggest, is found in Luke's gospel.

Eagle. The eagle suggests what belongs to the heavens and that which evokes wonder. To Agur the son of Jakeh there were three things too wonderful for him, four that he did not understand, one of which was "the way of an eagle in the air" (Proverbs 30 : 19). An eagle in the air is an apt description of John's gospel and the "heavenly things" unfolded in it (See John 3 : 12).

Matthew, with whose name the first gospel has always been associated, was a tax gatherer, but at the Lord's call "he arose and followed him" (Matthew 9 : 9). He is also called Levi, and he is the one who made Jesus a banquet (See Mark 2 : 14 and Luke 5 : 27). He was one of the apostolic band "Matthew the publican" (Matthew 10 : 3). The meaning of Matthew is given as "the gift of God" and under the guidance of the Spirit of God this is what he has proved to be ! This our short study will confirm. There is a long tradition to the effect that Matthew compiled the logia or sayings of the Lord in the Aramaic tongue and I believe there is every reason for calling this gospel Matthew's. His pen, once used to keep tax records, was used to good and lasting effect. A prominent feature of this gospel is the Lord's teaching and there is a large measure of truth in saying that Matthew records what Jesus said, whereas Mark records what He did, Luke what He felt (i.e. His compassion) and John, Who He really was : God manifest in the flesh.

Matthew presents Jesus as the "son of David, the son of Abraham." He specifically mentions David, **the king** in his genealogy (Matthew 1 : 6). In this respect the symbol of the lion is appropriate, i.e., the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. In the second chapter, the wise men are seeking the One born King of the Jews and pay their homage to Him. Jesus is also the One promised in Old Testament prophecy. The events in chapters one and two, for example, happen in order that the words of the prophets might be fulfilled (Matthew 1 : 22 ; 2 : 15, 17 and 23). I think two important points arise from the presentation of Christ as King : the authority of the King and the character of His Kingdom. The first is clearly established in chapter 5. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. . . but **I say** unto you" (verses 21, 22 ; 27, 28 ; 31, 32 ; 33, 34 ; 38, 39). These sayings make it clear that His Kingdom calls for a higher standard of conduct than that demanded by the Mosaic Law. The scribes could only legislate for actions, but here thoughts and intentions come under scrutiny. As children of the Kingdom our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (5 : 20). This brings in the second point : righteousness, which may be called a key word in this gospel. It occurs more frequently here than in the other gospels : six times in Matthew, never in Mark, once in Luke and twice in John. Important practical lessons from this gospel are acknowledgement of the Lord's authority and righteousness in one's personal life. Evil doers do not inherit the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6 : 9, 10).

For many, however, the core of this gospel is found in the verses at the close of chapter 11, verses found only in Matthew "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ;. . . ye shall find rest unto your souls" (verses 28-30). Here it is not the authority of the king nor the righteousness of His Kingdom, but the heart of the King revealed. How gracious the invitation ! How wide its scope !

It is well known that the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven" is peculiar to this gospel, and many of the parables found only in Matthew are similitudes of the Kingdom. These include the wheat and the tares, the pearl of great price, the treasure in the field, the drag net, the marriage of the king's son and the ten virgins. The parable about the sheep and the goats (25 : 31-46) is not stated to be a likeness of the Kingdom, but both the King and the Kingdom are mentioned. Many of these parables look on to the consummation of the age. The Bridegroom comes and those who are ready go in with Him (25 : 10) evil is dealt with (13 : 41, 49 ; 22 : 13) and the righteous "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (13 : 43). The phrase "the Kingdom of their Father" is also peculiar to Matthew's gospel. It ought to be a source of encouragement to every Christian ; "Here is great blessedness to the child of God. . . it shows the position in which the Lord Jesus has placed them ; associated with God as their Father, in His Kingdom, we see the mighty result." (J.N.D. Gospel Sermons).

Matthew's is the only gospel to mention the church (ecclesia). Nevertheless it has been rightly described as a Jewish gospel, written with

Jewish believers in mind, but it is bound in "Gentile covers"—that is in chapter 2, it is the Gentiles, the Magi, who find and worship the young child, **not** the priests from Jerusalem; and at the close the commission is "Go ye therefore, and teach **all nations**," (28 : 19) or "make disciples of all nations" (RSV).

"Much increase is by the strength of the ox." This symbol is, I believe, appropriate to the second gospel. Mark, who first failed in service, but later proved himself faithful, presents the Lord diligent and patient in service. "Behold my servant" (Isaiah 42 : 1 ; 52 : 13). Mark's mother's house must have been a regular meeting place for the disciples (Acts 12 : 12) and when Saul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey, they took John Mark as their assistant. After they left Cyprus, however, Mark deserted them and this was the eventual cause of Paul and Barnabas separating. (See Acts 15 : 37-39). Paul and Mark must have been reconciled later, because in his letter to the Colossians, Paul writes to the effect that if Mark comes to them, they must receive him (Colossians 4 : 10) and in the second epistle to Timothy "Take Mark, and bring him with thee : for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (4 : 11) or ". . . a great help in my ministry" (Weymouth). Mark had not been a companion of the Lord, and it is generally accepted that much, but not necessarily all, the material for his gospel, was obtained from the apostle Peter. Mark's is the shortest gospel and regarded by most authorities as the earliest (circa 60-65 A.D.)

There is without doubt a sense of urgency in this gospel. Mark plunges into his narrative at once "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". The words "immediately," "straightway," "anon" frequently occur in the A.V. They translate the same Greek word which occurs about eighty times in the whole of the New Testament and about forty times in this short gospel.

I think I may, without lack of reverence, call Mark 1 : 21-34 a day in the life of our Lord. He is found teaching in the synagogue where a man with an evil spirit is cured. Next, He is in the house of Simon and Andrew, and Simon's mother-in-law is cured of a fever and then at the close of the day, many sick people are brought to Him for healing. On another occasion, the pressure of the crowd was such that Jesus and His disciples did not have even the opportunity of taking a meal (3 : 20). The impression gained when a number of us studied this gospel a few years ago and which re-reading has fully confirmed, is that the Lord's activity demonstrates the power and character of His Kingdom. This gospel helps us to understand what Paul meant when he wrote of our being delivered "from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1 : 13).

Although Mark's is the shortest gospel and much of its material is found in Matthew and Luke, it is a gospel rich in detail. Three examples will suffice. The story of the woman with the issue of blood occurs in all the synoptic gospels. Matthew's account is the most concise, but only Mark adds that not only did the doctors fail to cure her, **but she grew worse**. Similarly in the story of Jesus crossing the lake asleep in the

boat, only Mark tells us that He was in the stern, His head on a pillow. When Jesus blessed the children, only the second evangelist records that He was moved with indignation at the disciples' behaviour and that He actually took the children in His arms. These may be small details, but they are by no means insignificant. We would be the poorer without them.

(to be continued)

TWO MASTERS OF MEDITATION

THE need for help in the practice of meditation is felt by many Christians, and the adapted extracts now presented have been found to give a measure of such help. One or two preliminary observations are perhaps required to prevent misunderstanding.

Both extracts aim to give directions for meditation as a vital necessity in each private life, but a moment's thought will suggest the immense value of these directions if applied to the Lord's Supper : the reference to being in the Spirit on the Lord's day ; the emphasis on realising the presence of the Lord ; and the engagement of mind and heart, thoughts and affections, with the Lord Himself, are among the themes applicable in this way.

Baxter uses a concept of the soul as the ensemble of mind, heart, and will. His aim is to urge that in the renewed man it is not sufficient for the mind only to be involved in the reception of divine things. The heart also is what God desires, and through it, the will. Meditation is seen as the great means by which, from the mind, the affections and will are reached.

It might be considered that two truths especially, are not sufficiently taken into account, and in reading these adaptations, we shall have to keep them constantly in mind. They are the gift of the Spirit indwelling the believer. He alone is adequate to take the things of Christ, and show them to us. Also, there is no explicit recognition of the immense privilege of access into the holiest by the blood of Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. . . , and having an high priest over the house of God ; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

1. The Contemplation of Divine Things.

(Adapted from Richard Baxter. 1615-91).

I entreat you reader, as you make conscience of a revealed duty, and dare not wilfully resist the Spirit ; as you value the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of the contemplation of divine things—that you diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practise, the following directions. If, by this means, you do not find an increase of all your graces, and do not grow beyond the stature commonly reached by Christians ; if your soul does not enjoy more communion with God, and

if your life is not more full of comfort ; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me as a deceiver.

The duty which I press upon you so earnestly, and in the practice of which I am now to direct you, is **the set and solemn acting of all the powers of your soul, in meditation on divine things.** This considering and contemplating of spiritual things is confessed to be a duty by all, but practically denied by most. Many that make conscience of other duties, easily neglect this ; they are troubled if they miss ministry or prayer in public or private ; yet they are not troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their life-time to this very day ; though it be that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digests truths for its nourishment and comfort. It was God's command to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein." (Joshua 1 : 8). As digestion turns food into vigorous health, so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation.

This meditation must use all the powers of the soul to distinguish it from the ordinary meditation of students ; for the understanding is not the whole soul, and therefore cannot do the whole work. As in the body, one organ receives the food and prepares it for others ; other organs prepare the blood for the heart and brain ; so in the soul, the understanding must take in truths, and prepare them for the will, and that for the affections. What good could all the glory of heaven have done us, or what pleasure should we have had in the perfections of God himself, if we had been without the affections of love and joy ? And what strength or sweetness could you possibly receive by your meditations on the things of God, while you do not exercise those affections of the soul, by which you must be sensible of this sweetness and strength ? It is the mistake of Christians to think that meditation is the work only of the understanding and memory ; when every student does this, or persons that hate the things which they think about. So you see that there is more to be done than barely to remember and think of divine things ; as some labours not only stir a hand, or a foot, but exercise the whole body ; so does meditation the whole soul.

This meditation is set and serious. As there is serious prayer, when we set ourselves wholly to that duty ; and ejaculatory prayer, when, in the midst of other business, we send some short requests to God ; so also there is solemn meditation, when we apply ourselves wholly to that work ; and transient meditation, when, in the midst of other business, we have good thoughts of God in our minds. And as serious prayer is either set in a constant course of duty, or occasional, at an extraordinary season ; so also is meditation. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labours, and also that which special occasions direct you to ; yet I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty, as you do of hearing, praying, and reading the Scriptures ; and no more intermix other matters with it, than you would with prayer, or other stated solemnities.

Give this contemplation of divine things a stated time. If you suit the time to the advantage of the work, without placing undue importance in the time itself, you have no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and defends it against many temptations to omission. Some have not their time at command, and therefore cannot set their hours ; such persons should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take their opportunities as they fall, and especially join meditation and prayer, as much as they can, with the labours of their callings. Yet those who are more masters of their time, I still advise to keep this duty to a stated time. And indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we should be better skilled, both in redeeming time, and in performing duty.

Let it be frequent, as well as stated. How often it should be I cannot determine, because men's circumstances differ. But, in general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditating day and night. See David's description of the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm 1 : 2) Choose also the most seasonable time. The same hour may be seasonable to one, and unseasonable to another. Those who are heavily engaged in business, must take that season which their business will best afford ; either while at work, or in travelling, or when they lie awake at night. Such as can choose what time of the day they will, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix upon that as the stated time. I have always found that the fittest time for myself is the evening, from sun-setting, in the twilight. I the rather mention this, because it was the experience of a wiser and better man ; for it is expressly said, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the even-tide." (Genesis 24 : 63).

Concerning the fittest place for meditation, it is sufficient to say, that the most helpful is some private retirement. Our spirits need every help, and to be freed from every hindrance in the work. If in private prayer, Christ directs us to "enter into our closet, and shut the door," (Matthew 6 : 6), so should we do in this meditation. How often did Christ himself retire to some mountain, or wilderness, or some other solitary place ? I give not this advice for occasional meditation, but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore withdraw yourself from all society, even the society of godly men, that you may awhile enjoy the society of your Lord. If a student cannot study in a crowd, although he exercises only his mind and memory ; much less should you be in a crowd, when you are to exercise all the powers of your soul, and upon an object so far above nature. We are so fled from monkish solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God's appearing to any of His prophets or saints in a crowd, but frequently when they were alone. Isaac's example is to go out and "meditate in the field." Our Lord so much used a solitary garden, that even Judas, when he came to betray Him, knew where to find Him ; and though He took His disciples thither with Him, yet He was "withdrawn from them" for more secret devotions : and though His meditation be not directly named, but only His praying, yet it is very clearly implied ; for "his soul" is first

made "sorrowful" with the bitter meditations on His sufferings and death, and then He pours it out in prayer. So that Christ had His accustomed place, and consequently accustomed meditation and prayer, and so must we ; His meditations go further than His words, they affect and pierce His heart and soul, and so must ours. Only there is a wide difference : Christ meditates on the suffering our sins had deserved, so that the wrath of God passed through His soul ; but we are to meditate on the glory He has purchased, that the love of the Father, and the joy of the Spirit, may enter into our thoughts, revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

Get your heart as clear from the world as you can. Wholly lay by the thoughts of your business, troubles, enjoyments, and every thing that may take up any room in your soul. Get it as empty as you possibly can, that it may be the more capable of being filled with God. If you could perform some outward duty with part of your heart, while the rest is absent, yet this meditation above all I am sure you can not. Therefore, reader, seeing your enjoyment of God so much depends on the capacity and disposition of your heart, seek Him here, if ever, with all your soul. Thrust not Christ into the stable and the manger, as if you had better guests for the chief rooms. Say to all your worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder," or as Abraham to his servants, "Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

Having set your heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having got an appetite, now approach to the feast, and delight your soul as with marrow and fatness. Christ and heaven, and the exceeding weight of glory are before you. The manna lies about your tents, walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to this, I am now to direct you how to use your considerations and affections.

Consideration is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on. Great is the power which consideration has for moving the affections, and impressing things on the heart. Consideration, as it were, opens the door between the head and the heart. The understanding having received truths, lays them up in the memory, and consideration conveys them from thence to the affections. What excellency would there be in much learning and knowledge of divine things, if the obstructions between the head and heart were but opened, and the affections did but correspond to the understanding ! He is usually the best scholar, whose apprehension is quick, clear, and tenacious ; but he is usually the best Christian, whose apprehension is the deepest, and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passage, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from that to the heart ; and though the Spirit be the principal cause ; yet, on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration. Consideration presents to the affections those things which are most important. The most delightful object does not entertain when it is not seen, nor does the most joyful news affect him that does not hear it ; but consideration presents to our view those things which are as absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Are not Christ and glory affecting objects ? Would they

not work wonders upon the soul, if they were but clearly discovered, and our apprehensions of them were in some measure answerable to their worth ? It is consideration that presents them to us : this is the Christian's perspective, by which he can see from earth to heaven.

Let us next see how meditation is promoted by the particular exercise of the affections. It is by consideration that we first have recourse to the memory, and from thence take those heavenly themes which we intend to make the subject of our meditation. We then present them to our judgment, that it may deliberately view them over, and take an exact survey, against all the dictates of flesh and sense, so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, till we are filled with a holy admiration. But the principal thing is to exercise, not merely our judgment, but our faith in the truth of our themes. Thus, when the judgment has determined, and faith has apprehended, then may our meditation proceed to raise our affections, and particularly love and joy.

Love is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation. Here, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of your work. Go to your memory, your judgment, and your faith, and from them produce the excellencies of Christ ; present these to your affection of love, and you will find yourself in another world. Let your faith lead your heart into the presence of God, and as near as you can, and expatiate in the praises, and open His excellencies to your heart, till the holy fire of love begins to burn in your breast. If you feel your love not yet burn, lead your heart further, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is " Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace ; " He that bade Thomas come near, and see the print of the nails, and put his finger into his wounds ; He it is that calls to you, " Come near, and view the Lord your Saviour, and be not faithless, but believing ; peace be unto you, fear not, it is I." How often has your Lord found you, like Hagar, sitting and weeping, and He opened to you a well of consolation, and also opened your eyes to see it ! How often, in the posture of Elijah, desiring to die out of your misery, and He has spread you a table of unexpected relief, and sent you on His work refreshed and encouraged ! How often, as in the case of the prophet's servant, crying out, " Alas ! what shall we do, for a host doth encompass us " ; and He has opened your eyes, to see more for us than against us ! How often has He set you watching and praying, and when He has returned, has found you asleep, and yet has covered your neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for you that the ' spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak '. Can your heart be cold when you think of this ?

Thus, reader, hold forth the goodness of Christ to your heart ; plead thus with your frozen soul, till, with David you can say, " My heart was hot within me : while I was musing, the fire burned." Deal with it, as Christ did with Peter, when He thrice asked him, " Lovest thou me ? " till he was grieved, and answered, " Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

(to be continued)



STUDIES IN THE REVELATION ————— J. S. BLACKBURN

5 THE SEALS AND THE TRUMPETS

THE visions of the Seals and the Trumpets occupy chapters six to eleven, with two interludes. The first interlude comes between the sixth and seventh seals, and is found in chapter seven. The second interlude comes between the sixth and seventh trumpets in chapters 10 : 1 to 11 : 14. With these visions we enter on those parts of the Revelation which most readers find bewildering, and on which special help is therefore needed. At first confronting chapters six to eighteen, most readers feel like uttering a phrase once part of common idiom, "I haven't a clue". Yet this portion of Holy Scripture, like every other, was not intended to mystify either the first readers or ourselves. It was intended to yield a meaning and a message so definite and indeed vivid as to affect their lives profoundly. To achieve this it tells the story of the end of the world. The Book of the Revelation is unquestionably the Bible's last word on this theme, the end of the world. But was it the first ? Or did its first readers already possess clues in the form of previous accounts ? We now address ourselves to this question as it concerns the Seals and Trumpets. What clues did the first readers possess to provide a sure beginning for a satisfying meaning for these particular visions ?

I. Clues.

Read Daniel 2 : 31-45 7 : 2-28 9 : 24-27 Matthew 24 : 3-31.

We shall be helped by observing the facts, and taking our start from them, that Matthew 24 describes conditions and events immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ with "power and great glory", and in doing so refers explicitly to the Book of Daniel, and secondly, that the Revelation uses the same imagery as Daniel. By the latter, I mean that he symbolises powers and kings as wild animals called in A.V. "beasts" with great emphasis on their heads and horns. It will be a sound beginning, therefore, to summarise the story of the end of the age according to the prophet and to the evangelist respectively.

(a) From Daniel 2 we learn that the 4th kingdom will be in existence at the Coming of Christ to reign. At that time it will be divided into ten parts, or kings, and it is in the days of those kings that the Stone will fall with a sudden, shattering blow on the 4th kingdom, and displace it with a Kingdom which will fill the whole earth, and never give place to another kingdom.

From Daniel 7 we learn also that the 4th kingdom will be in existence when the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven. At that time the 4th kingdom will have become divided between ten kings. Among these another will arise who will overthrow three and become the real power. He will speak great things against God, make war and prevail against the saints, and think to change times and laws. He will succeed in this latter aim for three and a half times. After this his kingdom shall be taken away and given to the Son of Man and His saints.

Daniel 9 supplies a very interesting identification. The last prince before the consummation, is a prince of the people who destroyed the city, that is, the Romans, after Messiah was cut off. The story according to this prophecy of seventy weeks is that a Roman prince shall make a treaty for the last seven years before the Coming of Christ, with the mass of the Jews. After three and a half of the seven years he will break the treaty, abolish the Jewish sacrificial customs, and substitute idolatry for the remaining three and a half years of the period.

Daniel 12 adds a most important addition to the light already given about the last period of three and a half years :— “at that time. . . there shall be a time of tribulation, such as never was since there was a nation”. (b) In Matthew 24 : 4-31 the Lord Jesus tells beforehand the story of the end of the age in response to the disciples’ questions. His answer provides the most important clue to the events of those times, not only because of the divine authority of the Speaker, but also because the story is not told under the guise of symbols, but in straightforward narrative of events. It is only necessary to note that the Lord was not talking to the church, which was not yet in existence, but to men who were, and only thought of themselves as Jewish disciples of Jesus, separated from the mass of the Jews by their faith in Christ, while the whole nation was under Roman occupation.

The whole period foretold was to be sharply divided into two sections. The dividing point (v. 15), would be the setting up of an idol in the temple, described by Daniel as “the abomination of desolation” (Daniel 12 : 11). Up to that time they were to “endure”; after it they were to flee. Before this clear sign there would occur “the beginning of sorrows” (v. 8) ; after it would come to pass “the great tribulation”. During the first part of the time, the disciples would endure many trials, including wars, famines, pestilences, persecutions in which many of them would be killed, and earthquakes : but at the same time the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world. During the second part of the period would be “the great tribulation”, so severe that if it were not to be shortened the human race would be exterminated.

The final end of this period called “the end of the age” would be the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

(c) To summarise these clues, it only remains to notice the elements common to the book of Daniel and Matthew 24 :—

- (i) Centre on Jerusalem and Jewish saints, but spreading to involve the whole earth.
- (ii) Dominion of Rome.
- (iii) Sharp division into two portions.
- (iv) An idol set up in the temple the dividing sign.
- (v) The great tribulation in the later period.
- (vi) The Coming and Kingdom of Christ at the end.

II. Seals and Trumpets.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of the Revelation deal with the Church period. In 11 : 15 great voices celebrate the beginning of the Kingdom of God and of Christ, which, we know commences with the Second coming of Christ. After chapters four and five therefore, which deal with scenes in heaven, it is broadly true to say that the Seals and Trumpets present by symbols the course of events between the close of the Church period and the Second Coming. It is now easy to see how what for convenience we will call ‘the previous accounts’, that is, the clues outlined in paragraph I, are to be held in mind as previous information covering the events of exactly the same period as the Seals and Trumpets. We shall now compare the previous account with the Seals and Trumpets in a little more detail.

(a) The Seals and the “Beginning of Sorrows”, (Matthew 24 : 8).

A table will display most succinctly the parallels between these two series. It will show beyond reasonable doubt that Matthew 24 prophesies from the intensely personal point of view of disciples living, witnessing and suffering in Jerusalem, events shown in Revelation 6 to be probably of worldwide scope.

Matthew 24		Revelation 6	
Verse	Events	Number of Seals	Events
—	—	1st	A Conqueror.
6, 7.	Wars.	2nd	Bloodshed.
7.	Famines.	3rd	Famine.
7.	Pestilences, earthquakes.	4th	Death by sword, hunger, and beasts.
9.	Death of disciples by persecution.	5th	Death of witnesses by martyrdom.
7, 29.	Earthquake, fall of stars, etc.	6th	Earthquake, fall of stars, etc.

So far as the sixth seal is concerned, the closest parallel in Matthew 24 is v. 29, that is, in occurrences “immediately after the tribulation”.

This perhaps means that the sixth seal applies to a later period.

(b) The Interlude of Revelation Seven.

It must be already appearing that there may well be a general correspondence between the two time-divisions, the "beginning of sorrows" and "the great tribulation" in Matthew 24, and the Seals and the Trumpets in Revelation 6 to 11. Further, there is a probable reference in Revelation 7 : 1 and 3 to the first and second Trumpets, and a clear, certain and direct quotation in Revelation 7 : 14 of the words, "the great tribulation" from Matthew 24 : 21.

In view of these considerations it seems clear that this interlude represents a solemn pause before the seer is given in vision the unparalleled inflictions of the great tribulation, for the purpose of showing him how two important groups of people are to be preserved by God through this terrible time when the wrath of God strikes the world. The first group is described as being protectively sealed before the blows from God fall. They consist of 144,000 out of all the tribes of Israel. The second group is an innumerable crowd of Gentiles seen after the tribulation as having been preserved through it. In a previous paper we have meditated on the peace and serenity of their position with the Lamb as their Shepherd, in so strong a contrast with the fearful upheavals through which they have been preserved. It is clearly best to take this interlude as being outside the time-sequence of the Seals and Trumpets, so far as the sequence of John's visions are concerned, but intended to give assurance regarding God's care for His saints during the tribulation.

(to be continued)

MUTUAL ACCEPTABILITY AMONGST CHRISTIANS COLIN CURRY

A RECENT paper in Scripture Truth, which sought to underline the teaching of John's second and third epistles, summarised the main lessons in the following sentences : "The key factor is the honour of Christ. Those who oppose or belittle the Christ upon Whom the whole of Christianity centres are to be refused. Those who are devoted to His Name, and anxious to communicate its value in as wide a field as possible are to be supported without hesitation. Decisions of this kind must always be based on what is essential, and there is danger when other criteria take the place of the crucial ones. Acceptance or rejection of people based on less essential considerations is fraught with more possibility of misjudgment". The paper then pointed out that caution and restraint are needed in these other areas, where the advice of Scripture is of a much less categoric kind. It was noted that the same letters which tell us to be decisive in the clear cases also provide an all-too-real example of what can happen when Christians are quick to judge their fellows on other grounds.

This paper follows up this theme ; the aim being to seek scriptural guidance about attitudes to fellow-Christians in a whole range of circumstances. We shall first try to isolate clear scriptural principles, picking out lines of action on which Scripture allows no flexibility. On these basic matters we shall do well to be decisive in our adherence to the clear instruction of Scripture. With these primary matters clear we may then pass into the region of second-order situations which require special humility in their handling, and where boldness would be ill-advised. Tensions amongst Christians do not always centre on major issues, and we need to have our conduct moderated by Scripture in many areas. To act in hasty and officious ways is often to act out of turn ; and, whether major or minor matters are at stake, our demeanor should never lack caution and grace. Few, perhaps, when faced with these issues, will doubt the need to be reminded of this.

Principles

(1) The first and most obvious principle is that **it is normal for Christians to be united** and to wish to acknowledge and strengthen their links with one another. In the deepest sense the link between true Christians can never be violated nor impaired. Their unity is something that **God** has established (see for example 1 Corinthians 1 : 9 ; 12 : 13). Believers are bound together in a vital way because of their common link with their Lord, and these bonds are firm and indestructible. The life which they share shows itself readily and willingly in real terms. Mutual recognition and understanding, and joint appreciation of our faith, and of the One Who is at its centre, are features of that life. Cleavages and tensions between Christians, on the other hand, are evidences of failure ; they are out of character with the true nature of their relationship. Love for one another has been implanted within them, a love which is of the same kind as the love of God which has been showered upon them. No Christian worth the name can be content with love for other Christians as a theoretical concept only. Love often finds its opportunity in situations which are far from ideal ; it works in the direction of overcoming disparities and discord amongst Christians. One of its plainest signs may be the ability of Christians to make allowances for one another without the need to iron out many of their inevitable differences. Tolerance on less fundamental issues is clearly encouraged in Scripture, and will be a sign that mutual love is really there. Christian unity is not a matter of toeing a common line on all points (not even on most points). It is not a question of reaching a certain attainment in understanding (though this clearly is desirable for other ends). It is not a matter of agreement on a position. It is a matter of a common life in which all participate ; the scriptural ways of demonstrating our unity involve living and spiritual attitudes. "Lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" ; these are features which cannot be absent if Christian unity is to be in evidence (Ephesians 4 : 2). Something is surely seriously wrong when there is little sorrow or concern about the breaches which exist amongst Christians, little inclination to seek to heal them, little sense of the gravity of adding to their number.

(2) Our second principle is closely connected with the first. **The Name of Jesus is held to be supreme amongst all who are truly Christian.** High and true thoughts of Christ form an indispensable basis for any unity which can be called Christian. Care and concern for His honour, readiness to be subject to His authority, in word and in deed ; these are essential marks of true believers. Their ability to be at one on other matters stems from their unanimity on this cardinal question. Tolerance, co-operation, fellowship, mutual compatability, mutual helpfulness, joint activities for the Lord, are all possible because of this. Things impossible on the natural level occur within the circle of those who honour Christ, where thoughts and actions are ruled by the Holy Spirit of God. There are real dangers in limiting our horizon in what we recognise as Christian ; we need to be very sure of our ground, and to examine our own state and motives closely, before we regard any other Christian as untouchable. Except in the rarest cases, such an attitude would find no scriptural support. It would in fact stand condemned by Scripture if shown towards persons who truly love and honour the Lord.

Of course, it also needs saying that though the Christian circle is a wide one it **does** have its limits. Christian unity is **not** a broad ecumenism which pays no attention to essentials. Unbelievers are outside of it, though it would be wrong to be unconcerned about this. It is limited to members of the body of Christ. **Reality** is necessary ; the living link with Christ is vitally important. Readiness to subscribe to the biblical teaching about our Lord is also absolutely crucial. The honour of His Name involves our unqualified assent to what it teaches about His person, His pre-eminence, the centrality and value of His redemptive work. The spirit which readily concurs with these fundamental matters, rather than any claim to an exhaustive understanding of them, is of chief importance. The fulness of these things is beyond the understanding of all ; and, as has been said, we must not make understanding the test. Nevertheless, the spirit that **refuses** these truths is clearly not of God ; it is completely foreign to the Christian circle and should be resolutely rejected there (see again I John 4 : 3 and 2 John 7).

(3) The third guiding principle identifying what is truly Christian is as follows. **There should be consistency in a person's life with what he holds in faith.** Tests of a moral kind provide a pointer to the authenticity of a person's faith. Judgments regarding those who can be associated with as Christians (in so far as it falls on other Christians to make them) have to be made, in part at least, on moral grounds. What is plainly untrue to our Lord, in this sense, also has to be rejected. The true Christian is careful primarily about his own ways, with the desire that his life may be free from what is unholy and dishonouring to his Lord. He recognises that he is also obliged to discern these qualities (or the absence of them) in others ; so that he may fall in wholeheartedly with those who wish to honour Christ, while disassociating himself from what is seen to be devious and disloyal to Him. This is an area where extreme care and humility are needed in forming right judgments. Witch-hunting, prejudice, and the censorious spirit are **not** Christian virtues ; Scripture makes it very clear that the disposition to find fault where clear evil is

not apparent is wholly reprehensible. Our approach to these delicate matters could easily reveal that we stand no higher on the moral scale than those we venture to judge.

Judgments of this kind have therefore to be made ; but it is vital that humility and love should be behind those judgments. Love abhors that which is evil, but it is sure of its facts first. It does not imagine nor suspect evil where it may not exist, nor is it pleased when it has to be exposed. It is entirely fair to the parties concerned, and not lacking in the desire to bring recovery and good from a situation in which another Christian may be "overtaken in a fault". Love overcomes evil with good; judgments which lack a constructive element need to be viewed with some suspicion (see, on these matters, Romans 12 : 9, 10 ; 1 Corinthians 13 : 4-7 ; Galatians 6 : 1-5 ; and James 5 : 19, 20).

A verse which summarises the points we have covered is 2 Timothy 2 : 22. "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart". All the principles on which Christians can (and should) be together are here. The Name of the Lord confessed and honoured ; purity of heart, involving simple sincerity and transparent devotion and obedience to Him (more basic than the extent of a person's knowledge) ; rectitude in life and conduct pursued, and showing itself increasingly. This verse plainly does not describe a sectarian position, or any other kind of position ; it underlines moral qualities. Let us each seek that it should be true of us ; and let us not fail to recognise with all readiness any of whom it is also true.

In the second part of this paper we hope to draw attention to passages which indicate a whole range of attitudes to other Christians which are right in different kinds of circumstances. The need for ruthless excision of another Christian is, unhappily, sometimes a real one. But, scripturally speaking, it is a rare occurrence that demands it. At the other extreme believers in some situations are told to welcome one another and to carry on in harmony despite differing viewpoints. Neither party is to seek to impose his own view on the other, but the spirit of concession to the other person is to be prominent. This instruction is not primarily presented to us with regard to trivial matters ; it has to do with matters on which strong and sincere views are held, and the consciences of the persons concerned are deeply involved. We have to recognise these areas where restraint in the judgment of others is the mark of obedience to Scripture, and they are perhaps wider than we sometimes allow.

Between these extremes are other kinds of situation, calling for varying degrees of action. One clear indication from the study of these passages will be that, except where there is patent heresy on basic truth, or patent moral evil, judgments are better made with restraint and (if they are adverse judgments) reluctance. This is not an area where superficial rule-of-thumb procedures can be adopted.

(to be continued)

ON OECUMENISM

(Continued)

3 DIFFERENT POSITIONS IN VIEW OF THE ATTEMPTS TO BRING
THE CHURCHES TOGETHER

THIS movement has brought about two opposing positions in Christendom.

The "Evangelicals"

Some churches or denominations reject these trends but they resign themselves to the present state of affairs which they doubtless consider distressing and remain associated with it whilst retaining their individual identity. They come together for certain activities, in particular for preaching the Gospel, but they consider it essential that each should keep its own organisation, in a separate body. Let the dear believers who belong to these groups think over the seriousness of the words of one of them who, reporting on a congress of the Union of Evangelical Christians which groups the majority of the denominations in question, depicts this "moving vision of the Church of Jesus Christ, **varied in its human organisation and in its forms of worship**,¹ but one and fraternal around its undisputed Head, Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour of the believers". Are we then authorised to give to the Church of Jesus Christ "a human organisation and particular forms of worship?" Do the Word and its teachings no longer suffice, do we need arrangements and traditions?

Rome

The other position is that of Rome. The Roman church defines herself as one, catholic and apostolic.² She esteems herself the "only body", herself alone. Those who think that they can retain their doctrines and their forms whilst uniting themselves to Rome, or who hope that Rome will change in order to fall into line with them, really are deceiving themselves. The Roman church has her own brand of oecumenism. She proclaims that she is the mother Church, the only heir and continuator of the Church of the Apostles. She declares that she is indispensable for a soul to find God; she recognises in her head, the pope, the vicar of Jesus Christ, infallible when he as pope proclaims a dogma. She forms a grandiose edifice superlatively well-administered and called, so she be-

1. The underlining is ours.

2. The Orthodox church, split up into autonomous national churches, almost all of which are situated in the East, has the same conception of her oneness, her catholicity, her apostolicity as the Roman church and she claims a more solid tradition and a superior liturgy. She refuses to recognise the supremacy of the bishop of Rome (the pope). Albeit, she calls on Mary and the saints. Her pretension to represent the only Church is in singular contradiction with her presence in the Oecumenical Council of Churches.

lieves, to dominate the world. She truly adores herself and prescribes complete obedience to what she orders as a first duty. For such a church, unification can only be a return to the fold,—“the father’s house” as, like others, the new pontiff has just put it,—of all those which she now calls “separated brothers” and whom she once persecuted pitilessly as heretics. She knows how to adapt herself; if necessary she will modify certain of her structures, but only in order to consolidate the whole as well as to be able to “be presented to the Christians separated from her in an attractive light and thus facilitate their sincere reintegration, in truth and charity, into the mystic body of the only catholic church”.¹ But in spite of the successes gained by what is called *progressionism*, i.e. a certain coming to terms with modern ideas, over *integrism*, i.e. the unshakeable attachment to dogmas, she would be denying herself were she to abandon her tradition, her hierarchy, her dogmas, such as the infallibility of the pope, the real presence in the “sacrifice of mass”, the intercession of the saints, the cult of Mary, the immaculate conception and the assumption of the virgin, *Mary mediatrix of grace, the transferability of merits, etc.*

If only the other half of the Christianised world, that which is drawn along by the oecumenical current, had a “sound doctrine” to put forward in opposition when confronted with this power! But we have seen that, far from casting down all that is not based on Christianity, it flatters itself that it can make the most differing conceptions which one can hardly call Christian truths, but rather religious notions as broad as possible, coexist by ambiguous formulae. It even bends its doctrines and practices towards catholicism as can be seen in the protestant religious communities and the “liturgical renewal”. How can they resist being swallowed up by Rome if they have no sound and sure doctrine? Can we not already see Rome taking over oecumenism, thanks to the Council, as a powerful vessel draws a lighter craft in its wake?

Where is the Place of the Faithful?

Thus we either have churches which accept that truth is relative and by their very existence contradict the unity of the Church, or we have a church which claims to be the only one, all other Christians being considered schismatics (Orthodox, Anglicans) or heretics (protestants in general). On pain of accepting error or lie, the place of the faithful is with neither, but without toward Christ and Christ alone. Blessed be God that the Lord recognises His slaves in Thyatira, that there are in Sardis “which have not defiled their garments” and that some hearts in Laodicea open the door to Him, but no matter what the number of these faithful, they in no way change the condition of these assemblies which represent so many systems which are going to be judged.

Some Dangerous Illusions

Moreover, let us make no mistake here. The desire for a visible unity of all Christians here below clashes with two insurmountable

1. Pope Paul VI’s homily on the day of his coronation (1.7.1963).

barriers : first, the true believers being known only of the Lord, there are some who would be left outside. Secondly, for the same reason, merely professing Christians would be included. Either you only recognise the adepts of a particular doctrine, those who pronounce shibboleth as you do, and it becomes a sect, or you accept all those who are baptized and it becomes the church of the masses. It is, in fact, significant that we almost never hear them talk in oecumenical circles of new birth, because of a distressing and increasing ignorance of the fundamental truths of salvation.¹

Alas, how many deluded people are there who think that they have entered the Kingdom of God, who are treated as such, without their having been "born of water and of the Spirit" ! How can worship according to the Word be known under these conditions ?

Probably the most marked trait which, characteristic of Rome, is spreading gradually to all ecclesiastical organisations no matter how diverse they may be, is an interest in their influence on earth. On all sides man is rising up and defrauding Christ of His Lordship. The Church, as they understand it, comes before Christ, and the visible, universal Church, which is dreamed of more than it is defined (and with good reason) is seen as a great institution of the earth. It is patent that the churches are becoming evermore occupied with problems of the day, be they economic, social or political, as if their task was to supply the answers to them, the which is to clearly put aside the Scriptures and the "stranger" character. "Do good to all men" does not mean get involved in all their troubles. If believers, wherever they may be, can only grieve over the divisions between Christians, is there not often mingled with this the feeling that these divisions are a dangerous factor of weakness for Christendom as a world power ? It is, moreover, the only one which can move those who are Christians only in name ; they see the church only as an organisation of this world and in Christianity a useful moral element. Christianity is overrun by irreligion just when it is supposed to be stronger than in the past and the attempt is made to face this menace by uniting.

It is only just to point out that many pious but ill-taught souls are burning with the hope of seeing the whole world converted to the Gospel of grace, the church enlarged to the dimensions of mankind and the Kingdom of God thus set up. It is an attractive idea which, unfortunately, ignores the teachings of Scripture. The latter clearly shows the church associated to a Christ, at present rejected, but who will take it to be with Him when He is about to take up the power and establish the Kingdom of justice and peace on earth, but in judgment. He is at present seated on the right hand of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. Till then, grace is offered. The world wants nothing of it. The redeemed are "delivered out of the present evil world" as Paul says to the Galatians (1 : 4) they escape "the corruption which is in the world" (2 Peter 1 : 4). "They are not of the world" (John 17 : 16).

(to be continued)

1. The basis of all oecumenical action is, according to an expression in the introductory lecture to the meeting of the Oecumenical Council of Churches in Montreal, July 12th, 1963, "the existence of a community of baptized people".

REFLECTIONS ON THE FOUR GOSPELS ————— ROBERT DAVIES

(continued)

THE third gospel has been described as the most beautiful book in the world. It was written by a Gentile who also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Both are addressed to a Gentile, Theophilus. That Luke was a Gentile seems clear from the greetings at the close of the Epistle to the Colossians where the "beloved physician" is distinguished from those "who were of the circumcision" (see Colossians 4 : 11, 14). He was probably Greek and a man of considerable education. It is generally agreed that he writes the best literary Greek in the New Testament.

From the opening of his gospel, I conclude that Luke had never known the Lord as a Man upon earth. He was acquainted with the work of other writers who were compiling their own accounts based upon the testimony of eye witnesses, and he had himself made his own careful investigations of all these matters from their beginning. He is, therefore, able to state the purpose of writing, "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (1 : 3, 4). It is a great thing to rest upon certainty and it is just as important for the twentieth century lover of God to be established in the knowledge of Christ. Because Theophilus means "lover of God" it is not suggested that he was not a real person, known to the evangelist.

When did Luke gather material for his gospel ? We know from the "we" passages in the Acts that he was for many years a companion of the apostle Paul. He was with Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem and then, and during the apostle's two-year detention in Caesarea (see Acts 24 : 27) Luke would have opportunity to meet and question those who had heard and seen the Lord. No doubt he would also collect material for the early chapters of the Acts. Philip the evangelist and his four daughters lived at Caesarea and from whom else would Luke learn about the Ethiopian eunuch, for example ? (See Acts 21 : 8). It is understood that most modern scholars date this gospel about 80 to 85 A.D. although some place it earlier, circa 60 to 65 A.D. If Luke collected his material as suggested, it is by no means improbable that he completed the Gospel and the Acts during Paul's open arrest in Rome (about 60 to 62 A.D.). (See Acts 28 : 30).

Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man, Son of Adam. His genealogy ends "which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" (3 : 38). The Lord is thus linked with the whole of humanity. By this I mean that He is not only the Christ, the Deliverer, the Hope of Israel, but the Saviour and Hope of the Gentiles as well. We find in this gospel the compassion of Jesus for the under-privileged, the poor and the needy. "I led them with cords of compassion".

Perhaps the distinctive character of this gospel is best shown in the incidents and parables peculiar to it. In addition to the early chapters

which give us the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, and the last chapter which recounts the journey to Emmaus, some of the best known incidents and parables include (amongst others) Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth and in the house of Simon the Pharisee, the parable of the Good Samaritan, the raising of the widow's son at Nain, the parables of the rich fool, and the great supper, the threefold parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, the parables of the rich man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the publican, and the stories of the cleansing of the ten lepers and of Zacchaeus.

The scene in the synagogue at Nazareth establishes the character of the Lord's ministry in this gospel. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him (Isaiah 61 : 1). He is anointed for the healing of the brokenhearted, the proclaiming of the gospel to the poor and proclaiming the Lord's year of favour. The people had ample cause to wonder at His gracious words and rejoice for all the glorious things He did (see 4 : 22 and 13 : 17). It is also significant that the Gentile evangelist records Christ's reference to two Old Testament examples of God's blessing going beyond the bounds of Israel : to the Sidonian widow and to Naaman the Syrian.

The lesson of the parable of the Good Samaritan is primarily a practical one "Go, and do thou likewise". Indeed one of the important lessons from Luke's gospel as a whole is that showing kindness ought to characterise God's children, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (6 : 36) "And be ye kind one to another" (Ephesians 4 : 32). Nevertheless the supreme example of the good Samaritan is the Lord Jesus Himself. "A stranger from heaven has come down to show neighbourly love on earth. . . We must begin by being debtors to Jesus, before we can follow Him in the neighbourly love—be the waylaid man before we can be the Samaritan" (J. G. Bellett's Notes on Luke).

Concerning the ten lepers who were cleansed, it need only be pointed out that it was a Samaritan—"this stranger" (17 : 18)—who came back to say "Thank you", and to whom the word of confirmation was given "Arise, go thy way ; thy faith hath made thee whole". For me, Luke's gospel is epitomised in chapter 19, verse 10, the recorded words of Jesus in the house of Zacchaeus, "For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". We cannot forget that the Saviour's seeking led Him to Calvary. We have in this gospel Jesus, the Son of man "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (See Psalm 8 : 4, 5 and Hebrews 2 : 9). This quotation cannot be left incomplete, however. The sequel to "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" is "crowned with glory and honour". This latter phrase may be more fully brought out in the Acts, the Son of man at the right hand of God (Acts 7 : 56) but it is anticipated in the last chapter of the gospel "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?" (verse 26).

Now the third living creature had the face of a man and, as this short study has shown, this is Luke's distinctive presentation. "Here is

man according to God, the pattern Man, in and through whom man is blessed and God glorified. . . first humbled into the dust of death, then exalted to God's right hand, His image and likeness, to rule as Lord of all" (Andrew Jukes).

I believe with the majority of Christians that, towards the close of his life in Ephesus, John the son of Zebedee wrote the gospel that bears his name. The writer was certainly an eye-witness. This seems the logical interpretation of John 19 : 35 "And he that saw it bare record, and his record it true". I accept the expressions "That disciple whom Jesus loved" and "that other disciple" as referring to the evangelist himself (see John 19 : 26 ; 20 : 4 ; 21 : 7).

It is thought by many that the first Epistle of John circulated with the Gospel in the early days, and a comparison between, say, John 19 : 34 and 1 John 5 : 6 seems to bear this out. They are certainly linked practically. The Gospel gives us the basis of the possession of eternal life. The Epistle shows the manifestation of this life in the believer.

For my purpose, the best place to begin is the close of the twentieth chapter : "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The writer's purpose is clearly stated and to this end he has selected his material. The miracles recorded are "signs", that is, they have a meaning and surely their meaning is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This is the apostle's witness to be read and believed and the blessing of the believer is life eternal. Life eternal as a present possession is an important theme of the fourth gospel "that believing ye might have life through his name" "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (3 : 36). This is fully confirmed in the first epistle "I write all this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know for certain that you have eternal life" (1 John 5 : 13 Weymouth). If, to some, this "knowing for certain" savours of presumption, the scriptural answer is that eternal life is not merited, but given of God. It is not a matter of human effort, but divine grace. This is the divine witness or record "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5 : 11). Jesus said "I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life ; and they shall never perish" (John 10 : 28).

John presents Jesus as the Eternal Word and the Eternal Son, the One who became a man and for a little while dwelt among men, but in Whom the disciples saw "the Godhead glory shine through that human veil". "We saw his glory" says the apostle, "glory such as a father bestows on his only son, full of grace and truth". There is a sense of finality about this gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1 : 18). See also John 1 : 14 Weymouth. "I am the way, the truth and the life : no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (14 : 6).

There is neither the story of His birth nor His genealogy in the fourth gospel. "But John, as if he found it oppressive to walk on earth, has opened his treatise as it were with a peal of thunder ; he has raised himself not merely above earth. . . but even above every angel-host and every order of the invisible powers, and has reached even to Him by Whom all things were made, in that sentence, 'IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD'" (Augustine—cited in Liddon's 'Divinity of our Lord'). We can now understand why the eagle has been universally associated with this gospel. No creature that walks on the earth would suffice. "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high ? " (Job 39 : 27).

Christianity, according to John's gospel, is nothing less than the knowledge of Divine Persons, the Father and the Son by the Spirit's power. Of the many passages that might be quoted, the fourteenth chapter supplies ample confirmation of this. For example, in the opening verses we have the Father's house and the Lord's promise that He has gone to make ready a place for His people and that He will return and take them to be with Him. Later we have the promise of the Holy Spirit, One to stand by and help, who will remain with the Christian for ever, "the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, . . . he dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (verse 17). Then comes the promise to the individual that the Father and the Son will make Their home within him. "If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (verse 23). This is the circle of life and love into which the Christian is brought. It must be said, in passing, that verse 23 raises a practical issue. Love for the Lord and keeping His words (or following His teaching) are inseparably linked (see also verse 21). Do I claim to love the Lord ? If so, to what extent do I follow His teaching ? These are questions one might profitably ask oneself. Obedience is necessary for the full enjoyment of Christian privileges.

We may go to the National Gallery and there on display for all who have eyes to see them are the great art treasures of the nation. So in this gospel, the inspired apostle unfolds the priceless treasures of Divine love. Have we the hearts to appreciate them ? For me the spirit of John's gospel has been admirably caught in the following lines :—

" Brought to rest within the circle,
Where love's treasures are displayed,
There we drink the living waters,
Taste the joys that never fade." (T. Willey)

I have considered briefly the different ways in which the four evangelists present the Lord Jesus. There is, however, an underlying unity ; not so much four gospels but, as an early Christian writer expressed it, "the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit". In Matthew, for instance, we find the following passage, wholly in keeping with John's witness, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man

the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11 : 27). Luke has its parallel (Luke 10 : 22). Compare also Mark 9 : 37 "And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me" and the negative side in Luke 10 : 16 "and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me" with John 5 : 23 "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him".

Mark begins with "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". The demons acknowledge Him to be the Holy One of God and Son of the Most High God. The centurion's verdict at the cross is, "Truly this man was the Son of God". In all three synoptic gospels there is the declaration at the Lord's baptism and transfiguration "This is my beloved Son" or "Thou art my beloved Son" (the wording varies slightly).

The apostle John, whilst concerned with our Lord's diety, leaves no doubt as to the reality of His manhood. Jesus is weary with His journey at Sychar's well, He weeps at the tomb of Lazarus, He thirsts on the cross and the fourth gospel alone tells us how a soldier with a spear pierced His side and "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19 : 34). Jesus Christ has indeed "come in the flesh" (1 John 4 : 2).

There are, above all, certain facts common to all four gospels, that is those relating to His death, burial and resurrection. "Out of countless acts and words of Jesus, death and resurrection is chosen to be the great subject for the common testimony" (Andrew Jukes). This is the heart of the good news, that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15 : 3, 4).

These reflections started with a reference to cherubim. The cherubim figured much in the tabernacle in the wilderness : "We get the cherubic figures hanging over the ark to express their desire to look into the things of Christ" (J. G. Bellett). The four evangelists record for our profit these very things (see 1 Peter 1 : 12). If we have travelled a much trodden path it is because my purpose is not novelty, but to encourage the study of the gospels. In the physical sphere, growth requires food of the right kind. In the four gospels is food for spiritual growth and development. "This is that bread which came down from heaven. . . he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" (John 6 : 58).

IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH Adapted from S. E. McNAIR, 1895.

IT will be time enough to 'walk worthy of my calling' when I am older". Do you propose to live a Christian youth when you are sixty ? Will your bright example be a power among your school fellows, or college friends when you retire from business ?

To join the Navy or Air Force the age limits are strictly defined. Once passed the thoughts of such service can no longer be entertained. The King of Glory wants living examples of Christian graces in the schoolroom, the college, the workshop. Would you dare leave that service to some indefinite future? The childhood, boyhood, youth, manhood of the Lord Jesus was the object of heaven's delight, not in a Convent but in a Carpenter's shop, surrounded by the young life of Nazareth. His life was taken from the earth. God was so well pleased with it, that He proposed to continue that pleasure down here in the lives of His redeemed ones. His legacy to the children of His love, His dying request was, "Take My name, take My meekness and gentleness, My character, and show it to the world. Live it over again as I lived it". Let them read the living epistle:—Christ revealed in His own. But who will give again to God, in some measure, the joy He found in the youth of Jesus? Not Peter "the elder", nor Paul "the aged", but some young reader of these lines, who hardly values the privilege that angels might envy.

One of Satan's favourite weapons is ridicule. What! To be laughed at? Oh—terrible affliction!

Oh, let us be ashamed of our shame, but never of our Saviour. None of the cowardice which blushes in silence when Christians are derided or Christ dishonoured! None of that convenient forgetfulness which never gives thanks before food in the city restaurant or the employer's dinner table!

The present is a trifling generation. A hunger for entertainment is a sign of the times. Are you going with the crowd?

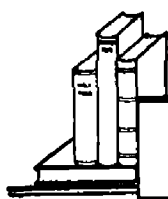
This is an age of increased facilities and reduced costs. We fly where our fathers walked. The aim of modern invention is to make everything easy and to give the largest returns for the smallest outlay. All this unfits us for the deep spiritual exercises in the path of faith. Modern thought has yet to find a short cut to piety. Young Christian lounges through a chapter of the Bible in five minutes and thinks there is little in it, since he gets nothing out. God does not make himself cheap like that.

Those who know the narrow way of separation to the Lord, but refuse to enter it, seem to be the special objects of divine displeasure. To know the Lord's will, and do it not, is a serious responsibility. Dear young reader, will you be one of the "Kings Own"?

Don't bargain for happiness here and heaven hereafter, but lay your life at your Saviour's feet, without making any conditions.

When the reality of His love dawns upon the soul it is like the sunrise of eternal day, and turns "the shadow of death into morning".

"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." Philippians 1. 20.



THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

JOHN BARNES

1 Chronicles 4

THIS little, most interesting insight into life and thought in such a remote age of Israel's eventful history is quite delightful. I like to think of this simple but lovely prayer recorded here as an 'Ephesian' prayer of the Old Testament.

1. The first request of the prayer is, "Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed." How great a desire on the part of a saint in a dispensation so much less enlightened than our own ! He coveted the blessing of the Lord Himself. "Oh" he cried, "that THOU wouldest bless me." Where God is brought into affairs we have true piety. So many leave Him out of all their reckoning, and even many believers leave Him out of much of their lives. To bring God into the activities of life is the first mark of true Godliness. The Ephesian counterpart is given us in the heart's desire of the apostle Paul for the saints, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ;" and, "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul ascribes a wonderful note of praise, early in the epistle, to the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." It is in Him that the blessings are centred ; in Himself. It was in his God that Jabez found his.

Jabez asked of God, "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed." He not only wished to be blessed but to be blessed richly. He was asking a favour of the great God. He had a big impression of His God and would ask largely. To be blessed richly is the privilege of every believer today. The Authorised Version speaks of 'all spiritual blessings,' but it is believed to be better rendered, 'every spiritual blessing.' It is not that God has thrust at us a great mass of blessing, however great it may be, in an indiscriminate way, but that each item in that infinitude of wonders is carefully, and with divine purpose, adapted to suit us according to our deep need and according to the wealth of the Father's thought, wrought out in counsels of divine Persons in eternal ages, and devised for our present and eternal blessing. The Father has endowed the Son of His love with everything there is in the whole universe, for it is He who is the Heir of all things, and it is in this glorious Person that we are so richly blessed. No wonder Paul exclaims, "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."

What Plenitude !

2. The next request of Jabez was that God would enlarge his coast. He was thinking, without doubt, of the inheritance in the land. This was

the perfectly legitimate aspiration of every godly Israelite that he might enter into and enjoy to the full that portion of the holy land allotted to him, and there to have fellowship with his countrymen, with His God in the way in which the Levitical worship allowed him, and there, eventually, in a ripe old age, to be gathered to his fathers. If part of the assigned portion remained in enemy hands the faithful Israelite could not be at peace. Caleb, old man though he was when Israel entered the land, would not rest content with part of his inheritance in the hands of some of the most formidable of Israel's foes, the sons of Anak. Similarly Jabez prayed for the enlargement of his border. We need not imagine that he coveted what did not belong to him by right, but he sought that he might come into the full possession of that part of the land which was properly his, where the 'lines had fallen unto him.'

It is well understood that the epistle to the Ephesians answers to the book of Joshua antitypically, and in that important letter we have great spiritual enlargement. The land of Canaan had geographical measurements; length and breadth. God said to Abraham concerning the land, "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee." (Genesis 13:17) But the believer's spiritual inheritance today has dimensions about it lacking to any earthly Canaan. Ephesians 3:18 tells us of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height." Here we do not only have geography but SUBSTANCE. Moreover, each of the dimensions is separated by the conjunctive as though inviting us to an exhaustive investigation of the inheritance; "walk through the land." How rarely do we enter in any fulness into the unspeakable vastness of our heritage. Yet it is there for us. The tiny prophecy of Obadiah considers a remarkable prospect; "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" and the idea of possession goes on from that verse, (v.17) to the end of the book. For many centuries Jacob's possessions have been trodden under gentile feet. Shall we allow our enemies to deprive us of the wealth which, in Christ, is truly ours? What Possession!

3. The third request was, "That Thine hand might be with me." The hand is used to exert power, to do things, and no epistle is more full of the idea of power than the great letter to the Ephesian assembly. We read in it of "the fulness of God." 3:9; in the next chapter we read of "the fulness of Christ." 4:13; in the following chapter Paul exhorts the saints to be "filled with the Spirit." 5:18. The fulness of the Trinity of divine Persons brings in a thought of such immense, immeasurable power that these minds of ours simply cannot take it in. Chapter 1:19 speaks of the "exceeding greatness of His power." This power, spoken of in such superlative terms was, as the chapter goes on to inform us, the output of divine energy used in the raising of our Lord Jesus Christ from among the dead. The history of the universe has witnessed no greater exertion of power than that, and this is the magnitude of the power which is available 'to usward who believe' today. The hand of the Lord was surely with Joshua in his conflict to occupy the land. "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee." Joshua 1:5. The remnant days of re-occupation and rebuilding under Ezra were signally marked by the protecting hand of the Lord. 'The hand of the Lord his God'; 'The good hand of his God'; 'The hand of the Lord my God,' are expressions which

recur throughout chapters 7 and 8 of his book. They appreciated this power exerted on their behalf and looked forward to the recovery of the inheritance from enemy hands for their own blessing and for their successors. (cf. ch. 9 : 12) As the hand of divine power aided and protected those saints of a bygone age, we can surely count on the hand that never tires to aid us in our own remnant times, and preserve something for those who follow us, should the Lord tarry.

What Power !

4. The fourth request Jabez made was, "Keep me from the evil that it may not grieve me." As there were enemy powers occupying much of the land in those days, so, today, there are invaders of the saints' inheritance, the heavenlies. They are the spiritual equivalents of the Amorites and others, no doubt ; evil spirits seeking to deprive us of the value of **our** heritage. We cannot do battle with these mighty foes with carnal weapons, but, as the apostle Paul has taken care to remind us, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The great citadels of enemy invaders are immensely strong but not impregnable to spiritual armies equipped with spiritual weapons. The old lesson of the sack of Jericho should be remembered in this connection.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians the armour suitable to, and indeed necessary for the spiritual warrior in the great conflict with evil powers is described for us in ch. 6. The 'whole panoply of God' is made available for the simple believer in his fight to gain and keep possession of his portion in the land, and to withstand the fiery darts of the foe in his subtle attacks.

What Protection !

5. We are informed, so beautifully, that "God granted him that which he requested". The prayer of Jabez was addressed to the "God of Israel." The granting of his prayer, so addressed, would be in conformity with God's revelation of Himself in that character. God had made certain promises to Abraham, ratified them to Isaac and again to Israel. Many of these related to the actual possession of the land in its fruitfulness. Jabez would, in the blessing of the God of Israel, that prince with God, come into the enjoyment of his lot with its dew, its freshness and its abundant fruitfulness, and possess it for himself without an invader in residence.

In the Ephesian letter the prayers are addressed, in chapter 1 to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and in chapter 3 to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first is directed to the One He served with unremitting faithfulness in lowly Manhood, His God ; the second to the One in Whose holy bosom He lay from eternal ages and Whose pleasure He considered in everything, His Father. To Him, in this blessedly dual relationship the Ephesian prayers are directed. The answer to these prayers we may expect to correspond to the level of their address. The prayer of Jabez, that man of God of ancient times, was, I suppose, somewhat limited by the dispensation in which he lived, but the believer in Ephesian times has his lot cast in a region of limitless horizons. The first Ephesian prayer leads us through its marvellous vistas from the Source of all glory, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the world to come when every foe will be vanquished and every subject in the full

enjoyment of the inheritance. The second prayer, addressed to the Father, who loves His Beloved Son infinitely and whose love is infinitely reciprocated, takes us on through scenes of unimaginably vast dimensions, through illimitable expanses, into eternal ages.

“Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

What Provision !

CHRISTIAN HEALTH AND PROSPERITY ————— J. STODDART

FEW things can be more helpful and encouraging in conditions of ill-health than the good wishes of loving friends. Conversely the harmful and depressing effect of unconcern and indifference is well enough known. In his third epistle the aged apostle John writes to his much loved friend Gaius to assure him of his affectionate interest and desire for his health and prosperity. In these days of casual attitudes some might regard this as unnecessary effusiveness, while Christians recognise it to be a reflection of the grace of Christ which we do well to emulate in our measure.

It might be difficult to establish or deny the identity of Gaius with Paul's friend of Romans 16 : 23 but at least it is to be noted that they display the same friendly, hospitable dispositions. Each had acted as host to God's people with that generosity and gladness which their name implies. They must have learned that “God loveth a cheerful (lit. hilarious) giver” (2 Corinthians 9 : 7) and surely this is all the more remarkable when the implication of 3 John 2 is plainly that Gaius was much below par in his physical state. Equally plain it is that his spiritual state was that of health par excellence, hence the wish of John that his friend's temporal well-being might match his spiritual prosperity. Could this with good effect be said of us ? Or are we so occupied with our bodily health that spiritual fitness becomes secondary and liable to suffer ? Surely the desirable thing is that these two things should be in balance.

We would be missing the point of the apostle's wish for Gaius if we then thought that temporal prosperity and good health were unimportant, for this is precisely what he covets for his friend. This would enable him to continue his valuable service of entertaining the Lord's servants and thus be a fellowhelper with the truth. It would also allow him to be present at the meeting to deter the assertive and dictatorial Diotrephes and to encourage the exemplary and highly esteemed Demetrius in his good work. The well-known phrase, “Mens sana in corpore sano,” (a sound mind in a sound body) comes very near to the Scriptural ideal for the Christian, as might be gathered from 2 Timothy 1 : 7, “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear ; but of power, and of love, and of a

sound mind." It will also be recalled that "harsh treatment of the body" such as practised by the Stoic school of philosophy was roundly condemned by the apostle in Colossians 2 : 23 (J.N.D.), while at the same time he found it necessary to discipline his own body and to keep it subject to the service and will of God (see 1 Corinthians 9 : 27). So we here see the wonderful balance of physical and spiritual health.

It is true to Christian experience that the Lord Himself imposes at times some physical limitation on the body as may be seen from Paul's treatment of this subject in 2 Corinthians 12. To rebel against this provision of His love and wisdom would be disastrous, but the "thorn in the flesh" (whatever painful form it took, we know not) caused him to beseech the Lord three times for its removal, doubtless as he would regard it as an impediment to his service for the Lord. How many a suffering saint of God has been grateful beyond words for the answer he was given, so universally applicable to every soul conscious of physical limitation. "And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Did he then succumb to his weakness and abandon his strenuous activities for the Lord? On the contrary we are astonished that any human frame could withstand the rigours and hazards catalogued in the details of his service in ch. 11, and far from any abatement of this he is bold to say in ch. 12 : 10, "Therefore I **take pleasure** in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake : for when I am weak, then am I strong." If we appropriate to our own weakness the gracious answer to his prayer from the Lord (and doubtless we should !) do we also follow his example of selfless committal to whatever hardship our service for the Lord demands? Of course, elderly saints will rightly say that it is no longer possible for them to engage in the vigorous activities they once pursued. And this is fully recognised, but many areas of service, with less physical demand and requiring the wisdom and grace of long experience, then lie before us. The beloved apostle Paul may only have been between sixty and seventy years of age when he said, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have finished my course." (2 Timothy 4 : 6/7) and referred to himself as "Paul the aged" in Philemon. v. 9.

Christian prosperity would be good success in whatever the Lord gives us to do. In the house of Potiphar, Joseph was said to be "a prosperous man. . . and the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." And when so wrongfully imprisoned, "whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. . . because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." (see Genesis 39 : 2 and 22/23). How necessary it was for the young man, Joshua, to be assured of prosperity in succeeding Moses as the leader of more than half a million of God's people. What tragic results would ensue if he failed ! But graciously the Lord gave him the unfailing secret of good success in the words of Joshua 1 : 5/9, "As I was with Moses so I will be with thee : I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. Only be thou strong and very courageous. . . that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. . . This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein : for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Is this the kind of prosperity we

covet for ourselves and others? Or is there the lurking danger that material prosperity has priority over spiritual success?

In these days of economic stress and strain of every kind there are many aged and infirm saints of God like Gaius who need our loving care and encouragement. May we with the apostle John have a truly deep concern that they may "prosper and be in health" both physically and spiritually, and in our prayers constantly remember their special needs before the Lord.

THRESHINGFLOORS

D. W. PATERSON

PRESSURE of many kinds is on the saints today, and because the Scripture says "in pressure Thou hast enlarged me" (Psalm 4 : 1 N.T.), the enquiry may well be made, "Why is our enlargement so limited?" Could it be that some are refusing to be burdened? In Nehemiah 9 : 29 and elsewhere in the prophets, refusing to hearken is connected with "hardening the neck" (self-will) and "withdrawing the shoulder" (in modern language refusing to be involved). May we all be exercised by God's loving hand upon us in discipline. (see Hebrews 12 : 11 and Revelation 3 : 19).

We do well to be reminded that everything depends upon the pressure He carried—"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree". Wonderful indeed is the consideration of the burden He bore, the "contradiction of sinners against Himself", "God's wrath and Satan's power". Who but He could face up to the claims of God's holy throne? Samson felt the weight before he died, saying "Let me, I pray thee, feel the pillars".

It is with these considerations before us that we can turn to the interesting subject of the threshingfloors. Every village in Israel would have its threshing-floor, to be used for the gain of all. A bare rock in an elevated place was chosen, and the harvest of wheat or barley collected in the middle. From this pile the sheaves were spread out about a foot deep and threshed, either by the feet of oxen, (1 Corinthians 9 : 9, I Timothy 5 : 11), or by a kind of sledge with nails or stones fastened to the under surface, (Isaiah 41 : 15). An iron-wheeled vehicle was also used, (Isaiah 28 : 27). A sledge for threshing was called a "tribulum" by the Romans, whence comes our word tribulation. Threshing was thus a skilful operation and a fitting figure of the education through which the love of God passes all His beloved children. "Wonderful in counsel and excellent in working (Isaiah 28 : 29) is found in this connection. It is ever to be remembered that what is positive is in mind, that is, the wheat and the barley. When Samson set the harvest on fire it was a terrible disaster, as the year's sustenance for the community was lost. Similarly the Philistines "robbed the threshing-floors". Let us look then for the gain of harvest, for God and for souls.

The first Scripture to be considered is the threshing-floor of Atad, Genesis 50 : 10. Care is needed in using the meaning of Scriptural names,

but when we find that the word **atad** is the same Hebrew word as the bramble in Jotham's parable (Judges 9), we feel justified in seeing here a type of the flesh. In making the moral journey from Egypt to Canaan, and to Hebron, it cannot be too plainly stated that "the flesh profiteth nothing", and again that "no flesh shall glory in His presence". Many and varied are the ways taken by infinite love to teach us this lesson. In Genesis 50 another point true to experience is also brought out. The onlookers in v. 11 observed, "This is a grievous mourning of the Egyptians". Even superficial observers see many of the saints of God subjected to pressure of a very real kind. It is in these situations oftentimes that the true character of the flesh is deeply learned by souls who have to do with God.

The second Scripture (Ruth 3) tells us of another aspect of this same schooling. In this book we are introduced to the mighty man of wealth, who represents great David's greater Son. Doubtless here, as in the book of Job, Israel is primarily in view. It has been pointed out that the spiritual recovery of the nation can be traced in Lamentations, through Canticles, to Psalm 45. We know from the Lord's lips that the time of Jacob's trouble will be a "great tribulation" such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24 : 21) It is just at this time that Ruth (Israel), as the result of the heart exercise of Naomi, will be found in the threshing-floor, ultimately to be brought into union with the true Boaz, and the happy issue, Obed—the worshipper—in ch. 4. Of course, this story is not limited to Israel, although clearly applicable to Israel. The same happy issue is found in the Church period, the Spirit's day, today. How often we have seen saints in affliction brightly sustained, indeed bearing witness that they would not have missed the pressure, in order that they might be brought into living union with Christ in glory, the true Man of Wealth.

The third Scripture (Gideon), reminds us what is possible in a day of departure when even one soul "threshed wheat in secret". The word Midian occurs elsewhere in Scripture—"only by pride cometh contention", and again "where there is no talebearer the strife ceaseth". The word for contention and strife is the same word in the original as Midian, and Midian thus becomes an interesting type of strife, and in particular, strife amongst the people of God, for we recall that Midian was also a child of Abraham. We read, "the land was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites", and has it not often been proved that strife amongst the people of God has robbed them of both food and lodging in a spiritual sense. It was in this distressing situation that Gideon came forward, "poor in Manasseh" and least in his father's house. He was not pretentious, and also more than once needed a boost for his own courage. It is to be observed, however, that he was able to bring forth that which spoke of Christ, a kid, unleavened cakes, and broth. He gained the victory, moreover, in his own house first. Then Abiezer, his locality, was gathered after him, followed by Manasseh, Asher, Naphtali and Zebulon. In war he could say, "Look on me and do likewise". His wisdom was able to handle even the men of Ephraim, something which later Rehoboam could not do. He is a remarkable man and in Psalm 83 we learn that his victory becomes a pattern of the future, when God deals with the King of the North. All this is remarkable indeed, but let

us recall that it all began with one man feeling the pressure of things and threshing wheat in secret because of the Midianites.

In the fourth Scripture we pass from what is individual to what concerns the company. We do well to observe this distinction, as in the case of Paul's two ministries, of the gospel and the Church, (Colossians 1). 1 Chronicles 13 and 15 deals with the interesting subject of bringing up the ark to Jerusalem. A simple reading of ch. 13 might raise the question, What was wrong? "David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds and with every leader". Surely nothing wrong? Singing, harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals and trumpets, and all before God. Why did the Lord come in at the threshing-floor of Uzzah in judgment, and that in a very severe way? The answer, beloved brethren, is in ch. 15. "We sought Him not **after the due order**". A new cart may be permitted for the Philistines, (1 Samuel 6 : 7). It will not do for God's people. None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites (15 : 2). David did not learn this from the captains. He learned it from the Scriptures of truth, the unerring guide for the people of God at all times. By all means let us make a noise—1 Chronicles 15 : 16 cf. 13 : 8—but this time a new element is found, joy ; see also 15 : 25. Has this a voice to us? Beloved brethren, it **has** a voice, and a very solemn one. The Corinthians also, like Uzzah the ark, had treated the supper as an ordinary meal. It was an assembly where assembly discipline was no longer administered. The Lord had to take up the matter of discipline Himself : "many. . . are weak. . . , and a good many are fallen asleep". The Corinthians, like David, had to learn how serious this is, and perhaps we have to learn it too. Happy indeed if we, as they, can learn that recovery is ever in God's mind, not despising His discipline, or fainting under it, but seeking always those peaceable fruits of righteousness found in those who are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12).

The fifth and last Scripture, dealing with the threshing-floor of Araunah (2 Samuel 24) or Ornan (1 Chronicles 22) is perhaps the most interesting of all. David was moved to number Israel. Chronicles traces this sin to its source. "Satan stood up against Israel". Judgment fell, but then we read "The Lord. . . said to the angel. . . It is enough, stay now thine hand" (2 Samuel 24 : 16). In 1 Chronicles 22 : 26 the Lord answered David "from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering". Have we here in figure One Who bore the heaviest pressure of all, even Him who died upon the cross, our beloved Lord? In keeping the Lord Jesus central in our studies a fresh interest and colour is thrown on all the rest.

In putting the Samuel and Chronicles accounts side by side we get a wonderful confirmation of the emphasis of the two books : **2 Samuel 24 : 18–25**. Silver, 50 shekels, the threshing-floor alone bought, the king and his servants prominent. **1 Chronicles 21 and 22**. Gold, 600 shekels, the whole place is in mind, Satan and Jehovah prominent and other typical details.

Chronicles goes on to the "house of the Lord God and the altar of burnt offering for Israel", a house "exceeding magnifical of fame and of glory throughout all countries". It is not the present purpose to explore these interesting subjects but only to indicate that wonderful realm already filled by the Lord Jesus Christ and which will shortly come into

manifestation. All rests on His going into death and bearing the judgment, for God first, and also for us, His loved ones.

Perhaps these few words may serve to stimulate interest in the subject of the threshing-floors, but more than this, to see the great gain of pressure viewed in relation to God, for the Lord first, in His death upon the cross, but also for the saints in their responsible pathway, both individually and collectively.

TO MARY ON THE SABBATH NIGHT ————— HAZEL DIXON

“And she. . . wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.” Luke 2 : 7.

“Then the soldiers. . . took his garments. . . and also his coat. They said among themselves ‘Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be’ : that the Scripture might be fulfilled. . . . Now there stood by the Cross of Jesus his Mother ” John 19 : 23-25.

Entrusted to His loved disciple's care,
You have endured this Sabbath of despair,
Throughout this vain High Day once more have kept
These things within your heart, and, pondering, wept.

Once more the tumult, in the noonday glare,
The cruel mocking of the Victim there ;
His calm submission, His forgiving word
A Sign despised : and through your soul, a sword !

Sharply it pierces, as you turn to see
The soldiers dicing, whose His coat shall be ;
Mere loot, mere gambler's gain it is to them,
But your grieved heart returns to Bethlehem.

The heat and shouting fade, and, in their stead,
Pale lamplight in the quiet stable shed ;
With the rapt hill-Judaeans, angel-sent,
Your gaze, and Joseph's, on the manger bent.

There, in your soul, you magnify the Lord !
Fed, cherished, cradled,—sleeping, still adored,
Warm in the tender care your love supplies,
Wrapped in soft swaddling bands your Sovereign lies.

The dice is thrown, the winner shouts aloud ;
The hateful scene returns, the callous crowd.
Was it in vain, that hour of purest bliss ?
O, Israel's Holy One—was it for this ?

Take comfort, Mary : think where He is laid !
 Not cast in the rough pit for felons made :
 Tombed richly, with fine linen wound, and myrrh,
 Like a great prince lies Nazareth's Carpenter.

Stripped by His foes, God clothes Him in high state,
 Remember Gabriel's words, " He shall be great ! "
 The Lord, Who brought Him from your maiden womb—
 Might He not break the power of the tomb ?

Yield up your grief to His omnipotence !
 Sorrow, with night, will fly, a few hours hence,
 And dawn most glorious consolation bring,
 Joy, far beyond your faint imagining—

Beyond the hopes of Israel's godly few ;
 The pure Firstfruits of a creation new :
 Death conquered, and in Him all nations blest !
 Sleep, handmaid of the Lord ; and be at rest.

TOWARD BABYLON ————— **ANDRE GIBERT**

ON ŒCUMENISM

(Continued)

4. WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY OF THE FATE OF CHRISTENDOM

The Failure of the Church in its Testimony, a Consequence of forgetting its Heavenly Calling

WE have just touched on the underlying cause of the state in which Christendom is to be found ; the Church has forgotten that its calling is heavenly and exclusively heavenly. The Church which, by its calling and its redemption is a stranger to this world, has established itself on earth and has put all or part of its hope therein, losing sight of the "hope of the calling" of the Christian.¹ She has let the world penetrate. She has become linked to it. The tare has grown with the wheat, the leaven has caused the whole lump to ferment, the grain of mustard seed has become the great tree serving as a home for the birds of heaven. All sorts of false doctrine have blossomed ; multitudes call themselves Christians without having the life of God, and worldly Christianity, blooming forth in its diverse forms, usurps the name of Church. It will be judged by the Lord according to the title that it parades, but it is not the Church : the Church which has sadly failed in its mission, is still in the midst of it, known only to its Head, Who watches over it with faithfulness and tender care.

1. Ephesians 4 : 4

"An enemy has done this" because the servants slept. There is nothing to be done about it. "Let them grow together until the harvest". It is impossible to restore what man has ruined. But it is always possible to act in accordance with what remains. There is no question of remaking the original Church, one must just live like the **permanent Church**, with the help of God and according to what His grace teaches.

We are not to be astonished at the state of affairs. It was announced by the apostles, the evil having begun in their days and having become progressively worse. The abandoning of the first love (Ephesus), worldliness, slowed down by persecution (Smyrna), triumphing later (Pergamos), idolatry associated with religious profession within a vast corrupt and dominating religious system (Thyatira), lifeless formalism gaining those who had come out of the system (Sardis), the little strength of a faithful and despised testimony (Philadelphia), spiritual pride excluding Christ (Laodicea),—so many chapters of a profoundly sad history if we look but at the work of man, but marvellous if we consider the patience and the constancy of Him Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps. He is ready to come, judging Jezebel and her people, surprising Sardis like a thief, vomiting out Laodicea, but laden with promises for the victors.

He is coming ; He has not come yet ; Christendom is not yet laid to one side by God. No matter how serious its state, no matter how great its responsibility, it is still the object of His patience, and the warnings are given to drive it to repent. But its ruin is spreading in spite of appearances, in spite of its lofty pretensions and increased activity. The Philadelphian testimony witnesses its ruin which in no wise justifies abandoning it, quite the opposite. Let us heed the One Who says, "Behold I come quickly, hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown".

Apostasy consummated after the Rapture of the Church

What will be the end ? The careful reader of the New Testament will be convinced that the ending will not be the triumph on earth of a restored Church, but by the coming of the Lord, first to take His own, then to judge "those who dwell on the earth". It will be "the day of the Lord" of 2 Thessalonians 2, and it "shall not come except the apostasy come first" (id. 3), that is, the denial of the Christian faith by that which will still retain for a certain time, the grandiose form of the edifice of Christianity. At the same time there will be the denial of their God by the Jews who will have returned to their land. "And then the lawless one shall be revealed" (v. 8), "the man of sin" (v. 3) otherwise the Antichrist.

Apostasy is on the march now-a-days, it is making rapid progress, but it has not yet openly arrived. It will come about when the true Church has been taken. The development of lifeless professing religion is not yet complete ; it will be when "he who now holds back" (the Holy Spirit) "will be taken out of the way". "What holds back" now is all that God in His government employs to slow down this development (id. 6, 7). But the "mystery of iniquity" which has operated since the days of the apostle, is ready to burst out into the full light of day. All is actively preparing for the coming into the scene of those who have been

called the great actors of the final crisis, a crisis which will be settled by the glorious appearance of the Lord. Among them will be "Babylon the great".

Babylon the Great

As we have just recalled, once the true Church has been taken up into heaven, the "great house" left on the earth, but void of all living reality, will for a time have a most splendid but most deceiving appearance. The unity of the so-called Christian world will take place, certainly, but it will be in that proud, opulent, intriguing Babylon which is described symbolically in Revelation 17, and of which the unequalled riches and influence are related in chapter 18. The grandiose Roman edifice, "the most imposing body of the contemporary world, solid on its foundations, difficult to breach", in the words of a competent historian, will subsist with all its imposing apparatus. It is within this age-old system that will be fulfilled, in total religious Babel (confusion), the apostasy of Christendom. The words orthodox, protestant, catholic will no longer mean anything. On the forehead of "the great harlot" there will be "a name written : Babylon the great". This Babylon, a counterfeit of the Bride of the Lamb, will be closely linked with the restoration of the Roman Empire, itself a counterfeit of the kingdom of the Lamb. It will have, for a time, that domination over the temporal power which has long formed the thread of history of the papacy. It will be "seated on a scarlet beast" (Imperial Rome) as "the great city which rules over the kings of the earth". This was its position, more or less, for a time in the past. It has lost it for a while but its religious power has been strengthened by being forced back upon itself, and it has more than ever put its spiritual values at the service of its prestige in the world. It can be seen now, ready to take up once more this "reign" and its new attitudes, like the new language of its head, are of a kind to attract the modern world and to reconquer the masses. We are only speaking here of the system, obviously, and not of persons, nor of the work of God Who employs the instruments which He wishes, and how He wishes, so that the main doctrines of Christianity are still taught, no matter how deformed and stifled they may be by traditions which are put on a par with, or even raised above, the Scriptures. None of this will be left when Babylon reigns and under the crozier of Rome, the unity of apostate Christianity is brought about.

But soon it will be said, "And in one hour she has been made desolate" (18 : 19), "in one hour her judgment is come" (id. v. 10). The civil power ("the ten horns of the beast") will destroy her. They "shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire" (17 : 16, 17).

"Come out from among her my people". It will be too late when the judgment falls upon her. The thing is spoken in advance, like all those things of which the angel sent by Jesus "bears witness in the assemblies" (22 : 16), so that he who has ears and who hears, instructed by the prophetic words, can take up that position to which the Lord calls him. The injunction to withdraw from iniquity in 2 Timothy 2 is to the individual, but it is given so that he who withdraws can find himself with others on the true and only foundation. The call to come out from Babylon is addressed to a people, which the Lord wishes to find

waiting for Him.

However, let not this also be but mere profession ; it would be more guilty than all the others. To claim to be those "who call on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart" runs the risk of becoming vain pretension, the worst kind of Laodicean boasting, and it would simply add yet another name to the list of sects that the Lord will vomit out. It is not just a question of saying but of showing that one is following "faith, righteousness, love and peace" with an undivided heart.

Is it so with us ? I speak to those who have cause to bless the Lord for having opened their eyes as to what the Church is according to the Word. Let us recognise, humbling ourselves, that we have not borne the simple and right testimony to which we have the privilege of being called. Since the Lord is still pleased to let us hear His voice to remind us of His promise and to warn us, let us not close our ears. "I come quickly", He says. Are we waiting for Him ?

Let us beware. It is to be hoped that this be particularly meditated upon by young people who may be tempted to sell their birthright, for if we heed the sometimes moving voices of Christians seeking unity, we shall not be making progress by seeking after this illusory unity, but would be moving backwards to the uncertain paths where these Christians are still struggling ; we should be harming sincere souls rather than helping them.

May the Lord keep us from considering ourselves either as a church or as **the** Church and keep us close to Him in dependence and submission. He is the faithful support of those who call upon Him out of a pure heart, who keep the precious truth of His personal presence in the assembly (Matthew 18 : 20), who realize unity there, enjoying a foretaste of what will be soon manifested in glory and who "follow" toward Him, the glorified Christ, the hope of the Church, and not toward Babylon.

CALEB or THE SECRET OF CONTINUANCE

ROBERT THOMSON

Introduction

HAVING a special service to do for God and the deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt, God spake to Moses face to face, a wonderful privilege indeed. Obedient to His word, Moses sent out twelve spies to search Canaan, a man for each Israelitish tribe. This was the land that Jehovah had promised to give them but it had to be gained by the dispossession of the present holders of it.

Caleb was chosen from the tribe of Judah, and his name means 'bold' or 'brave', a name he lived up to in accordance with the Lord's charge to Joshua (Joshua 1 : 6). God is looking for boldness today which springs from following Him with the whole heart. Six times in Psalm 119 David speaks of the whole heart for God and His word. Affection is connected with the heart, and out of it proceed the issues of life. It is recorded of Caleb that he wholly followed the Lord, and was characterised by the boldness and courage springing from affection toward God.

Moses began his directions to the spies with these words : “ **Get you up**”, and “**go up to the mountain**” (Numbers 13 : 17). The mountain was a place of elevation for their first view of the inheritance. They had to see if **the land** was good or bad, and whether **the people** were strong, weak, few, or many : whether they dwelt **in cities, tents, or strongholds**. “Be of good courage”, Moses concluded, and added the important command to bring back with them of the fruit of the land, so **they ascended** to Hebron. The name means “fellowship”, and the place had been Abraham’s home in the plain of Mamre, which means “fatness”. The vale of Eshcol was near and by the brook were found grapes, pomegranates and figs, some of which they brought back to Moses and Aaron after spying out the land for forty days. **But**, Hebron was in the hands of the gigantic Anakim. Nevertheless, so ravishing was this one sight of Hebron, that in the strength of it Caleb continued for forty years.

The Report

How good it is for us to speak together of the wealth of heaven, and to explore in secret, as by the Holy Spirit, the excellencies of that blessed One Who is the Centre of that scene, Christ Jesus, Son of God, our Saviour and Lord ! For Caleb’s Canaan, centred on Hebron, represents for the Christian all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, made available in fellowship with God. One real glimpse of the love of Christ which passes knowledge is sufficient to stimulate the heart of each dear saint of God, and to strengthen him for continuance in the spiritual conflict in the heavenlies wherein are all our spiritual blessings, in Christ.

Having shown the fruit of the land, and spoken of it as flowing with milk and honey, there was a “nevertheless”. It was the voice of the tempter, speaking of the strong enemy, cities walled and very great, and the giant-like men of Anak were there. “We were as grasshoppers in their sight !” How did they know this ? No doubt it was the result of introspection and occupation with self which magnifies weakness with all its disabilities. The voice of bold courage and strength in the Lord is heard from Caleb, “Let us go up at once, and possess it ; for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13 : 30). He was a man of action, for he depended upon Jehovah Who had both power and strength. “Faith can do that which seems impossible ; it can see Him Who is invisible ; and can know that which is unknowable”.

The Effect

How true it is that “them that honour me I will honour” (1 Samuel 2 : 30) and the Lord could say “But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went ; and his seed shall possess it” (Numbers 14 : 24).

The people who believed the evil report, all perished in the wilderness, which they traversed for forty years, one year for each day of the searching and Jehovah made known this breach of promise to His people (Numbers 14 : 34). So all the people who dishonoured the Lord died before reaching the land, but Joshua and Caleb lived still. What a picture of continuance is this ! They saw every one of their associates fall by the way, but in the strength of that one glimpse of Hebron they continued.

The Blessing

When the land was divided to the tribes in the days of Joshua, Caleb claimed the portion that had been promised him in the time of Moses. He was given the city of Arba (Hebron) and immediately took possession of it by driving out the three sons of Anak. If we are to enjoy the fellowship of Hebron we must drive out the enemy, the world, the flesh and the devil.

Caleb desired to share his spoil with others likeminded and said, "He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife" (Joshua 15 : 16). There is a rich reward to those who are strong in spiritual warfare, described beautifully in Othniel (powerful man of God) who took Kirjath-sepher (city of books). What a great stronghold is this today! Much learning may, sad to say, be accompanied by very little godliness. Othniel is given Achsah in marriage, and she was ready and willing to guide his feet in the right path. She received her father's blessing and having obtained a south land, she desired springs of water to make it fruitful. He gave her upper springs (John 4 : 14) and nether springs (John 7 : 38). She received the fullness of the Spirit (Ephesians 5 : 18).

THE REGENERATION

E. H. SAPP

Matthew 19 : 28

Titus 3 : 5

A WORD is used in these two Scriptures of peculiar meaning and importance. The translators have rendered it "regeneration" in each case with the result that it is mostly understood to refer to new birth as spoken by the Lord in John 3. The New Translation of J. N. Darby has a note on Titus 3 : 5 to distinguish the word employed from the one denoting being "born again". The word is palingenesia and divided into its component parts signifies "palin"—"again", "genesia"—"birth" or "creation" and is to be comprehended as a radical re-formation of what had become old, decayed, defiled, into a new thing as God would have it.

Perhaps the six days of re-creation of Genesis 1 will illustrate. It has been well observed that between the first and the second verses is a vast gap in time—all the eons of time the geologists demand to account for the folding of the rocks ; if so, be it so ! It is evident that the original creation had suffered a change reducing it to a state of chaos. To re-form, to re-create a cosmos in the earth was necessary for the habitation of the man God purposed to set over His works. Viewed thus, the habitable earth appears a real "again-birth". There was an identity with what was before but the re-formation was radical.

In the epistle to Titus the word is used for the second and last occasion in the New Testament. It is employed to describe the new creation of an elect converted soul—a transformed man replaces the old

man. A new creation, a man in Christ ! All the Persons of the blessed Trinity are in activity in this transaction. The source is the very heart of the eternal God ; holy love beamed manward. Even so the object of His philanthropy is a ruin, yet mercy prevails. "He saved us !" The Eternal Son appeared in time bearing the grace of God, bringing salvation from above unto all men. Then on the foundation of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, this rich justifying grace abounds effectually in all them who believe. Lastly and subjectively the man now in Christ is a new creature—old things washed or purged away and there is the positive renewal by the Holy Ghost. Such a one is manifestly made anew, morally and spiritually and moreover now in a standing and suitability to the Holy presence of God. This "perfect wholeness" is the palingenesia. Reading earlier in the epistle to Titus the moral and spiritual state of the believers in Crete is at low ebb. Yet to them, and, praise God, to us, is given rich unfolding of the operations of our Saviour God.

Now reflect a little on resurrection. This is the hope set before the saint of God and has major reference to the body. 1 Corinthians 15 wonderfully reveals the mystery. Here, too, the body raised has an identity with that sown, yet it is to ultimate, at the coming of the Lord, in a radical change, a conformity to the likeness and capacities of Christ's own body of glory. This will be an "again-birth" indeed. The old, decayed, defiled, corrupt mortal emerges in a body incorruptible and immortal—suited to the presence of God our Saviour.

A marvellous day has yet to dawn upon this old sinful world. Its rightful Lord must take to Himself His great power and reign. He must reign ! Let me quote from the pen of the late J. G. Bellett, "The old creation had its foundation in the power of God, the new has its foundation in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Hebrews chapter 2 teaches concerning 'the world to come', in which is revealed a scene where all the works of God's hand are to be found in subjection to the Son of Man. But it teaches us likewise that this Son of Man, this Lord of the 'world to come', had before been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, for the tasting of death for sinners that He might, as a suffering Captain of salvation lead sons to glory, or redeemed sinners with Himself into 'the world to come'. His Kingdom is the palingenesia He speaks of in Matthew 19 : 28, for not only is it still future, but when it is revealed it will have to be said there never was the like of it before. It is laid on the sorrows and sufferings of its divine Lord, the Son of Man, it issues out of the work of reconciliation accomplished at the Cross and sealed by the crowning of Him Who died and rose again."

The millennial earth will be a radically changed world—an "again-born" place. Righteousness is the sceptre of His Kingdom. All things that offend the Lord must be purged away first ere He establish His throne in splendour. But the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. In that day of His power He has a willing people, the nations blessed in His salvation and the Spirit of God poured out upon all flesh. He shall be glorified in His saints in that day and admired in all them that believe.

How good is this unique word "palingenesia". Hear our God ! "Behold I make all things new" and "It is done !" "Even so, come, Lord Jesus".



MUTUAL ACCEPTABILITY AMONGST CHRISTIANS

COLIN CURRY

WE now look at some of the particular situations which can arise, for which special instruction is found in Scripture. Generally, relations between Christians should be happy and unreserved, with the strongest possible readiness in recognizing, welcoming and helping one another. Warmth and openness of this kind tends sometimes to lose its spontaneity : it needs reviving and sustaining. At one limit of our range of subject-matter, therefore, we shall consider the instruction which encourages these proper mutual relations. Abnormally, though unfortunately not infrequently, in some circumstances Christians have real cause to tread carefully with one another. Sometimes even adverse action proves to be necessary, and there are extreme cases where this has to be definite and unhesitating. So that we may conclude our discussion with the more agreeable theme of normal relations between Christians, we begin at the other extreme, moving from it through the intermediate region where different shades of more moderate and delicate action are necessary. The sub-headings indicate the type of action required ; and the progressive change will be noted in the nature of the attitudes needed.

Decisive Refusal

We have referred already to cases where this is necessary. "Receive him not" (2 John : 10) is the plain instruction about a person who is active in disseminating what is untrue to the person of Christ, and who by his subversive actions and beliefs undermines the foundations of our faith. Individual Christians have to show clearly that such persons are unwelcome ; and, this being so, it is evident that gatherings of believers have to adopt the same attitude.

Persons whose conduct is disreputable have to be disowned by a gathering of Christians with whom they may be associated. A decision to this effect has to be made in all fairness but nevertheless with forthrightness when it is a patently right judgment of the matter. The dangers of unjudged evil, the readiness with which it spreads, and its reflection on the Christians who fail to judge it, are all clear in the solemn passage which instructs us about this (1 Corinthians 5). Possible recovery, however, has to be in mind even when such a judgment is necessary. The kinds of behaviour calling for action of this kind are detailed in verse 11.

It would be unwise to extend this action into totally different areas without clear justification for doing so. It would also be unwise, in taking note of the details of this verse, to fail to see that sins of the spirit are as shameful as more overt actions of the flesh. The discipline of others requires also a severity with ourselves in our inward attitudes as well as in other ways.

No Compromise ; Quiet Withdrawal

We now consider a kind of instruction prominent in the pastoral epistles. These epistles (especially 2 Timothy) envisage disturbing trends in the progress of Christianity. Our Lord Himself had indicated this in a sequence of parables (Matthew 13). He had told of a mixture of false and true, of trends for good and trends towards evil in the developing Christian scene, and of a great sorting out at the end. Man's order and teachings would distort and add to what was initially good and from God : outwardly it would seem to swamp God's order of things. This situation is seen beginning, and foreseen as developing, in the letters to Timothy. Proper conduct for Timothy and for his successors, in the presence of these unhappy realities, is outlined. This instruction (plainly relevant to our general theme) requires our obedience too ; these trends having proceeded so much further in our day. The series "Toward Babylon", currently appearing in this periodical, shows how confused is the present state of things. In brief, Timothy's directions are as follows. Within the Christian circle where God has placed him he is to be a leading influence in sustaining the truth, in teaching godly ways to others, and in moderating and curbing profitless and damaging activities. He is to be right **himself** first, with a clear conscience and a close link with God, and with the guarded behaviour which accompanies this. "Keep **thyself** pure" ; "Show **thyself** approved unto God" : here is the first requirement. Example is better than precept ; ungodly and unhelpful elements are at times best rebuked by quiet non-alignment with an evident pursuit of pure and profitable objectives. Remonstrance with those who oppose or mislead from the truth may be needed to open their eyes, and to put others on their guard ; meek instruction will at times help those who are prepared to hear. By positive understanding and presentation of clear fundamental truth, and by example in conduct, there is hope of countering unhelpful trends, of stemming profitless words, and checking subversive activities.

In the longrun there is need to stand apart from what is bent on a course which overthrows faith. What vitiates the basis of Christianity, what damages and confuses the faith of those who would cling to Christ in simplicity and obedience, is iniquity. No compromise with this is allowable. The main passage of this kind is 2 Timothy 2 (especially the latter half). From verse 16 onwards it is plain that false teaching on basic matters provides the background to the passage, and is the main element to be separated from. Timothy is to withdraw from persons and teachings and ways of life which dishonour the Lord. He is to be **with** other persons, whose qualities are described in verse 22. The passage primarily tells Timothy to be firmly on the right side of a **moral** boundary, and

well apart from what is on the other side in that sense. Especially in our day there is a need to be sensitive to developments and set-ups which bear the name of Christ but (in both outlook and practice) have left true Christianity far behind. There is need to be apart from these things. We are never advised to treat limited knowledge as necessarily wilful, however, and a blanket rejection of all the **persons** involved is hardly what Scripture recommends. The Lord Himself discerns that some in this situation are undefiled (Revelation 3 : 4, etc.), and He recognizes these with approval. Care is needed lest, in regard to some, an opposite view from His is taken !

Another aspect of this passage which may be important for us to consider is clear from the following quotation. It refers to the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were affirming that the resurrection had already taken place ; this is a sample of the kind of evil teaching the passage has in mind. About this W. Kelly writes : " It was not ignorance of the truth so much as exaggeration. . . No doubt they piqued themselves on higher truth than others taught, and on superior intelligence. This is an extreme danger for those who have a real thirst and value for the truth of God ; if not watchful, they are the most liable to be ensnared. But the remedy is simple and sure when men cry up their wares as being above all 'precious', and therefore depreciate the tried and faithful servants of the Lord as being those teaching on altogether lower ground. The saints will find it valuable to cleave to the truth they have always received since they knew God, or rather were known of Him." (Exposition of the two epistles to Timothy ; 3rd edition, p.226). These words were written a century ago : the claims made by those criticised have a modern ring. It is plain that there are refined ways in which doubtful teachings can be promulgated as well as the grosser ones. Elsewhere in these epistles, too, false sanctity is warned against as well as false profession (for example, 1 Timothy 4 : 3-5 ; 2 Timothy 3 : 5). The biblical view of holiness and men's version of it can differ considerably.

Cool Detachment

A few passages indicate the need, in some situations, for non-approval of attitudes without complete severance from the persons concerned. One such passage is 2 Thessalonians 3 : 6-15. It is a passage often used with doubtful validity, in a wider context than that in which it appears. Persons who are glad of opportunities for indolence, both in the spiritual and workaday realms, are primarily in mind here. Spongers, idlers, and passengers, though Christians, need awakening and bringing more into step with the remainder of the Christian community. Admonition has to be soft-handed, and may often take the form of mild ostracism. Lack of self-control and direction in Christian things (including habits of working in ordinary but important activities) ought not to characterise the people of God ; and there should be mutual influences sufficient to correct these matters. Needless to say this passage ought not to be pressed into service to justify the cold shouldering of some devoted Christian who cannot see eye-to-eye with us on some point or other.

Another passage is Romans 16 : 17–20. “Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned ; and avoid them”. The spirit that fosters rifts amongst the people of God is distasteful to normal Christian people. The persons who do this are to be noted and left alone. These activities are too close to those of the great adversary himself to allow friendship with such people. The best counter-activity is to be well absorbed with what is positive and good, and whole-heartedly engaged in right channels (see the later verses in the passage).

Mutual Respect

Numerous passages in the New Testament tell us that mutual respect amongst Christians is right, and to be encouraged. We are to look **up** to our fellow-Christians (esteeming them above ourselves) ; we are not to despise them in any sense. We are to respect them in spite of differences, whether these be differences of nationality, social status, attire, intellect, age, gift, or progress in the Christian life. There is to be effort to even out some of the more unfortunate disparities. In addition to all this, differences of **viewpoint** on many matters should not be allowed to form a barrier between Christian people ; differing viewpoints, held in all seriousness and sincerity of conscience before God, should in fact be a reason for added respect for one another.

The parts of the Roman epistle concerned with the practical side of Christian faith devote more space to this matter of mutual tolerance than to anything else ; and the subject appears briefly in other places. The main passage is Romans 14 : 1 to 15 : 7. The sample case which Paul uses (abstentions from meats, and recognition of special days) is remarkable in that the opposing standpoints are not equally valid. One person sees the issue more clearly (and according to God) than the other. It is even the difference between a Christian and a sub-Christian view. Yet these are not the sole considerations. There is to be no overriding of the “weaker” person ; not even any disputation with him. His own serious thinking on the matter, as one who knows he has to act carefully before God, has to be respected. He is to be welcomed because God has welcomed him, and the difference left unresolved. It is a more spiritual action **not** to press a correct spiritual judgment, than to browbeat another into alignment with it. The other person, too, though perhaps less enlightened, will also follow a spiritual line if (along with his careful personal judgments) he leaves it to God to assess his brother, who thinks so differently, while maintaining all respect for him himself.

It is important to note how this passage sets great store upon personal exercise before God, upon a clear conscience, and upon individual separate thought about issues in the light of Scripture. Legislation for another man’s conscience, pressure upon another man’s faith and practice, is uncalled-for and dangerous. The pure heart is what God commends. Unless these lessons are heeded one’s “knowledge” can lead to un-Christian ways which bring damage to others. Of course this is not to say that helping less-instructed people should never be attempted, but

merely that there are wrong ways of doing this. The example of Christ, as always, shows the ideal spirit, and is brought into prominence as the section nears its end.

The instance drawn attention to by Paul is one in which the real right lies much more on one side than the other. On the one side are the "strong" (provided their attitude is right) ; on the other are the "weak". There are many issues on which the true judgment is much less clear. Equally strong and well-meditated spiritual judgments, arrived at by prayer and dependence on the Spirit of God, can come down on either side, with scriptural support adduced for either point of view. It seems clear that, if the parties in the less well-balanced situation are told to live in respect and harmony, these other cases ought not to be allowed to give rise to dissonance. All sorts of things come into this category : household and adult baptism, shades of differences on the import of texts of Scripture and their interpretation, difference of emphasis on lines of scriptural teaching to be stressed, questions about the relative value and legitimacy of various kinds of service for the Lord. The list could be extended in many directions, and into some quite controversial fields. Who has not heard of hard and unyielding judgments on both sides in matters like these ? Why is it we find it so easy to under-rate the spirituality of the other person when he turns out to be on the other side in some such matter as this ? How many clashes might be avoidable if we could respect and forbear with one another in the way this passage suggests ?

(to be continued)

BEHOLDING WONDROUS THINGS

J. H. BOSLEY MENZIES

(1) Introductory :

I do not apologise for using the poetical and rhetorical word, wondrous. I feel that in these days of material security and mathematically calculated probability little room is left for wonder and amazement. It is possible to watch events occurring thousands of miles away ; it is possible to travel at super-sonic speeds ; it is possible to land on the moon and walk around. Of course, each of these achievements was the source of wonder for a while ; but now we are familiar with them, and in varying degrees accept them as facts. The more we familiarise ourselves with these wonders, the less we are amazed. Our sense of wonder becomes dulled.

I fear that this acclimatisation can also affect our spiritual wonder. A famous (controversial) German theologian, Karl Barth, has said that at the centre of every theological insight is wonder, 'open-mouthed marvelling'. As we are confronted with the activity of the living God, we step back in sheer amazement. What we see is so unlike our everyday experiences that we are overwhelmed, shaken from our complacency, and forced to admit that we have been standing face to face with the God who is, the God who has spoken, the God who has acted.

(2) Wondrous things :

The psalmist had the right idea when he prayed : 'Open Thou mine eyes that I might behold wondrous things. . .' (Psalm 19 : 18) There are two facets to this prayer. The first is that he asks to be made aware, the second is his response : wonder.

A characteristic of the work of the Lord Jesus was making people aware, opening their eyes both actually and metaphorically. 'The light shineth in darkness. . . that was the true light'. 'For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' The eyes are opened and the light of knowledge floods in. The confrontation takes place and our response is open-mouthed amazement ; sheer incredulity. 'Wondrous things' ; we reiterate the words.

I believe that it is as we stand humbly before God that we begin to appreciate the fact that God is. I fear that in the 1970s we can find it only too easy to forget that God is really there, that He has acted in history and that He does act in history. Consider the open-mouthed amazement of the Israelites as they looked back across the divided sea and saw their pursuing enemies swallowed up as the path was flooded. It is not surprising that their song of victory should be so promptly sung. 'I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously'. In their amazement they recaptured the events which they saw : 'The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my lust will be satisfied on them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, they sank as lead in the mighty waters'. The panic of the moment is captured, the picture of the enemies sinking is concrete, it has been seen. And now the wonder of the event overtakes the singers :

' Who is like Thee O Lord among the gods ?
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in
praises, doing wonders ? '

God acted in history redeeming his people from thralldom : God acted in history redeeming us from thralldom. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.'

The Israelites were not able to analyse the scientific principles of their deliverance, but they knew that this was a 'wonder'. Similarly we cannot understand the biological principles of God manifest in the flesh, but this is a wonder.

(3) His Wondrous Childhood :

Evangelical Christians tend to centre their worship upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus and its effect for them in their relationship with God, but it is good too, to trace the story of the incarnation. When the shepherds came to where the child lay and told of their angelic visitors, 'all they that heard it wondered at those things' (Luke 2 : 17). When Simeon took the Child in his hands and blessed God saying, 'mine eyes have seen Thy salvation' (Luke 2 : 33) Joseph

and His mother marvelled. When the Lord Jesus as a Child debated with the doctors in the Temple, 'all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers' (Luke 2 : 47). Three specific moments of wonder are presented in this chapter of His life. The phrase of Mrs. Alexander seems apt : 'His wondrous Childhood'.

(4) Where reason fails :

Mark records in his gospel the response of the people who saw the Lord restore to a deaf man his hearing. 'They were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well.' (7 : 37). Luke records the story of the widow who set out to bury her dead son and the compassion of the Lord who raised the son to life. 'And there came a great fear on all'. (7 : 16). What astonishment the mourners must have experienced, here they were confronted with something utterly alien. This was indeed a wonder. Reason failed them, but they had seen the evidence that God hath visited his people. John tells of the officers sent by the priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus. They came back without Him and could only offer the explanation 'Never man spake like this man'. (7 : 46). As we witness the work of our Lord Jesus in the Gospels, a sense of awe must creep over us, and as, in the power of the Holy Spirit we experience the life of God in us, and allow God to work in us and through us, our sense of wonder increases. Isaac Watts wrote :

Where reason fails
With all her powers,
There faith prevails
And love adores.

(5) Love so amazing :

'Jesus came forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto (the people), Behold the man !' As we reflect upon the healing work of the Lord, upon His ministry of comfort and consolation, His kindness and His concern for suffering and frail humanity, what is our response to the exclamation, 'Behold the man' ? We can hear the echo from Lamentations, speaking of the ruined holy city, but prophetically echoing no doubt the greatest sorrow : 'Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.' Human commentary must break down, explanation is impossible, exclamation can only re-echo the wonder. Perhaps our feelings are crystallised in Watts' words :

' See from His Head, His Hands, His Feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down ;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ? '

We can ask questions about this most awful of moments, but we can never hope to fathom the mystery of this wonder. Our response may well be that of Watts' next verse :—

‘ 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.’

The wonder of the work of Christ defies theological classification. We do not confine it within long words ; we cannot encompass it with brilliant intellect, but we are forced to humility as we stand outside of an experience we cannot understand, knowing that the love which was mingled with an inexpressible sorrow has found us as its object. Here again is another wonder.

‘ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God’. The love which we witnessed in the patient enduring of the cross, the love which drew us to the Lord Jesus, and introduced us to the relationship of sons before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, evokes in us open-mouthed marveling. We cannot understand why we should be the objects of the Father’s love. Even the most learned theologian cannot explain the reasons for the Father’s love. Barth has said, ‘ As the recipient of grace a man can only become active in gratitude. If anyone supposed he could understand himself as such a receiver of grace he would do better to bid theology farewell’.

(6) Wonder and Worship :

What is the end-product of wonder ? Do we spend all our time simply with open mouths, inarticulate and ineffective ? I believe that we can channel the energy generated by wonder, and this can enrich our worship.

John, in his vision on Patmos, was told, ‘ Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed’, and he saw a lamb as it had been slain. What wonder must have filled him as he saw the humble creature bearing upon it the marks of slaughter, and yet this was the one which had prevailed, this was the regal lion. The wonder of the triumphant death of Christ is emphasised in these symbols, and the wonder gives way to adoration and worship. The response that John witnessed was ‘ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and blessing.’

We are assured that we have boldness to approach God. This is true because the Lord Jesus in His death removed the partition between the holy of holies and man. But we do not, by virtue of this boldness enter God’s presence in a self-confident manner ; we do not aggressively assert our rights. We approach in wonder. There is no doubt in our hearts, for we are assured that we are given access in Christ, in that sense we have boldness. But can we ever cease to wonder ?

ON ŒCUMENISM

(Concluded)

APPENDIX

Babylon

I.—Babel (or Babylon, Greek form of the Semitic name), in Chaldea (or Shinar) was “the beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod” which “began to be mighty on the earth” after the flood (Genesis 10 : 8, 10). The first characteristic of Babel is this proud assertion of power “before the Lord.” A second, which precedes it, is that of human will rising ambitiously against that of God : an association which excludes the Lord to go against His injunction (comp. Genesis 11 : 4 and 9 : 1), hence the chastisement by confusion (Babel, interpretation given expressly by the Scriptures themselves) and the enforced dispersion (11 : 9). Finally will come the idolatry of which Babylon is one of the original centres (Joshua 24 : 2).

II.—These characteristics mark the historical Babylon, that of Nebuchadnezzar. After having participated as subject to the Assyrian (2 Kings 17 : 24) in the chastisement of Israel by the latter, it became when liberated and conquering, the instrument used for the chastisement of Judah. It opens the times of the nations, which still obtain, during which God takes the kingdom from His people and gives the government to the Gentiles who exercise it without being able to establish a stable dominion. Daniel is the head of gold of the great statue of Daniel 2 which symbolizes the succession of the four empires of the nations. The prophets draw attention to the luxury of the great city, its idolatry (Jeremiah 50 : 51), the violence of its warriors (Habakkuk 1), the pride of its kings, their rising up against the God of the heavens whose temple they profane, and the results of this (Daniel 5 : 18–23). Its fall, by means of the Medes and Persians, brings the captivity of Judah to an end, but the empires which follow, whatever their respective characteristics, retain a close relation to the initial nature, for the statue is one.

III.—So much for the past. In the future, Revelation again takes up the name of Babylon the great (cf. Daniel 4 : 30) to apply it symbolically to the “woman seated on a scarlet beast full of names of blasphemies” (Revelation 17 : 3). We are here in the period of things which “must shortly come to pass” but in which the present things issue once the time of the Church has drawn to a close (which does not belong to prophecy). The glorified Lamb has taken the book and broken the seals one after the other. The fourth empire, the Roman Empire, lives again. It is “the beast” which “was and is not, and is going to rise out of the abyss and go to perdition” (17 : 8, 11). Babylon the great, the “great harlot” is associated with it for a while with the moral traits of the head of gold of yore (pride, idolatry, persecution of the saints). But here it is a question of a “mystery,” a power which will claim to exercise the

dominion in the name of a religion but which in reality is total apostasy, so that the beast which bears it is "full of names of blasphemies". It is established on the "seven hills" which indicates Rome without any possible error and it "reigns over the kings of the earth" (vv. 9, 18). It falsely claims the place of the Bride who will reign with Christ when it is but a harlot having impure relations with the potentates who are seduced by its appearance and subject to its magic (17 : 4 ; 18 : 23). It will impose its astonishing ecclesiastical organisation and its natural power on the masses (it is "seated on several waters") and will place them at the disposal of the civil power, but it will use the civil power to increase its riches and prestige. In short, it will bring to its zenith a religious profession which will bring together under the Roman purple and scarlet those confessions among which present day Christendom is divided and from which all Christianity will by then have disappeared, leaving them in common apostasy.

This corrupt and corrupting system will soon be found to be tyrannical by those very people who have benefitted from it, and the political power, "the ten kings and the beast" will hate it, will end up despoiling it of its riches and influence and will finally destroy it (Revelation 17 : 16). Its fall, bewailed by all those who lived on its luxury and more generally by all the supporters of the civilisation over which it reigned, will be celebrated with joy in the heavens, as the signal for the marriage of the Lamb and His manifestation in glory (18 ; 19 : 1-5).

IV.—But once Christianity will have disappeared, the name and the spirit of Babylon will be found in the course of prophetic events which will follow. They will all converge in the "great day of the Eternal", when there will take place the final judgment on the enemies of Christ and His people (the faithful Remnant). These judgments, which differ according to the enemy, will all be executed on the territory of Israel or its borders (Edom) the object of covetousness and rivalry where the peoples and their leaders will be assembled to be destroyed. Perhaps the most remarkable prophecy in this respect is the Oracle on Babylon of Isaiah 13 and 14. If it dealt with the judgment of the historic Babylon, still in the future when the prophet wrote, this judgment is itself but a figure of the future. We find there a grandiose synthetical picture of the final crisis when, in the midst of the confusion and tumult of Babylon, the assembling of which we have just spoken will take place. Assembled together to be strong (Joel 3 : 9-12) in great rival confederations, but in reality all risen against Christ, the peoples grouped together will believe themselves invincible. They will say "peace and security", and lo "a sudden destruction will come upon them like the pains of one in childbirth, and they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5 : 3).

Three great enemies fall under the curses pronounced against Babylon in this Oracle.

1. The head of the Roman Empire and its armies, of which Revelation 19, verses 11 to 21 shows the defeat at Armageddon by the King of kings coming from heaven with His armies and casting the Beast (with the

false prophet) into the lake of fire and brimstone. Its previous association with apostate Christendom made it participate in the character of Babylon. Furthermore, what is destroyed then, struck by the stone detached without hands, will be the statue of which, let us not forget, Babylon is the head of gold. The fall of the historical Babylon and the return from captivity (thanks to Cyrus) have only partly accomplished Isaiah 14 verses 3 to 11. It is at Armageddon that "the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the rulers" shall be broken completely and finally. Thus the times of the empires of the nations, Babylonian in their very essence, will be brought to a close.

2. At the same time will be destroyed the Antichrist, the wicked one, the man of sin, the son of perdition, the king in Judaea, the false prophet who will have exercised the power of Satan for the benefit of the Imperial Roman power. It has been thought that "there will be some strange union under the secular influence acting in concert with the false Messiah (see Revelation 13 and 2 Thessalonians 2) between the idolatrous Romanism and the idolatrous Judaism" (J.N.D.). It may be that the Antichrist is unmasked as a false prophet only after the end of Christianity (he is only called false prophet in Revelation 19 : 20 and 20 : 10). He then exercises the "seduction of unrighteousness" of diabolical origin, both in the Roman Empire (Revelation 13 : 12-16) and in Judaea. He will benefit from both the Christian (he denies the Father and the Son) and the Judaic (he denies that Jesus is the Christ) apostasy, according to 1 John 2 : 22. One cannot help recognizing him in Isaiah 14 : 12-20 in that "bright star, son of the dawn" which falsely takes the place of Christ (v. 13, 14) just as the great harlot has taken that of the Church and whose image is superimposed, so to speak, on that of the Beast and on that of Babylon whose king is evoked in verses 16 and 17.

3. Finally, in the same Oracle on Babylon, the Assyrian and "all the nations" associated with him who have subjected Israel also appear. We know that the Assyrian is the great enemy of the people of God and the last, after having been the first, before the government was given to the Empires of the nations. He will think of fighting with the Roman Beast over the "land of beauty" and subjecting it. Once the western power has been destroyed he will use his advantage to the full and besiege Jerusalem, to be destroyed there by Christ when "His feet shall stand that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zechariah 14 : 4). A little later the associated nations will be destroyed in the land of Edom. All this is evoked in Isaiah 13 ; 14 : 24-27. Chaldea will be part of this Assyrian confederation, as in other times it was part of the kingdom of Nineveh, but above all it will give it its fundamental character of confusion (13 : 2-8) in this final battle with the Messiah, redeemer of His people. Finally Babylon, like Edom will be definitively destroyed whilst the other nations, in subjection, will live again in the millennial reign (Jeremiah 50 : 26-32 : Isaiah 13 : 19,20).

Let us not deceive ourselves. All that man attempts to set up by uniting, as in other times the men of the plain of Shinar, in order to make

a name and not be scattered, in reality prepares the final confusion of peoples which will become yet more manifest when there is no longer "that which holds back". It will end in the subversion of all earthly powers. Babel is the common seal which is placed on them by God. They will rise up, separately and together "against the Lord and against His Anointed one. Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us!" But "He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Then He will speak to them in His anger and in His fierce displeasure will he terrify them: And I have anointed my king upon Zion, the hill of my holiness. . . And now, O kings, be ye wise. . ." (Psalm 2).

THE RIBBAND OF BLUE

A. H. STORRIE

Numbers 15 : 38-41.

THE Lord spake unto Moses saying : "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders **a ribband of blue** : and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them ; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring : that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God : I am the Lord your God".

The ribband of blue on the borders of the Israelite's outer garments was designed to be a heavenly memorial, that the word of God might be held fast in the remembrance of the thoughts of his heart. Whenever the Israelite looked on the ribband of blue, it would remind him to think of Jehovah, and to yield a hearty obedience to the divine statutes.

It is evidently the ribband of blue on our Lord's garment that is referred to in Luke 8 : 44 : "A woman. . . came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment" and in Mark 6 : 55 : ". . . They laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment : and as many as touched Him were made whole".

In the New Testament the words "heavenly calling" only occur once, in Hebrews 3 : 1 : "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. . .", but the truth of the heavenly calling—suggested by the ribband of blue—pervades the greater part of the New Testament. Our verse continues : "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus". As is well known, our Lord is frequently given in Hebrews the name He bore in His manhood—the name of JESUS. He was the heavenly man on earth. How and where are we to consider Him as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession ? An Apostle is

one who is sent ; and it is particularly in the gospel of John that He is seen as the Apostle sent by God, while we rightly consider Him as "King" in Matthew's gospel, as "Servant" in Mark—"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, in Whom my soul delighteth. . ." (Isaiah 42 : 1). In Luke we behold the Man Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews He commands our gaze as our Great High Priest.—(3 : 1)—but for very instructive details we must go to some Old Testament writings.

The word "ephod" is a pure Hebrew word meaning to "put on", but in connection with the High Priest has acquired a technical meaning, and stands in the Scriptures characteristically for the priestly garment. "Did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel, to be My priest to offer upon Mine Altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before Me ?" (2 Samuel 2 : 28). Now we note that the heavenly colour blue was predominant in the ephod ; "Thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue" (Exodus 28 : 31). Indeed, Christ is the theme of the Mosaic Tabernacle, "every whit of it uttereth His glory" (Psalm 29 : 9, marginal reading), the blue denoting the heavenly character of our Lord's manhood. He did not become Man till born of the Virgin Mary at Bethlehem, yet He could say of Himself, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3 : 13) "The second Man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15 : 17). The breastplate of the High Priest was secured by a ribband of blue (Exodus 39 : 21), and the curious girdle of the ephod was made of the same material as the ephod itself, predominantly blue, which colour also appears in the bells which were to adorn—with the pomegranates—the hem of the robe of the ephod. The cloth of blue also comes into prominence as the covering of the Tabernacle and its furniture. (Numbers 4 : 1–15)

The question arises : Are we believers to-day, spiritually speaking, also wearing the ribband of blue, and walking according to its meaning ? The practical apostle James warns believers against the friendship of the world (James 4 : 4), and Paul deplores the minding of earthly things on the part of believers (Philippians 3 : 19). John's words are equally decisive : "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2 : 15–17).

TWO MASTERS OF MEDITATION (2) ——— J. S. BLACKBURN

THE reader of this, after the other paper (pp. 108–112), will immediately notice certain points of resemblance. There is a very similar concept of the soul, and, in particular, meditation is seen as the means by which, from the mind, the affections and will are reached and set in motion in response to the love of God.

Francis was in fact advising a housewife in what he calls the practice of devotion. It is very interesting that he advises her that in such a case as hers, the most favourable hour for meditation is the time between what has been called "the morning scramble" and the mid-day meal.

The same omissions are also to be seen, notably little or no recognition of the assured presence of the Comforter with the believer, making good the things of Christ; and the open access at all times into the "holiest of all" by the blood of Jesus.

2. Considerations. (Freely adapted from Francis of Sales. 1567-1622) Meditation, through putting our understanding in the divine light, and exposing our will to the warmth of the heavenly love, purges our understanding of its ignorance, and our will from depraved affections: it is the water of blessing, which, by its streams, causes our good desires to revive and flourish, and cleanses our souls. But perhaps you do not know how to conduct a season of meditation, for, unhappily, it is a thing that few people in our day know how to do. That is why I am suggesting to you a simple and short method for this. The preparation consists in placing yourself in the presence of God by a vivid and attentive apprehension of Him, and praying for His help.

Meditation is nothing else than one or several **considerations** made in order to move our affections in God and divine things. This is how meditation differs from study, which is not directed to our increase in the love of God, but for other ends and purposes. Having then set your spirit in the centre of the theme on which you wish to meditate, you will begin to make **considerations** on it. (An example will be given later of such **considerations**.) Now if your spirit finds taste, light and fruit in one of these considerations, you will stop there without going further, doing like the bees which do not leave a flower so long as they are finding honey there. But if you do not find your heart's desire in one of these considerations, after having for a little tried and tested it, you will pass to another. But proceed gently in this work, without excitement.

Meditation produces good movements of the will, or the action part of the soul, movements such as love to God and to the brethren, zeal for the salvation of souls, a walk following the steps of our Saviour, compassion, joy, fear of God, hatred of sin, confidence in the goodness and mercy of God; and in these affections our spirit ought to extend itself as much as possible. You must not stop at generalities, but must convert them into special and particular purposes of heart. For example, the first word which our Saviour spoke on the cross, when made the subject of our meditation, would produce a good affection of imitation in our soul that is, the desire to forgive our enemies and to love them. Now what I am now saying is that this is a small thing if you do not add a special purpose to this end. Meditation on this word of Jesus will stimulate me to be no longer annoyed by what others say against me, nor of their scornful actions; on the contrary I will say and do what is required to gain and soften them. By this means, your faults will be much more speedily corrected than by merely general feelings.

Finally, I advise you to gather a little bouquet of devotion ; and this is what I mean. Those who have lingered in a beautiful garden do not willingly leave it without being permitted to take in their hand four or five flowers with them in order to enjoy their fragrance during the rest of the day. In the same way, when our spirit has lingered in divine things by meditation, we ought to choose one or two or three thoughts which we have found most satisfying, and most likely to promote our spiritual advancement, in order to remind ourselves of them and savour them spiritually during the rest of the day.

It is especially necessary that after the conclusion of your season of meditation you keep in mind the resolutions and purposes which you have taken, in order carefully to put them into practice the same day. This is the great fruit of meditation, without which it is too often, not only useless, but harmful, because the virtues meditated but not put into practice sometimes puff up one's spirit. In our opinion we are what we have resolved to be, which is doubtless true if one's resolutions are living and firm, but they are only empty and dangerous if not put into practice. It is necessary, therefore, by all means to try to put them into practice and to look for opportunities small and great for doing this.

A Meditation on John 13 : 8. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me".

Consideration 1. Consider the setting : outside, the iron tramp of the Roman legion ; the plotting priests ; the fickle people : inside, the Lord Jesus speaking to His own about the Father, the pure delight of heaven.

“ Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
While I wait for Thee ;
Hushed my heart to listen
In expectancy.

Speak, O blessed Master
In this quiet hour ;
Let me see Thy face, Lord,
Feel Thy touch of power.

Speak, Thy servant heareth !
Be not silent, Lord ;
Waits my soul upon Thee
For the quickening word !

Like ‘ a watered garden,’
Full of fragrance rare,
Lingering in Thy presence,
Let my life appear.”

Consideration 2. “ Having part ” is here and now and not only in heaven. “ With Me ” means sitting with Him, hearing Him, receiving into mind and heart what He imparts, enjoying what He enjoys, aiming for what He aims for.

Consideration 3. This “part with Him” must be the essence of all that follows in Chapters 14 to 17. The centre is the Father. At this moment He was conscious of His Father’s House, their coming to the Father by Him, the Father making His abode with them, the Father’s love for the disciples, to know the Father is eternal life, the glory which He had with the Father before the world, the oneness of the saints with the Father and the Son.

Consideration 4. This “part with Him” must include His things which are taken by the Comforter and shown to us. The Comforter does not occupy us with Himself, but with Christ and His part.

THE GIVER.

“How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? ”

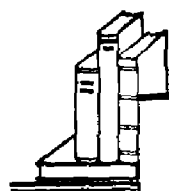
A thousand joys beyond my scanty thinking,
 A thousand blessings that His grace has brought,
 A thousand streams at which my lips are drinking,
 My heart a song of sweetest praise have taught.

And yet amid them all my Lord excelleth ;
 No beauty like the shining of His face,
 No glory like the sunshine where He dwelleth,
 No riches like the riches of His grace.

The joys were nothing without Him who giveth,
 The blessings nought but for the Source above ;
 And from the wounded side of Him that loveth
 Outflow the streams that tell me of His love.

Then, blessed Master, whilst Thy gifts enjoying,
 Thyself I’ll magnify above them all,
 To spread Thy fame my utmost strength employing
 Till home to Thee Thy voice at length shall call.

R.H.T.



“EYE HATH NOT SEEN . . . BUT” _____ J. STODDART

1 CORINTHIANS 2: 9, 10.

IT would be generally agreed that scientific conquests in recent times have provided greater abundance for the satisfaction of the eye and ear than has ever been known to man hitherto. Sights and sounds are transmitted and received by modern communication media over almost limitless distances, and remote objects in Creation, such as the moon and the deep beds of the ocean, are now disclosed with startling detail. Yet the shrewd observation of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 1 : 8 remains as palpably true as ever, that “the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing ;” and in 4 : 8, “neither is the eye satisfied with riches.”

Of course, it is right that the divinely given faculties of seeing and hearing should be used to the best and fullest extent. However, our Scripture under review assures us that a whole vast world of reality lies quite beyond the range of these wonderful senses. Is it, then, possible to explore this important realm of things “which God has prepared for them that love Him” ? Many, it seems, would give a negative answer here and piously plead that we shall only know such things when we reach our heavenly Home, basing their humble assumption on the very words of v.9. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” Is this the true understanding of the passage ? or is it not rather the sad result of inattention to reading its context and completion ? Let us observe that the apostle Paul is using a quotation from Isaiah 64 : 4 which if it were to stand alone would certainly confirm the impression that such deep and wonderful things are beyond our present understanding and enjoyment. And in the natural order of things this is unchallengeably true, for the very best of sight or hearing, assisted by the most sophisticated instruments of science and the accumulated learning of ages cannot reveal what lies in the heart of God for His own. This is a divine prerogative and depends upon His sovereign will to make it known.

A more careful look at our verses shows a remarkable extension to the quotation from Isaiah 64, evidently overlooked by those already referred to. This extension is introduced by the forcible conjunction “but” of verse 10, “**But** God has revealed them to us by His Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” What relief, what satisfaction this brings to the enquiring mind, to know that no

longer are things so vital and so dear to the heart completely beyond our ken. Thus pious doubt and vain speculation are alike dismissed by this significant announcement. "God **has** revealed them to us by His Spirit". How perfectly this agrees with the Saviour's own expression in Matthew 11 : 25, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

In the context of these verses in 1 Corinthians we have the clearest unfolding of the process whereby this and indeed all Christian truth is revealed, received and reproduced. It is "by His Spirit" that God in His sovereign pleasure makes known to us things that are hidden from man's natural perception. Thus the Lord Jesus referred to Him as "the Spirit of truth" Who would "guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak ; and He will show you things to come." Only by One so competent, Himself co-equal in Godhead, could the thoughts of God be communicated to man, and that only after redemption was accomplished and Christ glorified. Only then would the entire gamut of all truth be revealed and safeguarded from the intrusion of human thought limited by sight and sense. How grandly G.V.W. exults in the wonder of Divine revelation in his exquisite hymn (No. 330 L.F.) :—

O God ! the thought was Thine !
 (Thine only it could be)
 Fruit of the wisdom, love divine,
 Peculiar unto Thee :

For, sure, no other mind,
 For thoughts so bold, so free,
 Greatness or strength, could ever find ;
 Thine only it could be.

Thus revealed by His Spirit, for our **present** joy and understanding, are "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "If it were not so, I would have told you," said the One Who, dwelling in the bosom of the Father, could alone its secrets tell.

But there may still be in our timid minds the question as to how such exalted thoughts can be **received** by mortals like ourselves. Revelation is one thing, but reception of what is revealed is another. Quite true, and as well we should recognise this fact, for clearly the best of human wisdom fails to recognise revelation when it is plainly before the eye. In v.8 we read that "none of the princes of this world knew : for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Even Pilate's eyes must have been stone blind, when, with the Son of God, the Way, the Truth, the Life, standing before him, he could ask, "What is Truth ?" Reception on our part, then, is by the indwelling Spirit alone as we may gather from v.12. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God ; that we **might know** the things that are freely given to us of God." Thus revelation comes to us by the Spirit come down from Christ glorified, but the self-same Spirit Who is in every believer, is the power by which we receive and enjoy every-

thing He reveals. This, of course, must necessarily be a subjective process within each one of us, measured by our submission to His gracious, patient teaching. How He makes our cup of joy overflow as He unfolds to us the wonder of these things which God hath prepared for them that love Him ! Again, we gladly sing with G.V.W. :—

Sealed with the Holy Ghost,
We triumph in that love,
Thy wondrous thought has made our boast,
“ Glory with Christ above.”

Lastly, may we think of the **reproduction** (for want of a better word) of the truth revealed and received by the Holy Spirit. This was a work committed to the apostles to speak and write not only the substance of Christian revelation, but the very words that would adequately express it: What human resource could command the words, the language, of revelation so unfathomably profound ? Yet, to be intelligible, it must be in “ words easy to be understood”, not in an unknown tongue, which would simply dissipate the truth. The answer to this problem is given us in v. 13, “ which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; communicating spiritual things by spiritual means.” (J.N.D. and others). Thankful we must be that men of God have given us a translation of the original words in our own language, labouring with immense patience and ability, to avoid the slightest intrusion of an uninspired thought. Thus has come to us the revelation, reception and reproduction in words, all by the Holy Spirit of God, of those “ things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” O, how can we afford to disregard such precious truth, or excuse our ignorance of it by humbly saying, “ we shall understand it all by and by.” True it is that “ we know in part, and we prophesy in part” at this present time (1 Corinthians 13 : 9), but have we a deep desire that that “ part” might be bigger even now ? Well, it is the Holy Spirit’s gracious work to increase our knowledge and enjoyment of Divine things every day of our sojourn. “ He will **guide** you into **all** truth. . . and He will show you things to come” (John 16 : 13) The great Treasure House of Scripture abounds with shining detail of the “ things which God hath prepared for them that love Him”. Perhaps most cherished of all is the brightest gem of the Saviour’s promise, “ I go to prepare a place for you . . . and I will come again and receive you unto myself.” (John 14 : 2, 3) “ He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22 : 20).

OVERCOMERS ————— JOHN BARNES

“ **I**N the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.” John 16 : 33.

The overcomer, in each of the successive periods of the church prophetically outlined in Revelation 2 and 3, seems to be considered in the context of the peculiar difficulties of his day. Were trials in general in the Lord’s mind, one allusion would seem to be sufficient. Each age

of the assembly's history has given rise to special problems and in each phase there is contemplated the possibility of some believers overcoming the temptations of the day and gaining the promised reward. The fact that the Lord offers an appropriate prize in each case would seem to support this suggestion.

It may also be said that the features which are proper to each class of overcomer were first seen in our Lord Himself. The behaviour the Lord expects of His people has already been exemplified for them in His own perfect life. The path of the christian overcomer, however hazardous he may find it to be, was first trodden by the Son of God, in lowly Manhood, and in looking to Him and in learning from Him the tried believer may derive help and find wise counsel to direct his footsteps through a darkening day, in a measure of faithfulness. This thought seems to be latent in the text which heads this paper: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." What the Lord requires of His own has been wrought out in His own peerless life, that they should 'walk as He walked.'

It may, therefore, be helpful to take a fresh look at these seven letters, to note the particular hazard of each period, the special features each age demands of the overcomer and how these indispensable characteristics may be traced in the walk of our adorable Lord, that we may be encouraged to follow 'in His steps.'

1.

The letter to the saints at Ephesus epitomises the first period of the assembly's eventful story and shews the danger of that period. This is quite clear: 'Thou hast left thy first love.' First love is frequently thought of as being the kind of responsive affection so often seen in the newly converted, when every activity is marked by freshness, zeal and energy. While we may well, and undoubtedly should, covet the perpetuation of these desirable features, it may be that this expression goes a little further. It is not 'first love' abstractly or generally, but 'thy first love: ' i.e. Ephesian first love. This may have been reached somewhat later in the christian life and may suggest a more mature love, the product of sound teaching, such as the Ephesians enjoyed, and be the development of an appreciation in depth which, perhaps, may not yet be reached by the immature believer. Decline from such love would be serious indeed.

A glance at Paul's letter to the Ephesians would convince the reader that the believers there enjoyed a very high standard of instruction which should have produced, evidently did produce, no small return in affection for the Lord. But something came in to cool off the warmth of their love and their devotedness was impaired. This, in turn, affected their behaviour, so lowering the whole tone of the assembly's life. This is implied in the expression which occurs in the Lord's exhortation to them. "Repent and **do** the first works." A falling away from love of this high quality results in a diminution in the standard of practice.

Is there any resource for believers who, in a current widespread lowering of standards, desire to be maintained in devoted response to the Lord Jesus? We have suggested that these features may be seen in all their excellence in our Lord Himself and we may observe this feature superlatively displayed in Him. He said, "That the world may know that I **love** the Father. . . even so I **do**." Then, it is said of Him, "Having

loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end." Nothing could lower the devotedness of that love. He loved them through the horrors of arrest, mock-trial, scourging, spitting, shame, crucifixion, abandonment and the darkness of death. Paul reminds us that 'love never faileth'. This is seen in all its grandeur in our Lord in His devotedness to the Father, to the church and to each of His own. The Hebrew servant, in the type, is considered as saying, "I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free." The Lord Jesus fills out this picture in all its preciousness. Nowhere else can love of this elevated character be seen in perfection but it **can** be seen in Christ and as shewn forth in Him be of encouragement to the simple christian who, with some affection for the One who loved him so steadfastly, desires to live for Him.

2.

The Lord, who walked in the midst of the golden lampstands, had no censure for afflicted Smyrna. His all-searching eye scrutinised the condition of His assemblies but His message to the suffering witnesses of Smyrna contained only commendation and encouragement. But that there **was** danger is evident in the exhortation to be faithful. The severe pressure of their circumstances was sufficient to bring to light any inclination to unfaithfulness that may have lurked unsuspected in their hearts. It is pressure that reveals what we really are inside. If a sloe is squeezed it will exude a bitter juice. Now, in the immense pressures of a time of violent persecution the temptation to take an easier path is very strong. In conditions of such severity the Lord's exhortation came to the christians in Smyrna, "Be faithful." The exhortation came, not from someone comfortably remote from such experiences, able to philosophise abstractly about circumstances beyond his experience, but from the feeling, sympathetic One, who had, Himself, passed through the very fire and who knows exactly what its pressures are. **He** was faithful unto death, though knowing perfectly all He would have to endure. The christian overcomer, in a Smyrnan setting, may be encouraged to know that in his trial, not only will he be directed to the example of the Lord Jesus, but he will benefit by the companionship and positive support of the **Faithful One**, in like manner as the three Hebrew stalwarts of Daniel's day were accompanied, in their fiery trial, by the 'form of the Fourth,' the Lord Himself, no doubt.

3.

Working by subtle infiltration Satan undermined the foundations of Pergamos. The danger there was that of inflation and worldly importance. In Matthew 13 the Lord points out this danger. Leaven has the effect of blowing up a lump of dough and of permeating the whole inflated mass. The parable of the mustard tree also emphasises the human tendency to seek for greatness in the world. Such worldly enlargement exposes the company to enemy infiltration symbolised by the leaven which infects the whole lump, and, to change the figure, by the birds of the air which find lodgement in such a system. The church was not intended to seek great things for itself on earth. The place the world gave to the Lord Jesus should be accepted by His people, and their advancement lies in the acceptance of that position.

The Lord Himself overcame in the period of wilderness temptation

by lowly submission to the Father's will. Instead of exerting His power to provide for His physical requirements He was humbly dependent on His God and **lived** by His every word. Instead of seeking greatness an easy way, He patiently awaited God's time, and meanwhile spent Himself in His service. Nor would He tempt the Lord to intervene on His behalf while He hazarded Himself from the temple's pinnacle to impress an awe-inspired nation. **He** was being subjected to testing ; He would not subject His God to testing.

Every attempt of the enemy to appeal to a desire for greatness failed ; he found nothing in the Lord Jesus which answered to his wiles. Jehovah's faithful Servant was subjected to every test and **He** triumphed in them all. Violence and corruption alike failed to penetrate the security of His defences. So, in this letter, the overcomer is promised the reward of the hidden Manna. This wonderful food, treasured up in a golden pot in the sanctuary, is the figure of Christ, 'once humbled here' but greatly valued **there**.

4

In Thyatira the danger lay in seeking greatness in another sense. The urge to dominate, to rule, to usurp authority, governed that church. The reference to Jezebel who, as to order in creation, stepped out of her proper sphere of subjection and over-ruled her husband, plainly indicates this fact. Such an authoritarian tendency has been a marked feature of the Roman era in church history, though the penchant was there long before. Paul reproached the Corinthians in these trenchant words : " Ye have reigned as kings **without us**." The apostles did not share this desire with the Corinthians. Those devoted servants of God were content to share their Lord's rejection and to await with patience the day of glory when they would reign **with Him**. Meanwhile, it was, for them, the day of more abundant labours with stripes and imprisonments and to be reckoned the offscouring of all things.

The Lord Jesus, too, met this difficulty. On one occasion, the people, in a wave of popular sentiment, would have made Him king. **They** would have done this. Our blessed Lord will accept this place of honour, glory and power, not from the people but from the Father ; not by popular choice but by Divine authority ; not when a capricious nation wishes but at the time which the Father has reserved in His own authority. The glory would certainly come for the Lord, but would as surely be preceded by the sufferings of the cross. He **will** reign : such authority is His by right and at the due moment God will bring Him into His right place in invincible power, but meanwhile He 'waited patiently for the Lord'." (Psalm 40) It would be to the infinite advantage of the saints, likewise, to await God's day for bringing in His King, when they will reign with Him, and not seek to anticipate it by attempting to reign without Him now.

5

In the Sardis period believers are imperilled by cold formality. The danger here consists in not being what one claims to be. It is a condition of moral death. It is tragically possible outwardly to conform to certain religious conventions, to profess to certain creeds, correctly to hold certain doctrines, and yet to have no heart at all for the Lord : to be one thing outwardly and quite another inwardly. One of the Lord's assertions

concerning the Pharisees highlights this rôle they played. He called them 'hypocrites', a Greek word which means "play actors". They were not truly devout but acted as though they were, just as a man, not truly Henry VIII, pretends, for the purposes of the play to be that king. Outwardly they cloaked themselves in the traditional requirements of their cult but inwardly moral death reigned and the bones of dead men filled the whitewashed sepulchres.

If we examine the life of the Lord Jesus Christ we see there a principle radically different. He assured His hearers, "I am altogether that which I am saying unto you." (See John 8 : 25) This is a staggering claim and certainly no one, other than the Perfect Man, would dare to make it, unless he were a madman. There was not a shade of difference between what the Lord said He was and what He really was. The two halves matched exactly in one continuous pattern of perfection. Moral death in the heart and profession of life outside will never match up : someone, somewhere will detect the fraud. The Lord Jesus was able to expose His life to any inspection, "which of you convinceth Me of sin ? " No scrutiny of that precious life could uncover any flaw.

While we recognise the uniqueness of the Lord, genuine christian living is possible for the humble believer. Christian sincerity is a valuable thing. The English word 'sincere' is derived from two roots which mean 'without wax'. What claimed to be marble was entirely so, not partially would sometimes fill up any flaws in his work with a wax of similar colour to the stone he was using. An honest craftsman would scorn to stoop to such deception, so your genuine artist gave you a sculpture 'without wax'. What claimed to marble was entirely so, not partially wax. The overcomer in a Sardian atmosphere will be a man of this kind. He will be what he represents himself to be.

6

The Philadelphian company, like that in Smyrna, had no activities which merited the censure of the Lord. It is true that they were weak, and the Lord speaks of things as they are. He does not flatter them by pretending that they were a tower of strength, but refers, quite factually, to their 'little strength.' He does not say 'some strength,' as though suggesting that there was, at least, something to build on, but He calls it 'little strength' as though in order to emphasise its very smallness. Nevertheless, they had not denied His name, and here was the element of danger. It takes power to confess the Lord's name in a world bitterly hostile to Him, and little strength may seem hardly adequate to meet the strains of such a demand. So the overcomer in a Philadelphian day would need to be acutely aware of his weakness and know how to tap resources of strength outside himself.

The Lord Jesus, as we would expect, shews us how this may be done. In the place of weakness and poverty in lowly Manhood He was the Faithful Witness, always confessing the Father's name and revealing Him. In the 40th Psalm we are informed that God was told out by Him in the wealth of His attributes ; His righteousness, His faithfulness, His salvation, His lovingkindness and His truth. Later in the Psalm we read of the Lord that His goings were established. What was the secret of His power ? Psalm 16 makes it clear ; "I have set the Lord always before Me. . . I shall not be moved." The Lord Jesus Christ's secret of power

in the place of weakness was that He drew strength from His God. His reward is shewn us in the same Psalm ; "at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." So, too, the Philadelphian may overcome, drawing on the infinite resources stored up in the exalted Son of God. The reward to this overcomer is that he will be made a **pillar** in the temple of God. We may recall that one of the pillars in Solomon's temple was named 'Boaz' which means, strength. What a glorious contrast to the little power of today !

7

Finally the church at Laodicea may be noticed. This company was completely indifferent to the claims of Christ. He is seen to be outside and knocking at a closed door. Meanwhile they made pretentious assertions. Their true condition is described by the Lord under the well-known figure of lukewarmness, which He states to be nauseating to Him. A man spits out of his mouth any object which is distasteful to him. This is what the Laodicean type of church is to the Lord. How may a believer in a largely Laodicean age rid himself of sickening indifference ? The Lord's example should be a stimulus to us. There was not a shade of lukewarmness in the devoted service of the Son of God. "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." What warmth, what energy, what affection moved Him as He went about doing good, doing the Father's works and speaking the Father's words ! Then, as His incomparable pathway neared its close he was to say, "Not My will but Thine be done." He was entirely committed to doing the Father's will. There we can trace no indifference, no coldness, no want of heart. This is the perfect One whose heart beat only for the Father and His loved ones. Thus engaged with such a Person, the believer, in an age of refrigeration, may be encouraged to offer more warm-hearted service to the Lord.

There are many other features easily discernible in the heptad of assemblies we have thought about ; we have considered only one in each case. It is hoped that these may be used, in the gracious will of the Lord, to help us follow an ordered path of warmhearted devotedness to our ascended Lord, and, "Overcoming in His name, from earthliness be free."

"UPON GITTITH

E. H. SAPP

THREE Psalms are addressed "To the chief Musician upon Gittith," namely, Psalms 8, 81 and 84. The 8th Psalm is "A Psalm of David" ; the 81st Psalm is by Asaph the choirmaster and seer ; the 84th Psalm is captioned "for the sons of Korah." They are praise compositions and give expression to the joy of divinely moved hearts contemplating the Kingdom of God. Such joy and contemplation well becomes us today, who in this increasingly evil day long for and love our Lord's appearing.

The 8th Psalm actually celebrates the Kingdom "come"—come with observation—in display.

The 81st Psalm meditates the occasions when the Kingdom was proffered to Israel but disdained and therefore postponed. Evidently Israel under Joshua in the land was a theocracy, but they proved a stiff-necked race. Set up in David and for a while prospering in the reign of

Solomon, the conception of divine rule failed until “there was no remedy”; both Israel and Judah were carried into captivity. Passing to the New Testament, the Kingdom is twice offered. First, in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, it was violently rejected; they said “We will not have this man to reign over us” and crucified Him, the Lord of Glory. Yet once again after Pentecost, if Israel had repented, “the times of refreshing” would have come from the presence of the Lord by His sending Jesus Christ from heaven (where He had gone to receive a Kingdom and to return) to bring in the era of restitution of all things. “But my people would not hearken to my voice and Israel would have none of me” (v. 11). Consequently the Kingdom is still in abeyance, but “He must reign” and “He shall come”; in the interim this is the time of Christ’s patience which we share in spirit with Him.

In Psalm 84 the Kingdom (or House of God) is in “mystery”, that is, the idea of it is held in the affections of the godly as something which is “within you”. This household of faith experiences in its wayfaring as marching to Zion the present ministrations of the goodness of the Lord and spiritually is intelligent of the rich blessings as dwelling in God’s house by the Spirit. “They that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee” (v. 4). “Gittith” is a term not as clearly ascertained as some other titles heading the Psalms. Howbeit the word alludes to Gath. Even as Obed-edom and Ittai (worthy men!) were “Gittites”, natives of Gath turned to the God of Israel. Gath means “wine-vat” suggesting “Gittith” to be a musical instrument used at the vintage festivities. But humanity knows sorrows as well as joys. It is thought a Gittith could express in its gamut both extremes of emotion. Certainly in these Psalms we touch heights of ecstasy, rest of heart, deep satisfaction in the Kingdom, wistful longing for the day of its manifestation and sorrow for its deferment. We still pray, as taught by our Lord “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven”. Wonderful will be the day when the whole earth is full of His glory, when His Name shall be excellent in all the earth. “A Gittith” is called for to strike the chord of joy realized in that day.

The 81st Psalm begins with singing aloud and with an exultant shout. Israel should have had the shout of a King in the midst of her continually. Their faithful God had brought deliverance for them and established them in the land of milk and honey, corn and wine. “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” (v. 10). “Israel would none of me. So I gave them up” (vv. 11, 12). “Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!” (v. 13). “I should soon have subdued their enemies” (v. 14). “He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and. . . satisfied thee” (v. 16). These words are echoed by the Lord Jesus and in like sorrow of heart in Luke 13: 34, 35 and Luke 19: 41–42. This Psalm utters the joy of the Kingdom and also the disappointment of the Lord’s Anointed at its rejection.

Psalm 84 is much loved. How desirable is God’s dwelling place! Here is a calmer if a deeper joy, here the saint finds rest and worships. Here His altars are found, ever speaking of redemption and reconciliation. Into such blessedness we have entered “through the veil into the Holiest”, here we can worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. It is delight exceeding all joys to be there in the House of the Lord. The

middle four verses are in the scope of experience while passing through this vale of tears, blessed experience of the present ministry of grace and mercy by our Head in heaven, the Son over God's House. The remaining four verses touch on home at journey's end. This will be the realised "glory", even the Father's house ; but also the participation in the Kingdom of the Son of man. The prospect of beholding the face of God's Anointed, Whom as yet we have not seen, but in Whom we believe and in Whom we exult, is unspeakable joy.

This is surely a beautiful Psalm for the erstwhile sons of rebellious Korah, who (as we too) obtained mercy, saved by amazing grace. May we suggest Ephesians 5 : 19 and Colossians 3 : 16 as the "Gittith" we employ.

May the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. Yet a little while and He Who shall come will come and will not tarry.

PHINEHAS

ROBERT THOMSON

THOUGHTS ON NUMBERS and JOSHUA

PHINEHAS was the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, and was therefore of the priestly family. Very little is said of him in the Scriptures but we can see that he was a man of action for God at a time when faithfulness was much needed. His name means oracle and he truly spoke and acted for God, Who is ever looking for faithful men who will honour Him by magnifying His word whatever the circumstances may be. The New Testament parallel is 2 Timothy 2 : 2 "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also". As we anticipate the Judgment Seat (2 Corinthians 5) the commendation we would love to hear would be, "Well, thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19 : 17).

Let us consider the history of the children of Israel at this time, for they were nearing the end of their wilderness wanderings, a period of forty years (Numbers 14 : 33-35). Many of the older generation who had been at the crossing of the Red Sea had died but Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still. In Numbers 20 things were very serious indeed : there was no water, the people chode with Moses and they wished to die. Intercession was made for them before God, Who instructed Moses to **speak to the rock** in the sight of the assembled people, and it would bring forth water.

He did speak to the rock, and also struck it twice with Aaron's rod taken from the presence of God, and spoke of His people as rebels. In the story of the smitten rock in Exodus 17 : 6, Moses was acting in obedience to God. The second smiting was altogether wrong and out of place. For Jesus, Who takes away the sin of the world, will never again be the Victim. He is now the glorious Victor, having broken the power

of death and the grave, and is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, meeting all the needs of His redeemed people from His resources in glory.

By practice they were rebels, for had they not spoken against God and Moses, besides despising the manna ? However, the judgment rested with God, Who sent deadly fiery serpents among them, causing the death of many. When they acknowledged their sin before God, He commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass, put it on a pole, and lift it on high in the midst of the bitten, dying people. Whosoever looked upon it lived.

From this point, the people begin to journey toward the promised land, Canaan, rather than wander in the wilderness. They were in possession of a new life, from their looking to the uplifted serpent of brass. Nothing can stop their progress now, and Sihon and Og with their opposing armies are overcome and slain. Then Balak, King of Moab, being afraid, hired Balaam, the sorcerer, to come and curse the children of Israel.

Three things are recorded of Balaam in the New Testament which would act as warnings to us in our day and age. 1. "They. . . ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11). 2. "Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, . . . who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2 : 15). 3. "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2 : 14).

God is behind the scenes and He will not allow those who have been blessed of Him to be cursed. In Numbers 23 and 24 Balaam speaks of the camp of Israel in this manner, "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (23 : 9). (Separation).

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (23 : 21). (Sanctification).

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !" (24 : 5). (Satisfaction).

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (24 : 17). (Sovereignty).

In spite of the Lord's blessing, Israel's behaviour fell short. Israel committed sin with Moab, joined himself to Baal-Peor, and merited the fierce anger of Jehovah (Numbers 25 : 1-3). Moses was commanded to slay the idolators, and in the midst of all the weeping and sorrow, one came into the camp bringing a Midianitish woman. Phinehas, therefore, took a javelin and thrust through the two of them. This action of **faithfulness** is recorded in Psalm 106 : 30 and was counted to him for righteousness.

Moses is given his last command from Jehovah, that he has to arm a thousand of every tribe of Israel and be avenged on Midian. Phinehas is chosen to go with them bearing the holy instruments and the trumpets. This was a precious charge, and everything must be done with holy reverence. According to Numbers 10, the two silver trumpets were to give varying blasts for the guidance and instruction of the people of God. In those days the blowing of the trumpets was the divine means of making known the mind of God : in our day and generation we have the

completed word of God and the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. So Phinehas conveyed the ministry of God to the fighting warriors, and victory was achieved. Five kings of Midian were slain and also Balaam they slew with the sword.

Coming now to the dividing up of the land which the Lord gave them to possess, we learn that the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh desire to have their inheritance on the wilderness side of Jordan. This is granted to them by Joshua, and he sent them away with his blessing (Joshua 22 : 6). One great disadvantage of not being within easy reach of Jerusalem was that they could not participate in the yearly sacrifices which were offered in the divinely appointed place.

However, they built a great altar near the borders of Jordan, not to offer sacrifices thereon, but rather to be a witness to all and the generations to follow, that they were ready and willing to do the service of the Lord as they that were over Jordan. Phinehas is sent, along with the ten princes of Israel, to enquire as to this seeming rebellious condition. Phinehas, in the character of **peacemaker**, hears what they have to say, declares his approval, and the children of Israel bless God. (Joshua 22 : 30-34). Thus, instead of destruction and bloodshed, there is peace and blessing.

The altar is called, Ed, (a witness) for, they said, "It shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God".

MUTUAL ACCEPTABILITY AMONGST CHRISTIANS

COLIN CURRY

(Concluded)

Positive Co-operation

THOSE who know something of busy and happy involvement in the things of the Lord, with self-interest not at all in mind, and barriers and restraints forgotten, can testify to the value of that experience. To have others with us in sharing the rich blessings which are ours in knowing Him, to find ourselves joining in thanksgiving and response to God the Father for all that has been unveiled to us, deepens the joy and the reality of these things. There is a special triumph in this when we recollect that otherwise Christians often have little in common, little that they could be involved in together. The best scriptural example of extreme non-co-operation would no doubt be the Jew and the Gentile with all the distance and suspicion existent between them. Yet, in Christ, that wall of partition has been removed. "Through him. . . **both** have access by **one** Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2 : 18). This is equally true of parties remote from one another in many another sense. What a wonderful thing Christianity is! Christian fellowship really experienced, has above-natural elements in it. What is shared and enjoyed belongs to the realm of the Spirit, where Christ fills and dominates everything. In practice, however, there are things that can mar this. Roots of bitterness can spring up all too rapidly ; there has to be diligence in avoiding this. We have to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

There are outward-looking aspects of fellowship too. Co-operation

in facing adversaries, in sharing problems, in maintaining the vital things; praying together, working together, pushing outwards and onwards together in the service of the Lord, being concerned together about those who are apathetic or cool towards the Christian realities: we can see how Paul, for instance, valued fellowship in all these ways. Anyone today who is involved in any of these activities knows well the value of the support of others. "Striving together for the faith of the gospel" is something highly important and continually needed. The Philippians, so satisfactory in most other ways, needed this urging upon them (Philippians 1:27). How sad if people who are at one on almost all other counts allow themselves to be at cross-purposes over minor matters. We must not allow petty jealousies, or other small personal tensions, to spoil our opportunities to be united in our Lord's great concerns. We are to let these things sink out of sight. We are to be "of the same mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2), in the mutual recognition of His supremacy and excellence, and in the demonstration of His spirit of grace and humility. In this way there **can** be genuineness and coherence in the Christian witness.

Promotion of Spiritual Growth and Profit

From the thought of Christians co-operating on some **common** activity for the Lord, we now turn to consider that kind of unity which is based upon their **different** contributions to it. The first Corinthian letter envisages Christian unity as a constructive dovetailing of many functions, a living entity with many individual contributions within it. The human body, many members yet one body, is the illustration (chapter 12). Those who acknowledge Christ as Lord, and are joined to Him by the link of life and union formed by the one Spirit, are **one** in this way. A great reality which has no place in it for imperfection is expressed by this figure. The divine concept of the body of Christ is indeed an important truth to grasp. But the context shows that there are important practical lessons too. The Corinthians needed bringing into line with this truth in practice, and there is still a great need for this instruction. We are told in this passage that **all** believers have their part to fulfil; all have a gift of the Spirit, not of their own choice but His. This gift is to be recognized and used. The smoothness of the total activity depends on all the contributions being made. Nothing is to be despised as unimportant. Neither is anything so outstandingly important that the rest can be discounted. It is easy to have inverted values in this field. The one absolute essential is **love** (chapter 13); that love which is the very character of Christ Himself. This, in its own selfless and undemonstrative way, can mould each of the activities in the helpful direction. Here is the fountain from which all the contributions must draw their character and strength. Growth, profit, order, real fellowship, and profitable ministry can occur if Christian people act in this way. Experiences of this kind are not completely unknown amongst the Lord's people today. The need to pursue these objectives in a purposeful way would seem as urgent as ever, however.

Finally, some of the more obvious sub-groups amongst the people of God may be mentioned. For their different classes there is separate instruction in Scripture, and all have their rôle in the whole response to its guidance. The distinctions between men and women, between parents

and children, between husbands and wives, between youth and age, are in places held to be important in Scripture. The instruction to the different parties, about demeanour appropriate to their status, is invariably straightforward. Submission to Scripture is the requirement here. The kind of order it proposes to us may not accord with the contemporary outlook, but it is really much more attractive and much less chaotic. The wisdom of adhering to Scripture here, with a good and obedient heart, is fairly self-evident.

On the question of different stages of progress in the Christian life (and the relations between those who are at different stages) there are several points of guidance. Seniority has to be respected, and doubly respected when it is combined with responsible care for others. There is need for leaders who really lead, whose whole demeanour and teaching command respect and readiness to follow. These qualities must be recognized wherever they appear. Leaders who belittle, or stifle, or merely dictate to those who are at an earlier stage, are not really leading very well. People younger in the faith need understanding, their problems need to be faced. This was the way Christ helped people, understanding their needs and weaknesses. On the other hand, those who are by no means leaders (because of youthfulness, or for other reasons) would do well to recognize this. There will be other ways in which they can contribute. Right-spirited younger people can have a keenness about their faith, a zeal for the Lord, and a brightness in their interest which older persons could find difficult to match. They can retain balance in a Christian gathering ; they can fulfil a very important rôle. It would be most unwise to under-rate their value, or to fail to foster their distinctive contribution.

Final Comments

Some of our subject-matter has centred on circumstances amongst Christians which are not the happiest ; and, in places, we have been engaged with not very elevating matters. It would be wrong to dwell over-much on these themes. The real **substance** of Christianity lies elsewhere than in the field in which we have been moving. To be engaged more in that other area of things is in itself part of the secret of greater unanimity amongst Christians. Nevertheless, none can deny that the scriptural matters here discussed form part of our guidance for today, and we may be thankful for God's wisdom in providing it. Without it we should often be in difficulty in modern circumstances. If what has been said can foster attitudes which overcome causes of restraint, and make us more able (on a proper basis) to be together in the things of the Lord, the Scriptural teaching on these lines will have achieved its goal. It is an end worth striving for ; for indeed "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity !" (Psalm 133 : 1).

5. THE SEALS AND THE TRUMPETS**(Continued)****(c) The Trumpets.**

Returning in thought to the Clues enumerated in Section I, we recall that the period called "the end of the age" is to be sharply divided into two portions, and that the "great tribulation" occupies the second or later portion. Since we have seen in Section II (a) that the Seals correspond with the earlier portion, or "the beginning of sorrows", so we should be prepared to recognise that, in general, the period of the seven trumpets corresponds with the "great tribulation". The inflictions falling on the world as symbolised by the seven trumpets are so severe that we cannot but call to mind the Lord's words quoted earlier, "except those days should be shortened", the human race would be exterminated.

At this point a remark is appropriate which perhaps should have been made at an earlier stage. Taking a general view of these chapters from chapter six, it is plain that we should visualise John as being located in heaven, and in the vision, or dream, global geography is so altered that he can look down from heaven and see that portion of the globe which has been called the prophetic earth spread out below him from the distant Euphrates to the Atlantic shores, and from beyond the traditional boundary rivers Rhine and Danube to the northern strip of Africa. The main essential of the Revelation is that from his place near the Throne he can see how every event upon which he looks down to the earth is initiated and controlled from that supreme Throne of God. What a stabilising truth is this for the people of God in all time ! He saw and heard the first angel sound, and lo ! there rushes over the land areas of the Western Empire a storm of hail and fire mingled with blood. He saw and heard the second angel sound, and there follows down on earth below him a fearful upheaval involving the maritime provinces. And so on to the sixth trumpet, which is followed by 200,000,000 cavalry suddenly bursting across the Euphrates upon the Eastern Empire. This is what he saw. He does not interpret, and in one sense, we may well ask what need there is for further explanation. One thing we know, that the series ends with the world kingdom of our God and of His Christ, when the seventh angel sounds, (11 : 15). Many have attempted to interpret the symbols in detail, and it may well be that, as symbols, the earth means men under ordered government, as under the Beast ; the sea means mankind in a state of disorder, and so on. At this point, however, it will be necessary to bring in another clue, available to us, but not available to John or his first readers, the Historical Interpretation.

(d) The Historical Interpretation.

The general view of the Revelation taken in these studies is that the greater part of the book awaits a still future fulfilment, that is, the Futurist Interpretation. Most readers will be aware that traditionally there are two other principal views, that is, the Preterist, (which sees the greater part fulfilled immediately in John's day) and the Historical, which sees the bulk of the book having been fulfilled continuously since John's

times. It is the writer's definite conviction that each of these possesses truth over strictly limited sections.

Returning to the Trumpets, it is the writer's firm conviction that their fulfilment in a partial way from John's time to the extinction of the Eastern Empire at Constantinople is self-evident. For this purpose we must also take in the Seals, and, of course, remember that the full accomplishment remains still future. If all this be true, then it is very clear that the events covered by the Historical Interpretation provide an extremely valuable clue to the full future events.

Just as the Seven Churches (chs. 2 and 3) have a double meaning, first, to the churches existing in John's time, and second, to successive periods down to the Second Coming, so, what follows has two interpretations. First, going forward from John's day over the centuries until the Roman Empire of the past is destroyed, and second, going forward from the Second Coming of Christ to catch away His own people, and reaching to the destruction of the Roman Empire of the future. It will be interesting to quote William Kelly. "I cannot doubt that the seals prefigured the course of the Roman Empire. . . down to the nominal supremacy of Christianity. . . the early trumpets refer: first, to the Gothic invasions. . . to the extinction of the Roman empire in the west I do not doubt the application of the locusts (5th Trumpet) to the Saracens, and of the Euphratean horsemen to the Turks", and so to the extinction of the Roman Empire in the East.

The past fulfilment of the Trumpets came about as follows. About the year 400 A.D. there began four successive furious invasions by the barbarians from beyond the northern boundaries of the Empire. (First four Trumpets). They ended, with immense suffering for the peoples, with the abolition of the Western part of the Empire, and the fall of the city of Rome about 500 A.D. The warnings of woe (8 : 13) showed that worse was to follow, and in 680 (the 5th Trumpet) the world heard for the first time of Mohammed, according to Gibbon a fallen prince and therefore well represented by a fallen star (9 : 1), whose followers cruelly scourged the Roman world for more than 100 years, yet without overthrowing the Eastern Empire centred on Constantinople. Next, about 1000 A.D. (the 6th Trumpet) a new Mohammedan power, the Turks from the East, set out from Baghdad on the Euphrates, again fearfully scourged the Eastern Empire, and finally destroyed Constantinople about 1453. It is very significant that the western lands flocked to help Constantinople against the infidel Turks in the Crusades, and the great meeting place between east and west was Jerusalem.

And so the Roman Empire of the past ended in terror and blood. Imagine the calamities of that 1000 years from the first barbarian invasions, intensified by modern means of terror, and concentrated into $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, and we have the nearest approach Scripture affords to understanding the events, set in motion by God's throne in heaven, by which the lofty looks of men will be brought low, and the world-kingdom of our God shall come, with all its righteousness and peace.



SPEAKING WITH TONGUES

J. S. BLACKBURN

A SELECTED ISSUE

A FULL treatment of the subject of Tongues would have to embrace many aspects of the subject and its place in Scripture and in experience. For the moment I propose to confine myself to one selected issue, which is, what is to happen in an assembly if there enters an anxious desire to acquire the gift, where it had been previously unknown.

One short passage, 1 Corinthians 12 : 28–31, seems to contain within its brief compass much that is required to set this issue in a fully scriptural light. At the same time it gives full place to the deepest desire to please the Lord, and to be near Him in spiritual things. It is assumed that the reader and the writer are agreed that we are bound to be guided entirely by Scripture. Only thus will the way be found which glorifies God and is for us that of peace and power. Experience is most important, but we cannot for a moment afford to rely on someone else's experience to be our guide in the way of truth. Rather, all experience must be checked by diligent and disciplined enquiry into the Word of God. Absolutely anything can be proved by what someone else tells us about his experience, from the papist mass to the extravagances of the mediaeval mystics.

In reflecting on this short passage, together with the related ones to which it reaches out, it will be helpful to distinguish four points in its exposition.

(i) Paul took the situation as he found it at Corinth. That is, there were in that church the following gifts in evidence : apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helps, governments, tongues, interpretation.

(ii) The phrase "the best gifts" suggests a scale of values, and therefore that some gifts were less valuable than others. In chapter 14 two gifts are selected, that is, prophecy and tongues, and they are tested by clearly defined criteria **of experience**, to allocate their places in the true scale of values. The tests are, does the exercise of the gift in ministry, (v. 3), prayer, (vv. 14, 15), singing, (v. 15), blessing, (v. 15), giving thanks, (v. 16), result for the saints in :

edification (vv. 1–5)
clear meaning (vv. 7–11)
the understanding helped (vv. 14–20) ?

By these tests, prophecy resulting in edifying the saints comes out high, and tongues comes out very poorly indeed. "The best gifts" cannot possibly include tongues.

(iii) There is something outside of the range of spiritual gifts, and more excellent than they, and this is divine love. Chapter 13 extols it.

(iv) The Corinthians are urged to "covet earnestly" the best gifts, but especially love. Note that love is the first of the **fruit** of the Spirit, in contrast with tongues which is low on the scale of the **gifts** of the Spirit.

These expository notes are extremely condensed, and will not yield their real power without a careful weighing of every word. Based on them a few observations suggest themselves.

(i) In considering the reaction evoked by the issue selected, it is clear that we must not forbid to speak with tongues. (14 : 39). Indeed we must welcome and share enthusiastically every earnest aspiration after a fuller experience of the Lord and concern for spiritual things.

(ii) It is plain to me that the main issue centres round the phrase "covet earnestly". The phrase vividly describes what happens when the tongues movement invades an assembly. What else are the endless discussions, the anxious vigils, often far into the night, the "waiting" sessions, than coveting earnestly? Let us maintain this zeal, but let us re-direct it in obedience to the Word to edification and love **in the church**.

(iii) For it is plain that, applied to tongues, such "coveting earnestly" is utterly opposite in direction to what is enjoined in this passage. So the first thing to be done is to get our priorities right. Let us begin straight away with that which is central and fundamental regarding the purpose of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the earth. The deep silence of worship addressed to the Father in spirit and in truth : the great central facts regarding the Spirit's presence as set out in John 14 to 16, Romans 8 and Galatians 5—these are the truths and experiences which demand first priority.

(iv) It is a great mistake to rate the gift of tongues high among spiritual things. A great zeal for tongues did not prevent the Corinthian saints from being severely reprimanded for carnality. Indeed its gifts and its carnality were its principal characteristics. Moreover, the idea of an inseparable connection of the "fulness of the Spirit" with tongues, a connection which Pentecostalist teaching tends to make, is manifestly fallacious. Indeed, it would appear that the main ground for a zealous aspiration after tongues comes down to this idea that the "fulness of the Spirit" is inseparably, essentially, demonstrated by tongues. We must indeed be all agreed that to be filled with the Spirit is something to be sought most earnestly. Yet only once in the New Testament is tongues directly connected with being filled with the Spirit, and this is among the initiatory events of Acts 2 : 4. Being filled with the Spirit in almost all other references, (2 in Exodus, 4 in Luke, 7 in Acts, 1 in Ephesians), describes a God-given equipment for some special task or duty. An inspection of these makes it impossible to maintain that tongues was a necessary or even frequent sign of the fulness of the Spirit. Can anyone

believe that in Acts 7 : 25 Stephen was speaking with tongues ? In fine, tongues **do** appear in the most reprehensible connections in the only epistle which deals with them : tongues **do not** appear, except in Acts 2 : 4, as a sign of the fulness of the Spirit.

(v) It is sadly to be agreed that there is extensive disillusionment with much which passes for edification in assemblies. On the other hand, I have been deeply moved by the earnest desire for divine love and spiritual things which is often channelled after tongues. If only some of this intensity of desire and prayer were re-channelled into seeking to edify **in the assembly** ! This is the Bible pattern. The practice is perhaps defective because you are earnestly coveting the wrong things ! A clarion call from 1 Corinthians 14 is v. 12, which bears exactly on this point. "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church". These words are aimed expressly at diverting attention from tongues to edifying by prophecy in the church. The result in v. 25 would be worship to the God who dwells amongst His people.

SIMON PETER. HIS FALL AND RESTORATION ——— T. TYSON

Luke 22 : 54-62, John 21 : 7-17

A RIPON ADDRESS 1972

IN our studies of the life of the Apostle Peter, we have seen Peter learning to follow the Lord, learning something of who the Lord was, especially in that great confession, "Thou art the Christ", and seen learning something of the glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. Last night we saw him learning something of the grace of the Lord in the feet washing. All these were necessary lessons in the training of this great servant of God, for the work he was going to do, and now in our study tonight we have come to a very solemn portion of God's word. I feel it a very great responsibility to talk about this. We have prayed that we all might feel that this is a word to each one of us, as we listen to what happened to Peter. For Peter had now to learn how little he was in himself, how utterly helpless he was to do anything for the Lord except by the Lord's enabling. This is the lesson we all have to learn, sometimes by bitter experience, as Peter had, that we cannot serve the Lord at all in our own strength but only by His enabling and by His power.

I feel that there are two dangers in thinking about a story like this which I hope we will avoid tonight. The first danger is to say "This couldn't happen to me". Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall". The other danger is to say "It happened to Peter, the great apostle, so perhaps it is not so important if it happens to me".

So, in thinking about Peter tonight, I want to recognize before God, that this is God's word to us here in Ripon 1972. Although we are hear-

ing the story of what happened to Peter two thousand years ago, this is still God's word here to us tonight. Although I shall be talking about Peter and what happened to Peter, let us all the time be applying it to ourselves and see how it fits in our own experience as to what God has to say to us in it. I have a lot of alliteration tonight, and I do hope that some of it will help you to remember this very serious message as it has helped me.

The Causes of the Catastrophe

I would suggest to you that the prime cause for the catastrophe was **Peter's confidence in himself**. Peter had grown to a place of leadership amongst the apostles. He was the spokesman, the one first 'out with it', the leader ; and Peter felt that he could cope with anything that came. His confidence was in himself. He trusted in his own **faithfulness** saying, "Though all men should be offended I will not be offended. Everybody can leave you, Lord, but not me, I will stick it out. I shall go through". And Peter trusted in his own faithfulness to the Lord.

Peter trusted in his own **courage**. There is no doubt whatever that Peter was a very brave man. I am sure he had faced up to many storms on Galilee. He was a brave fisherman. We were reminded on Sunday afternoon that Peter was a jolly good fisherman, and he would have to be brave to be a good fisherman. But you see he trusted in his own courage, his own bravery. He said "I am ready to die and to go to prison with you Lord", and Peter really meant it ; he would have done so. He was brave enough to have died for the Lord, as he did later on, but he was relying on his own courage, on his own strength to carry him through.

Peter trusted his own **love** for the Lord. Oh yes, Peter loved the Lord. There is no doubt about that, but he trusted his own love for the Lord to carry him through this great test. "If I should die for thee I will not deny thee in any wise. I love you, Lord, I won't let you down". Poor Peter, how little he realised the test that was coming to him in a few hours ! How little he realised his own weakness, and how little he realised the enemy's power ! Can I say tonight, poor you and poor me if we feel or think we can do anything for the Lord in our own strength, by our own faith, or even by our own love for the Lord, apart from His enabling. When the pressure is turned on and the difficulties come, if we are relying on ourselves we shall fail.

And it was because he trusted in himself that he ignored the warning. I hope there is nobody here that has had to go to court because they have gone across red lights. If you have had that unfortunate experience I hope it is because you did not see the red lights, and not because you deliberately ignored the warning. Peter thought that he knew better than Jesus, and because his confidence was in himself, he ignored the warning that Jesus gave to him. If we find that we have a clear warning in the word of God not to do something, let us beware that we do not ignore it. If we do we are heading for a fall. The warning first came in general terms, "All you will be offended this night", and Peter said, "Not me, I shan't be offended, Lord, that does not include me", and Peter rode on through the lights. Sometimes in God's word we come across general warnings, forbidding us to do this or that ; I am not going to specify them tonight as we have had several of them brought

before us this week. If we ignore these warnings in our Christian life we are heading for a crash.

Then the Lord graciously pin-pointed this warning to Peter himself, not only in general terms, but in personal terms. "Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me". Peter said "I won't deny thee in any way!" And Peter rode through the lights. I wonder if some of you, while we have been studying God's word, felt God speaking to you, giving a particular warning about some particular thing that you are doing in your life. Oh, take notice of this solemn question and do not ride on through the lights! Listen to the warning that God is giving. Because Peter's confidence was in himself and because he neglected the warning, he neglected his real resources. He followed them into the garden, and we see the Lord moving forward to pray and He leaves the disciples saying "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation"; but because Peter's confidence was in himself, and because he had ignored the warning, he went to sleep. Oh what a sad, sad sight that is, is it not? Jesus, the Son of God, down here in lowly manhood, Jesus praying and Peter sleeping! The Lord comes back to Peter, and in one translation He says, "Were you so utterly unable to keep awake Peter, just for one hour?"

Secondly, **Peter's combatant was greater than himself.** It is only in Luke's gospel that we read about the devil's part in this great tragedy. As in Job, Luke draws the curtain aside for a moment and lets us see into the unseen strategy being worked out on this battlefield. What happened to Peter did not just matter on earth, it mattered in heaven; the battle was not just between Peter and a servant girl, or between Peter and the Roman soldiers. The battle was really between the Lord and Satan, and Peter was the spoil of the battle. "Satan has desired to have you," said the Lord. Of course, Satan could not have Peter eternally; he had confessed his Lord and eternally he was safe, but Satan could have him in testimony and in service. And so Paul says "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." I wonder if that is why Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour". I want you to notice the very striking phrase (Luke 22 : 31) "Simon, Simon, behold Satan". I know it goes on, but just let us stop there for a moment. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan". "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world", says Paul. In these personal conflicts that come into our lives, let us see beyond the personal thing that applies to us. Let us see through to the unseen strategy. Perhaps you say that it does not matter if I do not say grace at the dinner table in the canteen; it does not matter if I deny my Lord in some little way. How is it going to affect the testimony question? It matters in the strategy of heaven, for the battle is between the Lord and Satan and if we fall for the moment then Satan has won the victory. But how wonderfully the Lord goes on, "But I". It is just as if the Lord says, "You looked at Satan, Peter, and you have seen the adversary, now, look at Me. 'But I have prayed for thee'. This is where your strength comes in Peter." Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" and "When I am weak, then am I strong". As I am getting older I

am only just beginning to appreciate what we owe to the intercessory prayer of the Lord. I am convinced that not one here tonight would be walking faithfully for the Lord, enjoying the fellowship of the Lord's people, if it were not for the Lord's intercessory prayer on our behalf. He says, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not". Yes, Peter's courage failed, his love was overshadowed, but his faith came through. Peter believed in the Lord just as much when he went out to weep as when he went in to warm himself. His faith came through, although the other things failed, because of the prayer : "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not".

The third cause of the catastrophe was that **Peter's comfort was for himself**. These three headings, Peter's confidence in himself, Peter's combatant greater than himself, and Peter's comfort was for himself, represent the three great enemies to our spiritual progress, the flesh, (confidence in himself), the devil and the world. Now we come to the world's attractiveness. Peter thought it would be more comfortable to follow at a distance, so he followed afar off. He had heard the Lord say, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me" : he had read Psalm 32 where it says "I will guide thee with mine eye", but Peter followed afar off where he could not hear the Lord's voice nor see the Lord's eye, and he fell. I am asking you and I am asking myself how closely are we following the Lord ? If you had been there you would have been able to measure the distance between Peter and his Lord. You would have been physically able to measure it in yards. You cannot do that here in Ripon today but let me ask you how closely are you following with those who are following the Lord ? Paul said "Be ye imitators of me as I also am of Christ". How closely are you involved in the little company to which you belong ? Are you really in it, following closely, following the Lord ? Or are you one of the fringe people following afar off ?

Peter thought it was more comfortable to follow afar off also to be inside, but inside with whom ? With the sworn enemies of the Lord ? Inside with the "couldn't care less" ones ? There is a publication of notes on John's gospel which is attractively called "The Man from outside". Jesus is still the Man from outside as far as this world is concerned. He is outside everything in this world, its pleasures, its culture, its entertainment and its religion. If we are going back inside the world we are going to the wrong side of the fence just as Peter was. The damsel on the door said to him "Are you one of His disciples ? This is not the place for you. What are you doing here ? " If you were of the world, the Lord said, the world would love its own. Oh beloved saints, you are not of the world. We are not of the world, we have been brought out of the world, and if you and I try to go back into the world as Peter did here, we are going to be found out. They will spot us sure enough. "What are you doing here ? " said the girl on the door. "This is no place for you". Or, you will have so to conform to the world that they cannot tell you are a Christian.

Then Peter thought it would be more comfortable at the fire. Peter's comfort was for himself. In, just at the porch ! In, and now **right** in, sitting with them ! What a slippery slope it is ! Let us take warning and not dabble with the things of the world. On Christmas Cards there is often an attractive picture of a fire blazing on the hearth with the words

“Good cheer”. The Lord often used those words, “Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven”. I want to ask you where you go when you want to be cheered up. Do you go to the Lord? Do you go to God’s word? Do you go amongst the Lord’s people? Or do you go like Peter to the world’s fire, and turn on the TV or the radio or get the novel out or the Pop records? Where do you go to be cheered up? This is a great question to all of us but to you young people especially. Are you separate from this world or are you slowly sinking in to it?

That led to the second testing question. In John 18 : 18 & 25 we are told they made a fire of coals, and Peter stood with them and warmed himself. He allied himself with these enemies of the Lord. In verse 25 we read again “Peter stood and warmed himself”. A sort of bracket is formed. What comes between? Let me tell you. They were trying the Lord of Glory for His life. They were saying to Him “Are you the Christ, tell us plainly?” And when He remonstrated one of those who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand—Peter stood and warmed himself! If ever you feel inclined in any way to stand with the world, remember that just across the way the same world is still mocking and trying your Lord. Peter found comfort where the Lord found a cross, and are we going to find comfort in this world where He found a cross? And so the second question came to him because he stood and warmed himself, “Art thou one of His disciples, you, warming yourself there?”

Then Luke 22 : 59 tells us that Peter settled down for a while. I hope there is nobody here who has settled down in any way in the world. Peter settled down for a little—for about an hour he sat down amongst them at the fire. If he had only remembered Psalm 1 : 1 “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful”. Here he was sitting right in amongst them, then like a bolt from that peaceful blue came that stinging question. Luke says “another one confidently affirmed”; John tells us who he was. He was kinsman to Malchus and a few hours before, Malchus had seen Peter’s angry face silhouetted in the torch lights. Malchus had seen that flashing steel and he ducked and it caught his ear. He would never forget Peter’s face. His kinsman said “Did not I see thee with him in the garden?” No wonder poor Peter resorted to oaths and curses. If we take our stand with the Lord it will be tested in the world. Peter stood with the Lord in the garden in the dark, but he stood with the enemies of the Lord in the light. In some ways I find it easier to stand up here talking to you Christians, than I do to stand up in the staff room at school and say a word for the Lord. It is easier for me to flash my sword around when the Lord is with me, as it were, when I am in the company of Christians and having to quote scripture, than it is while having a cup of tea in the staff room, and I am sure you find it the same.

The Damage to Peter through this Denial

Let us think of the immediate effects of the denial and then the long-term effects of the denial. The first one was **intense sorrow of heart**. One of the most pathetic, sad statements of scripture is this. “And the Lord turned and looked on Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly”

—sorrow of heart. It is just as if the Lord looked and said "Oh, Peter, if only you had listened to me", and many a Christian who has neglected the word of God, and gone contrary to the word of God, has had to have this sorrowful experience, as if the Lord were saying to them "If only you had listened to me".

Secondly, **the ruin of his testimony.** Could you imagine Peter after this performance at the fire, giving those soldiers and that maid a tract entitled "Jesus the Messiah"? He would know that it would not work! You cannot share the world's fire and then expect the world to share your faith.

Thirdly, **forfeiture of leadership.** "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" but until Peter was converted he was a source of weakness, not a source of strength to his brethren. What do you think poor young John thought about Peter's performance at the fire? It did not help him very much, did it? During the war there used to be a cartoon poster directed against fifth column activity. "Look out, someone is following you". I am going to say to you tonight, "Christian! Look out! Someone is following you and where are you leading him? Are you leading him to the Lord, or are you leading him to the world's fire?"

Now we come to the prolonged effects and the first one is **the refusal of the will of God.** Perhaps refusal is rather a strong word. Sometime later in John's Gospel, we read of Peter's saying "I go afishing". Notice the selfwill in it. I am not saying that Peter was in the wrong place. The Lord had told him to go to Galilee and wait for Him there. But notice the "I" in it; I am going fishing. He was not subject to the will of God and was therefore a bad leader. "We'll go with you", said the other disciples. He was a leader alright, but he was leading the wrong way. Let me ask you again, "Where are you leading others? Are you leading them to a deeper commitment to the will of God, or are you leading them away from it?" **Unfruitful service.** All night for nothing was unfruitful labour! It was not that they did not work. They fished all night for nothing. I think sometimes in Gospel activity that phrase would picture it. All night for nothing! I wonder sometimes if we could not trace back our unfruitful service to some way in our company or in our individual lives in which the Lordship of Christ has been denied.

A dulled sensitivity to the presence of the Lord. They saw the Lord waiting for them on the shore and they did not know Him. They did not recognize Him. Do we recognize the Lord as we read His word, or is it just a dull duty? Do we recognize the Lord in the meetings or do we come because we have not the courage to stay away? Are we insensitive to the presence of the Lord? This is one of the results of our denial of the Lord.

The Road to Restoration

How Peter had to learn himself! He had to learn also the love of the Lord still following him through, still holding him up, still going on with him, still willing to bring him into service again. I want to end on this happy and triumphant note, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren". Think how graciously the Lord dealt with him. Let us not forget that Peter had already had a private interview with the Lord. The sin of it had already been forgiven, but now he has to come to a public

restoration for his service to the Lord. I want us to think again in three ways how the Lord worked in Peter's heart to restore him. First of all I want to call it—**back to square one**. This is the way the Lord so often has to work with us to restore us. He has to bring us back to square one. He had to do it with Abraham. He had to do it many, many times with Israel. How often we read in the prophets, "Remember what the Lord did for you in Egypt". "Remember how He brought you over the Red Sea". "Remember how he fed you in the wilderness and how He carried you through". The Lord so often has to bring us back to square one. Do you not remember how happy you were when you were first converted? Do you not remember that first flush of excitement when you wanted to serve the Lord? And thus the Lord brings us back to square one, to that first essential experience when we first committed ourselves to Him. This is what He did with Peter. Peter first recognized his own sinfulness and something of the Lord's glory by a draught of fishes, and so the Lord takes him back to that point, that is to the same sort of miracle. I know there were differences, but He brings Peter back again to square one, back to this committal to Himself. It was only when John said "It is the Lord" that Peter moved forward this time but he did move—he rushed forward when he realised that it was the Lord.

A patient probing by the Great Physician. Trying to get splinters out of children's fingers is a job I sometimes have to do, and one of the first things a child asks when he sees a needle, is "Will it hurt?" I am compelled to say "Yes, it might hurt, but it must come out". There had to be a patient probing and it hurt Peter but it was absolutely necessary. First of all, the Lord reminds Peter of the **place** (and here we begin a separate touch of alliteration!) He reminds Peter of the place—a fire of coals on the shore. Where had Peter last seen a fire of coals? When he was standing round it, warming himself with the soldiers, and the Lord in His gracious dealings brings Peter back to another fire of coals. Oh, the sorrowful memories that must have come into Peter's heart as he looked at that fire of coals, and the Lord standing there. Then He reminds him of his confident boast, "Peter, can you really say that you love Me more than these?" That hurt, did it not? Peter had said "Lord, I love Thee more than all these. If these all run away, I won't". The Lord says, "Peter, can you say now that you love Me more than these?" If we make promises to the Lord, He will hold us to them. He held Peter to them, even to the point where Peter said, "I will go to prison and I will die for You". The Lord says, "You have said it Peter, and you will". It is a solemn thing to make promises to the Lord, so He reminds Peter of his confident boast.

Now, in the way of restoration, He reminds Peter of His own glorious **power**. Notice the things that He brings to Him—a draught of fishes, and then a miraculous provision of bread and fish. That had happened before when He fed five thousand, and it was then that Peter had said, "To whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life". Is it not as if the Lord is saying to Peter, "Peter, you need not have gone to the world; I have got it all. You need not go back to the world for your provision; you need not go back to the world for your effectiveness; you need not go back to the world for your comfort and cheer. I alone can provide them." Thus He reminds Peter of His power.

He then reminds Peter of His **purpose** for him. In John 21 : 15-17 three times He addresses Peter as Simon son of Jonas. I am sure, as Peter heard that, he must have gone back in his mind to the first time he heard those words from the Lord, "Simon, son of Jonas, I am going to change your name. I am going to call you Cephas, a Stone". Peter might have been saying in his heart "Are you really keeping to it, Lord, after all this ; after the way I have denied you, am I still a stone ? " Oh yes, He was. The Lord was going to carry through His purposes in Peter's life. The Lord had also said, "I will make you a fisher of men". Had Peter forfeited that ? No ! The Lord says, "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Shepherd my sheep". The Lord is carrying through His purpose in Peter's life. Peter is to be a fisher of men, a feeder of the flock. The Lord did indeed make Peter a fisher of men. We never read of Paul's having 3,000 or 5,000 conversions as Peter had. He was the fisherman with the net and he drew them in. God never purposes our failure, but His purposes are fulfilled in spite of our failure. Is that not wonderful ! My father often used to say, When the Lord saved me He knew all the falls that I was going to have ; He knew all about me when He saved me ; and I am not a disappointment to Him.

Lastly, before Peter could be fully restored, there had to be a **complete confession**. Three times he had denied the Lord, so three times the Lord asked him "Do you love me ? " What I want to bring home to you tonight is that now Peter throws himself completely on to the Lord. Peter's progress in restoration can be summed up in these phrases : From "Man, I know not" to "Lord thou knowest". "Man, I know Him not", says Peter when he was asked about the Lord. Now he is completely broken : his confidence in himself is completely gone, and he relies on the Lord. He says, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee", and in the end he says, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee". And having brought him through in this way, having shown to him his own weakness, having broken his self-confidence, having brought him to the point where he casts himself entirely on the Lord, the Lord is now able to fit him for further service. That service was to shepherd the flock, to feed the lambs, to feed the sheep, to be the under-shepherd until the Great Shepherd should come, and in the end even to go to prison and to die for the glory of the Lord that he once denied. What a triumph for the Lord ! "Satan hath desired to have thee, but I have prayed for thee". So it can be with us when we trust in the Lord and not in ourselves. May God bless His word to each one of our hearts.

2 Corinthians 6

THE expression, "unequal yoke", as used in the Authorised Version of the Bible and perpetuated in our vocabulary by constant use is, in fact unfortunate, in that it misses the main point of the passage. J.N.D. translates "diverse yoke" and this is quite plainly accurate since the first member of the word is 'hereto', which as we are all aware conveys the notion of 'other' in a diverse sort of way. Compare Luke 23 : 32 where 'other' means 'different'. The thieves were evildoers ; the Lord did only good. Mere inequality would not be a serious hindrance to fellowship. In everyday life as in assembly life inequalities are innumerable, but not insuperable. Rarely are two people equal, if indeed ever, but diversity is another thing and it is this that the apostle deals with in this chapter in such detail.

Inequality does not imply diversity of nature. One horse may stand twelve hands high and another fourteen ; one may be white and the other black ; but inequalities such as these present little difficulty. These animals could be harnessed together for labour, or, if male and female, could be mated for breeding purposes. But even where two animals are pretty evenly matched in size and weight, such different species as horse and ox could not make partners. There is a diversity of nature and not a mere inequality, so that a true partnership cannot be formed.

Paul uses five different pairs of nouns to add weight of illustration to his argument and against each pair he uses a different word to describe the impossibility of fellowship. We may remember, also, in this connection, the Levitical law's prohibition of the use of diverse animals in the yoke, a prohibition which is implicit in the terms used here. (cf. Deuteronomy 22 : 10).

Paul begins by saying, "Do not become diversely yoked with unbelievers". He is not writing about associations already in existence prior to conversion. Many of these could be ended—some perhaps should be ; but others exist in a permanent and inviolable form. One of these is referred to in 1 Corinthians 7 where a believer is considered as being united in marriage to an unbelieving partner. The believer, in such a union is not to break a bond so formed. But our passage has in mind a person not already in this situation and at liberty to make a decision. "Do not **become** unequally yoked". Such a partnership is not to be contemplated. To enter into this kind of situation would be to violate a plain command of the Lord through His servant, and the christian so proceeding could not expect the blessing of the Lord on such an association, marital, commercial or whatever else. Even differences of race, social standing and so on, though sometimes presenting problems, can often be overcome by common consent, mutual understanding, consideration and courtesy, but Paul is referring to complete incompatibility between believer and unbeliever, and he emphasises his point by elaborate argument.

The wide disparity between the christian and the unconverted is set out in five contrasting pairs.

1. What share has righteousness with unrighteousness
2. What fellowship has light with darkness
3. What agreement has Christ with Belial
4. What part has the believer with an unbeliever
5. What union has the shrine of God with idols.

A comprehensive list indeed !

1. Diversity of Practice.

The first word 'share' is a translation of a word which may mean 'partnership'. The word partners, which occurs in Luke 5 : 7 is evidently derived from the same root. The fishermen mentioned there worked together, sharing the labours of their industry, sharing in the profits which accrued to them. We might even call them co-directors of the enterprise. Clearly the expression has in mind a business or commercial partnership. Thinking of this as a basis for illustration of his theme Paul says that there is no partnership between righteousness and unrighteousness. In practice they are poles apart. Now, this is so self evident that some may wonder where the difficulty arises. It does arise, however, because of our faulty discernment. It is so widely assumed that because people act decently and behave in a civilized manner they are righteous persons. This would, of course, be true as judged by human standards, but, in Scripture, we have divine standards and all not measuring up to the divine standard are classed as unrighteous. In fact the Greek gives 'not subject to law' or 'lawless'. John says 'Sin is lawlessness'. This is the opposite of righteousness. In the presence of God we do not 'measure ourselves among ourselves'; we must use the yardstick He Himself provides and since, by faith, believers are constituted righteous with a righteousness of God, no righteousness of man, however commendable, could stand in the same class. Not merely is it less ; it is diverse. The unbeliever, decent and honourable though he may be, is unfitted for fellowship or partnership with a righteous person.

2. Diversity of Principle

What fellowship has light with darkness ? The word fellowship has its base in the idea of 'common' ; common ground, common principle. The two principles, light and darkness have no common ground. Normally, light dispels darkness. If you walk into a perfectly dark room and switch on the electric light the darkness will be dispelled and the room will be filled with light. The two do not exist together ; they have no common meeting place. We know that in the beginning God divided the light from the darkness. Oddly enough, though physical light disperses darkness, it works out differently in some cases where darkness is moral. In John 1 we read : "the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not". The light shone in the Lord Jesus Himself in all its wondrous perfection but the darkness remained unaffected. This proves it to have been more than simple absence of light. Where absence of light causes darkness, access of light remedies the deficiency.

The darkness referred to in John 1 was really opposition to the light. There is no common meeting place for light and that which opposes it. The separation the Lord imposed in the physical sphere is symbolical of this moral gulf and this should be appreciated and maintained by the believer.

3. Diversity of Person

There is no agreement between Christ and Belial. Agreement is the translation of the Greek word 'symphony', which, as we know well, means 'sounding together'. Symphony is a harmonious combination of sounds. There is a harsh discord between certain notes or combinations of notes which offends the sensitive ear. Christ and Belial sound on such different frequencies that there is no possibility of harmony. Belial evidently means 'worthless'. Of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of God, every redeemed voice gladly avers, 'Thou art worthy'. The gulf between Christ and Belial, the worthless one, is infinite and impassable. If we are Christ's men and women our loyalty to Him should make it impossible for us to walk harmoniously with those who are loyal to His enemy. One does not refer, of course, to one's job of work in which most of us must labour in yoke with unbelievers. There we have no choice—unless we were to go out of the world altogether. (1 Corinthians 5:10) But where liberty of choice is possible, as in marriage, for example, the conflicting loyalties should clearly decide the issue for the believer.

4. Diversity of Position

What part has a believer with an unbeliever? According to Liddell and Scott the word translated 'part' can, among other things, mean part of a country. I suggest this is a valid application in this context. The Christian is a heavenly man: his citizenship and his politics are there. The unbeliever does not believe in heaven or in the Lordship of Christ, so his interests are centred in another sphere and he is committed to following other leaders. He pursues the course of worldly politics, worldly aspirations and worldly policies. Actually, though they have no real 'part' there, many Christians entangle themselves, to their spiritual loss, in these affairs. This can only bring them disappointment and sorrow, for we know the direction in which worldly politics trend. The utter displacement of God's Christ and the substitution of man's choice is the world's avowed aim. Cf. Psalm 2. The Lord taught His disciples to pray to the Father, 'Thy kingdom come'. This is the kingdom which should capture the interest and engage the energies of the Christian.

5. Diversity of Participation

What union has the shrine of God with idols? According to the lexicographers the word translated union has reference to 'laying things down together.' The contrasting ideas quite certainly have nothing in common; they could not be laid down together. What feature could God's holy shrine share with the demon-centred worship of the idol's temple? People talk and writers write books on 'Comparative religion' Christianity is lumped together with Buddhism, Shintoism and many other religions for the purpose of comparison, and religious authors see 'large areas of agreement' among them. So far as Christianity is

concerned there is only contrast ; christianity cannot be 'laid down together' with them. This Scripture is, itself, so plain that we may safely reject outright any philosophical pleas. If we participate in the fellowship of the table of the Lord we cannot have fellowship with those whose participation is with the table of idols ; and the expression, table, as used in this context, stands for the whole participation, not only for the Lord's supper, as it is frequently truncated to mean.

A prayerful and honest consideration of these verses with their five black and white contrasts should convince any thoughtful christian that the path of obedience to His Lord demands separation from links of a nature contrary to christianity. If a believer had such associations prior to conversion, if they should be of a permanent kind, as marriage, he will be able to look to the Lord for grace to continue in them and perhaps to win his partner for the Lord. Any association of this diverse character, inadvisedly entered into since conversion could only be damaging in its effect.

EZRA'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM ————— ROBERT THOMSON

THE seventy years of Judah's captivity were ended. Its beginning is spoken of in this way, "And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years" (Jeremiah 25 : 11). The termination is also clearly stated, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure : even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built ; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid" (Isaiah 44 : 28). The whole work of Jehovah's judgment against Israel is clearly stated from its beginning to its ending, even before it happened. How wonderful are the warnings and the pleadings of God toward the people whom He loved, that He might turn their affection to Himself alone !

Nebuchadnezzar is declared as "My servant" (Jeremiah 25 : 9) proving that God is sovereign and can use whomsoever He will to do His service. Cyrus is called "My shepherd", and the "Lord's anointed", many years before he is born, showing not only His sovereignty but also His foreknowledge. Our hearts are cheered to know that God had recovery in mind even before the seventy years of captivity began ; for His desire was to bless His chosen nation, Israel, on the ground of their obedience to His word.

Cyrus acknowledged that his power and greatness were given him of God, and sought to fulfil the charge given him by divine decree. In the first year of his reign he issued a proclamation to those of the captivity to go and rebuild the House of God at Jerusalem. It is good to see those in high places seeking to further the work of God. There must be no slackness among the people, for those who did not go up had to help those who went up. God was working, and the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin rose up, giving a good example to others. The people gave gifts for the new House of God, and Cyrus, the king Emperor, restored much from Solomon's temple which had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

This was God's perfect way of preserving His own things and restoring His people after seventy years of captivity. It was really a new generation which had learned God through His judgments.

Following the surmounting of many trials and difficulties, by the help and mercy of God, the temple at Jerusalem was eventually finished. (Ezra 6 : 15) The two leaders in this great work were Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who gave courage to the people by their example. Such was the interest by Jehovah in those who responded to build the temple at Jerusalem, that almost the whole of Ezra chapter 2 is devoted to their names and pedigree. The building itself was not sufficient ; there must be the priestly company who are competent to minister to God in the sanctuary.

Thus we are introduced to Ezra, who was of Aaron, the high priest, and a ready scribe in the law of Moses (Ezra 7 : 6). The House of God needed spiritual power and freshness for communion with Jehovah, for He must have worshippers who can worship Him according to truth. The servant Ezra gathered together men of like faith to go to Jerusalem with him from Babylon to do service in the temple. Even the heart of the ruling monarch was wrought upon by God to grant Ezra all his request, and everything was now prepared for Jehovah to be glorified, and His people to receive His blessing. The supply was then given from the highest source on earth—the king's hand ; and yet higher still, for the hand of the Lord was upon him in blessing. God's hand had been heavy upon the Philistines in judgment, (1 Samuel 5 : 7, 9) ; now it was to be seen in blessing, giving a good supply for the whole journey as Ezra and his company started for Jerusalem "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4 : 19).

We notice, with deep joy of heart, that Ezra was ever mindful to speak of "the good hand of the Lord God", which was ever upon him for blessing. The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem took about four months, and was marked by perfect safety, because of the goodness of God toward him. This is a present encouragement to our souls as we pass through a trackless wild, for our God will not only order our steps, but will preserve us while we are in the way. In former times there was the pillar of cloud by day, over the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the pillar of fire by night, not only to assure the children of Israel of His presence with them, but also to guide them in the way they should go : for when the cloud moved, they followed. (Numbers 9 : 15–23) So Moses, who enquired to be shown the way of the Lord, received the glorious answer from the Lord "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33 : 13, 14). Ezra was obedient to the voice of the Lord, and sought those who were of faith to work with him.

God was also working in the king's heart, for he prepared a letter concerning Ezra, the restoring of the vessels of the temple, and the gifts of silver and gold from the province of Babylon. Upon hearing of the king's interest, and of his great provision for God's holy temple, Ezra broke forth into a doxology of praise for his desire to beautify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (Ezra 7 : 27, 28). The hand of the Lord God was upon Ezra to strengthen him and give to him the needed help for the work which was before him. So in Ezra chapter 7 we see supply.

safety and strength all proceeding from the hand of the Lord to His ready and willing servant.

A detailed account is then given of all who went with Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem, for God is deeply concerned about those who are interested in His work and service. Ezra viewed the people as they abode three days by the river of Ahava, and found that there were none of the sons of Levi. These were men of understanding and suited ministers for the House of God ; a very needed requisite for worship in the temple. Under the good hand of God, Ezra desired that such men be sent him, and a goodly number of the Levites and Nethinims came along.

A fast was proclaimed as they abode in tents by the river ; and also an earnest calling upon God for guidance and protection as they carried such valuable vessels from the king for use in the House of God. The journey lay through bandit-infested country, and God preserved them from the force of the enemy and from such as lay in wait by the way.

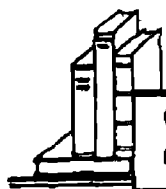
We, like them, have had entrusted to us the holy things of God, being ourselves constituted holy through the work of Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We are to keep untarnished the precious things of Christ which have been committed to us. Therefore it is imperative that we should hold fast, stand fast and always be watching ; that is, not to give up anything, not to give way and be ever on the alert.

Note the three days mentioned, by the river and in Jerusalem ! (8 : 15 and 8 : 32). There is no doubt that in the figure we have the moral distance of separation from the world and its system, by the death and resurrection of Christ. Let us always seek to maintain this distance. It was on the fourth day that the costly vessels of silver, gold and copper were weighed in the House of God, and everything was recorded.

CORRECTION

Page 167, Sept./Oct., third paragraph, should read :

"The English word 'sincere' is derived from two roots which mean 'without wax'. In the days of the old culture an unscrupulous sculptor would sometimes fill up any flaws in his work with wax of a similar colour to the stone he was using. An honest craftsman would scorn to stoop to such deception, so your genuine artist gave you a sculpture 'without wax'. What claimed to be marble was entirely so, not partially wax".



CHANGELESSNESS

J. STODDART

AS one fleeting year succeeds another we are forcibly reminded of the changing and aging character of everything in Creation. It would be idle and absurd to challenge a phenomenon so obvious, and yet but scant attention is paid to the lessons and implications intended in the well-known facts of change. Perhaps the start of 1973 would be an appropriate time to consider such lessons for our profit and blessing in the days that lie ahead.

Blind unbelief has no option but to accept the process of change in all around, while the Christian regards it as the most compelling pointer to the changelessness of the Creator God Himself. The diligent seeker soon finds in the Scriptures of Truth, in which God reveals Himself, that He alone knows no change. What comfort and strength this has afforded to believers in every age, and especially to those who are "wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting life." The writer of Psalm 102 is overwhelmed with self-distrust as the ravages of time leave their unmistakable imprint on his life. But how thoroughly he has learned his lesson when, turning heavenwards, he says in v.12, "But Thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever." Realising that not only he but the heavens and earth are subject to age and change, he now boldly says to Jehovah, "But Thou art the Same, and Thy years shall have no end." (see vvs. 25/27). The capital S is used in 'the Same' because it is a title of God, denoting 'the existing One, Who does not change.' (J.N.D. trans.)

The present day believer is charmed to find that what is said of God in Psalm 102 is quoted in application to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in Hebrews 1 : 10/12. It is in Him that God has spoken in these last days to us, and all that God is has been fully and perfectly expressed in Him. It may be asked if this in itself did not entail a change in Godhead, since the Eternal Word had to become flesh (John 1 : 14) and live as Man in this world of time and change. And this would be true as to His **form**, as is plainly stated in Philippians 2 : 5/8. He Who was "in the **form** of God . . . took upon Him the **form** of a servant, and became in the likeness of men." Truly a most significant change, for "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3 : 16), seen, heard and handled in this world as never before. How thankful we are for this mighty fact as to the **form** of God, but in no other sense is it possible to attribute change to God, and the absolute changelessness of His **character** is substantiated beyond all question in Jesus Christ, Who is "the Same yesterday, and to-day, and

for ever." (Hebrews 13 : 8)

The intention of this paper, however, is not to labour theological truths which are so well accepted and treasured among us, but to draw comfort and strength for the journey ahead as we stand on the threshold of this New Year. The greatly accelerated rate of change in the modern world may seem to reach almost alarming proportions, and many freely express the difficulty of "keeping pace with things." The various levels at which this is experienced need not be detailed here, but everyone is aware of it in one form or another. How very needful it is then to be marked by stability when "the wind of change" blows more fiercely, and surely this would be a fine exercise for us all in the coming year. No human resource is, of course, equal to such a test and our hearts are driven to find their strength in the changelessness of Him Who declares, "I am the LORD (Jehovah), I change not ; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Malachi 3 : 6). This was said to God's people in a day of declension and change, not for better but for worse—when, as to-day, there was a danger of being swept along in the maelstrom of changing attitudes and ideas. The effect upon real souls is seen in v. 16, "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another ; and the LORD hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His Name." Here then is the sure result of knowing and relying upon the unchanging faithfulness of God, Who is "the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1 : 17)

Perhaps we detect a note of depression in Canon Henry Francis Lyte's famous hymn, "Abide with me", written in the year 1847, when at the early age of fifty-four he was already a dying man. But at least in the second verse, he shows where his trust was firmly placed, as he says :—

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

Not all change, thank God, is a change for the worse, and, indeed we are able to take account of changes which are beneficial and essential even to survival itself. The normal process of growth produces changes of this kind both in the physical and mental aspects of life. Similarly, in the Christian experience, we are committed to a continuous process of change, as we may readily see from 2 Corinthians 3 : 18, "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Here is the kind of change which should mark us as the years go by and which is consistent with the stability of character to which reference has been made.

Change that is merely the product of a restless nature or a desire to conform to the whims, fashions and foibles of the passing world is totally inconsistent with the changelessness of the God Who has called us. So in Romans 12 : 2 the Apostle enjoins us to "be not conformed to this world ; but be transformed (or changed) by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect,

will of God." In the bright prospect that lies before every Christian beyond this mortal life, we are reminded in Philippians 3 : 20/21 that "we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : Who shall **change** our body of humiliation and fashion it like unto His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." Here is a **change**—and how essential we see it to be—which must await that rapturous moment when "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry", (Hebrews : 10/37), when "we shall all be **changed**, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and **we** shall be **changed**." (1 Corinthians 15 : 51/52.) So far as we are concerned this will be the last and most wonderful change of all ; beyond that, nothing but changeless perfection and the full ability to appreciate and forever adore Him Who is "the Same (changeless) yesterday, and to-day and forever."

How powerful and stabilising is the influence of knowing One Who is so unchanging in His love, in contrast to the best of friends in this world. This is sweetly expressed in the delightful children's hymn, which says,

" There's a Friend for little children, (including us all)
 Above the bright blue sky,
 A Friend that **never changes**,
 Whose love can never die.
 Unlike our friends by nature,
 Who change with changing years,
 This Friend is always worthy
 The precious Name He bears."

Whatever changes have happened in the year that is gone, or may happen in the New year we have entered, we can rely utterly upon Him Who changes not with changing years, knowing that the constancy of His love and faithfulness is as changeless as His very Being.

So rapidly and inexorably are environmental changes taking place all around us that much concern is felt for the preservation of long enjoyed amenities. The study of man's relation to his environment, commonly called ecology, produces warnings from time to time of the disastrous effects of pollution of air space, seas, rivers and land itself. How sad a commentary on the result of man's inventiveness and progress without reference to His Creator ! What could emphasise more effectively the eternal wisdom which has decreed that while the heavens and the earth "are the works of Thine hands : they shall perish ; but Thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and **they shall be changed** : but Thou art the Same (the Changeless One), and Thy years shall not fail." (Hebrews 1 : 10/12.) Good it is to know that the last and greatest environmental change will not be the product of man's incompetence and neglect, but the fruition of God's wisdom, love and eternal vigilance, which will wrap up the old creation and bring in the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells." (see 2 Peter 3 : 10/13). Reference to this passage will show that man's most ambitious achievements in nuclear physics will pale into insignificance compared with the divine process of accomplishing God's purpose for the physical universe.

Thus it is that He Who Himself is changeless will change everything that has been stained by sin and disobedience throughout Creation, and fill the new scene with His Own glory, for the eternal blessing of His own. The exquisite note of praise and confidence in Mrs. G. Helyar's hymn might well be on our lips at the commencement of this another year of grace :—

O Lord and Saviour, we recline
On that eternal love of Thine ;
Thou art our rest, and Thou alone
Remainest when all else is gone.

Yes, "Thou remainest", sea and land,
E'en heaven shall pass, but Thou shalt stand :
Undimmed Thy radiancy appears,
Changeless through all the changing years.
(L.F.363)

"May we who are wearied with the changes and chances of
this fleeting life—
Repose upon Thine eternal changelessness."

JESUS CHRIST THE SAME

E. H. SAPP

THREE Psalms, namely 131, 133 and 117, only eight verses in all, may bring out a little of the thought that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. First, in **Psalm 131**, we have our Lord in the days of His earthly life, "that holy thing. . . the Son of God". Next, in **Psalm 133**, our Lord is the exalted Head, the risen, ascended, glorified Man. From that heavenly glory He ministers with royal resources and rich blessings to His saints in earth. He is the real Melchizedek—a man nevertheless who has lived man's life on earth, our compassionate Priest. Lastly, the two verses of the shortest **Psalm 117** relate to Kingdom days when the whole creation is ruled by Christ the King. So wise, so just, so peaceful is that day, that there arises to Him a swelling chorus of praise from appreciative hearts. In that day Jesus Christ is the object supreme of all and is by all adored !

Psalm 131 is by David and is considered as a reminiscence of his youth. May be 1 Samuel 17, verses 28 and 29 come down to the scene of Israel's weakness and dread. David is angrily rebuked by his brother Eliab. Naughtiness and pride of heart are attributed to him, but David evincing the meekness of his integrity, justly replies "What have I now done ? Is there not a cause ?" Soon indeed was David to be the only deliverer and saviour of his people. It is well for us to consider the great things our Lord has done for us. No lover of the Lord Jesus could ever think of Him as haughty in spirit nor of His countenance showing pride or lofty looks. As the obedient, sent One, speaking the Father's words, doing His Father's works, doing always those things which please the

Father, He was, as it were, "as a weaned child". Does the psalm bring Jesus before us? Is He not the meek and lowly in heart? And here we ask, does He ever change in character? Could any but Himself utter the incomparable invitation in Matthew 11 : 28-30? Children nestled in His arms unafraid; the poor thronged Him; the afflicted and heartbroken moved Him to compassion. Of course, He was not the world's ideal. He did not give Himself to its schemes; He composed no book or creed of religion or philosophy; He was poor, despised, nobody by man's standards, yet He was the Son of David and the King of Israel, and He is the Hope, the only Hope of Israel. To Him are given in resurrection "the sure mercies of David". This is the faith expressed in verse 3 and the assertion of the apostle in Acts 13 : 26. The wonderful prophecy in Zechariah 9 : 9 was fulfilled, but an entry into Jerusalem on a war-horse would have pleased the world far better in that day. Soon they cried "Away with him, crucify him". Will a day still future witness a better and more glorious fulfilment? He will still, even then, be "just" and "lowly."

One desires to view **Psalm 133** through New Testament eyes. Christ is in glory, His church on earth, He is the Great High Priest, royal as Melchizedek, compassionate as Aaron. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit baptised saints into one body, a unity which abides as there is none other. The brethren are the household of God, a sanctified company ever to be practically holy. Separation from evil is the **practical principle** of this unity. The grace of the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the **power of this unity** and of **gathering**. Follow this line and we shall experience "goodness" and "pleasantness" in our assemblies. Think of the so-called benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians. There, saints in disorder are rebuked and corrected. How shall they proceed? "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all". The "dew of Hermon" alludes to the Lord's faithfulness in the supply of mercy, daily unceasing mercies. Geographically, Mount Hermon is an established physical mercy to the whole land, its frozen summit creating a layer of coldness whereby the sun-evaporation of moisture distils overnight and the dew descends upon the mountains of Zion. This is a perpetual phenomenon, His mercies fail not, they are new every morning. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17 : 3).

Only two verses comprise **Psalm 117**. The significance of them is overlooked but they are pinpointed for us in the reference to them in Romans 15. The effect of the outreach of the Gospel to us Gentiles is one thing whereby we, standing by grace, might glorify God for His mercy. Secondly, foreseeing the future kingdom of the Son of man, such blessing abounds in that day that all creation unites in the praise of the Lord. "Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles and laud him all ye people". Amidst the splendour, glory, power and blessing and peace of millennial times, the Lord God omnipotent reigning, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. "For his merciful kindness is great toward us; and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise ye the Lord!"

PROPHECY: A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE

COLIN CURRY

1. A PROPER APPROACH

Preliminary Remarks

IN view of the fact that a considerable part of the content of the bible is of a prophetic nature, how much or how little attention is it right to give to the study of prophecy?

Some people answer this question by making it almost their sole preoccupation. Prophetic study can be highly engrossing, and in the light of developments in the 20th century it is also topical and relevant. There is need for some caution however, lest it should completely dominate our field of interest. Another common attitude is to leave this kind of study more or less alone. This arises partly from the feeling that it is not the prime concern of Christians. There is of course some truth in this (see, for example, Acts 1 : 7). People who know something of the special and distinctive nature of the Christian revelation are impressed with the need for spiritual appreciation and moral response to the truth of Christianity, here and now, in their lives. They also feel a certain distaste for the strong orientation towards prophecy which they see in those who over-play it to the neglect of other important matters.

Neither of these extreme responses can really be defended in the face of Scripture. The true attitude lies well between these extremes. Prophetic study is valuable, but ought not to be divorced from other things ; it ought not to be undertaken for its own sake, nor merely for the interest which attaches to it. It is doubtful whether the special character of the Christian era (with its distinct privileges and responsibilities) can rightly be understood as a thing apart : without seeing its place on the stage of history, and within the total scheme of things. Anyone who purports to be close to Christ, and devoted to Him in the special way which is possible in the present day, cannot rightly belittle the things which concern His honour (and His supremacy and authority) whether or not these relate to another day than the present.

We therefore hope to consider some of the essential lines of prophetic teaching in a series of occasional papers. Before entering into the subject-matter of prophecy, however, it seems important to justify from Scripture our statement about the value of this instruction today.

Attention to Prophecy Urged by Scripture

The general title to this series of papers is taken from 2 Peter 1 : 19. This verse asserts quite plainly that Christians would do well to pay heed to prophetic Scripture. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye should take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts". As long as he remained here Peter would press again and again the certainty of what Christians had believed, and the purifying effect it should have on them. The future glory of the Lord Jesus Christ was no cunningly devised fable. Peter with others had witnessed a special

sample of the excellence of that glory, when with Him at the transfiguration. This added its support to the Old Testament Scriptures which spoke so constantly of that coming day ; though even on its own that prophetic word was completely sure and reliable. It must be right to give serious attention to that word, therefore, allowing it to have a real impact on our outlook and ways.

Peter's words, when written, applied primarily to Old Testament prophecy. Similar words in the last book of the bible show that it is fair to extend them to the whole of biblical prophecy. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1 : 3). No doubt this has a first application to the book of Revelation alone, but it can be extended back to cover all the prophetic teaching which culminates in that book. This statement is backed up in an impressive way in the closing verses of the whole bible. To leave these matters out of our reckoning, to take away from them, or alternatively to distort them by adding our own thoughts, is serious indeed (22 : 18, 19). But there is great blessing in reading, hearing and keeping (by valuing and responding to) their message.

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do wickedly : and none of the wicked shall understand : but the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12 : 10). We quote this verse, merely as a sample of many, to show that the Old Testament in its own way presses the same lesson. The instruction which God provides is the key to wise discernment of the times through which His people pass. It strengthens their faith, it equips them for survival in severe testing (with something to spare), it preserves and purifies them from the general and mounting wickedness of the day in which they live. If this is the outcome of heeding this God-given instruction, we shall surely be well-advised to show interest in it.

Prophecy Used and Authenticated by Christ

In addition to what the bible says about the importance of its prophetic parts, there are direct statements from our Lord which confirm the need to pay attention to this area of instruction. Matthew 24 and 25 are chapters which contain much about the future, from our Lord Himself. In these words He builds upon the Old Testament teaching about the end-times of history : He amplifies and elucidates many things for His followers, giving warnings and guidance too. As if to stress the fact that His authority underlies all that He says on these matters, He includes such words as "Behold I have told you before" ; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" ; "Watch therefore : for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (24 : 25, 35, 42). Freely, in His conversation with His disciples, He refers to this and that passage in the old prophecies, putting His seal upon the reliability of it all and the guidance it gives. Both the whole of the Old Testament prophecy, and all the details, are entirely trustworthy and to be drawn upon for instruction : this is His view of the matter. As examples of His ready use and acceptance of it, see for instance verses 15, 27 and 30 in chapter 24. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the Holy place, (whoso

readeth, let him understand :) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains" (verses 15 and 16) ; " 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 " (verse 30) ; (in the O.T., see Daniel 7 : 13, 14 ; 11 : 31 etc). He quotes again from Daniel 7 in Matthew 26 : 64, not now to His followers, but to the high priest and to his collaborators, on the eve of His death. He uses the passage as confirmation of Who He was, and of the sure reversal in due course of their verdict against Him ; and they certainly understood what He meant !

We have noted how our Lord referred to detailed passages concerning future events. A wide selection of verses could be quoted to show that He saw His first advent predicted in the Old Testament too. One or two quotations will suffice. Speaking of Moses, He said "he wrote of me" (John 5 : 46). Having read a passage from Isaiah, in the synagogue at Nazareth, His comment was " This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4 : 21). He made it clear too that, not only in its details, but also in its whole scope, the Old Testament witnessed to Himself ; to His sufferings and His rejection, as well as to His glory ; to His glory and supremacy in a coming day, as well as to the path of suffering which would lead to that end (Luke 24 : 44). Late on the day of His resurrection our Lord indicated to His disciples that they might have understood the Old Testament prophets better than they did. They had been "slow of heart to believe **all** that the prophets had spoken". They had overlooked the indications there that He would suffer and die. We today, on the other hand, could easily neglect those other parts of the prophetic witness which relate to His glorious appearing and the trends in history which will build up towards that great moment. Let us remember **His** view of disciples who lack awareness or interest in these things : He calls them foolish and cool-hearted.

A Special Favour and Opportunity

The study of prophecy is a favour not granted to everyone. " Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends" (John 15 : 15). The Lord Jesus places confidence and trust in His people today. Abraham, the friend of God, was in a similar position of trust and communion with God in relation to the drastic measures soon to be visited upon Sodom. " Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ? " (Genesis 18 : 17). Abraham in turn was able to act with understanding in that fast-moving situation ; he was able to plead urgently and openly with God, knowing that He would act mercifully as well as with justice. The instruction from God which is available today, by the Holy Spirit, through the prophetic Scriptures, includes things beyond the grasp of even the prophets themselves. Not for themselves, but for **us**, the prophets wrote them. There are matters available to us which angels would wish to know, but cannot (1 Peter 1 : 10-12). God, says Paul in Ephesians 1 : 9, 10, hath "made known unto **us** the mystery of his will". It is well known that the word mystery in the bible means a secret now open, and the passage goes on to state what is the substance of this secret into which believers are admitted today. " That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he

might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him : In whom also we have obtained an inheritance" etc. We may well share Paul's spirit of worship and appreciation as he speaks of God's sovereign grace and liberality towards present-day believers. In His wisdom He gives us an understanding that behind all the cross-currents and apparent chaos of history, there exists His sovereign plan. To know with assurance that there is a direction in which all things are moving ; to know that infinite wisdom has determined (and will ensure) that Christ will be at the very apex of things when all the trends of time reach their fulness ; this kind of knowledge is heartening indeed, and fills our hearts with thanksgiving. It is a high privilege to be in this secret, and to have the instruction about it which Scripture provides.

An Unveiling of Christ

From what has been written already it will be clear that any reading of prophecy which does not find Christ in it, as the centre and objective of the whole story, is a misconstruction of what it teaches. **His** rejection, suffering and death, as the turning point around which the whole of creation and time centre ; and **His** supremacy, as the focal point towards which the ages are leading ; these are the key features of the whole story. Any study of prophecy which merely provides us with interesting information, but does not open our eyes to the many glories of the Lord Jesus, nor increase our attachment and loyalty to Him, has failed to grasp the essentials of the matter. Here is a test of our approach to it. Do we study prophecy in order to be taken up with the Person Who is its beginning and its end, and its theme from first to last ? If the teaching of prophecy is properly received, one effect will certainly be that Christ will be admired and obeyed in an increasing way.

The book of Revelation is made up mostly of visions given to John, the seer ; and there are clear statements that most of it relates to the future. The curtain of time is drawn back, and he sees ahead into the days of prophetic fulfilment, and on to the final consummation. God's rule will be established and all resistance crushed. Processes of judgment, over which Christ will hold complete control, will bring this about. There are many important details, not all of them clear enough for dogmatic interpretation ; but there is no doubt whatever about the main purpose of the story, nor of the trend of the events which are to come. As the title of the book indicates, it is all to be thought of as "the revelation of Jesus Christ". The word "revelation" could be rendered "unveiling". It should be an unveiling of Christ to present-day readers : and He will be unveiled for every eye to behold in a day near at hand (Revelation 1 : 1, 7). Perhaps a good watchword for students of prophecy might be a phrase from Revelation 19 : 10, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy". Let us approach prophecy as those "that love **His** appearing" (2 Timothy 4 : 8), as those that welcome the prospect of full recognition and public acclaim for our Lord.

It Purifies our Lives and Ways of Thinking

In the book of Revelation we are permitted, not only to view our Lord dealing with all that is offensive to God and opposed to His people,

but also to overhear comments from heaven about what is being done. As an example we may quote chapter 19 : 1, 2 "Alleluia ; . . . true and righteous are his judgments". Heaven concurs with the judgment of "Babylon the great", asserting the rightness of her downfall, and being jubilant that her evil has received its death-blow. By this means the reader is encouraged to discern in advance those principles which will be full-blown in their evil in the coming day, and to form judgments now which are in line with heaven's righteous assessment of them. Prophecy, rightly read, will help us to distinguish between good and evil ; and the shape of our lives will be moulded accordingly. Movements and attitudes of our day can be assessed in the light of Christ's ultimate dealing with them. Apart from judging outward trends and movements, it should make a difference to the kind of persons we ourselves are, as the following verses say very clearly, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" . . . "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" . . . "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3 : 11, 14, 17).

Also, the study of prophetic truth helps a Christian to be a stable well-directed person, marked by purity, peace of mind, and quiet hopeful patience as he awaits the realisation of all that Scripture foretells. For the Thessalonian believers, and for those of today too, a bright hope and a bright future stand out against the dark features of the coming day of the Lord. These dark prospects hold no menace for them. Salvation in the fullest sense will be theirs, the completion of God's gracious work within them, already begun. Let them therefore be calm and hopeful in their attitude. Let them be consistent and purposeful in quiet adherence to the teaching received, strengthened by that sovereign and protective love which could never fail them, waiting in patience for their Lord. If the reader cares to read chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians, a chapter which speaks of some of the darkest events that this earth has yet to see, it will be seen that **these** are the objectives Paul has in mind in instructing them about these things. This chapter clearly shows that instruction on prophetic matters should have a stabilizing and purifying effect on those who absorb and react to it in a right way.

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST --- JOHN BARNES

THE Headship of our Lord Jesus Christ is alluded to throughout Scripture. It comes in right at the beginning in type, in Adam's history, is pictured for us in the historical books, is referred to in the Psalms and fills the thought of God as to what He purposes to bring into effect at the end. As we might expect, the subject is presented in completeness, for whatever the Lord Jesus does, He does perfectly. We should not, therefore, be surprised to find it alluded to in seven aspects, seven being

the number of perfection according to Scripture usage. It is to these seven aspects I wish to direct your attention.

Like other groups of sevens in the Bible it is possible to divide the references into four and three, four having direct bearing on the assembly and three to other topics. I have arranged them here in what I believe to be their moral order.

1. The first aspect I should like us to think about concerns the Lord Jesus as Head of the woman. The texts which refer to this aspect are Genesis 2 : 18–25, and Ephesians 5 : 23–33. In each of these passages mention is made of the **Origin** of the woman. “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.” Genesis 2 : 23. And, “For we are members of . . . His flesh and of His bones.” Ephesians 5 : 30. We see in each of these passages of Holy Writ how powerfully the thought of origin is insisted on. The Man is the Head of the woman in that He is the source of her very existence. Lest it should be imagined that the Spirit is making allusion to the woman in a simply human way, as is so often believed, Paul emphasises his real purpose by saying in Ephesians 5 : 32, “This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” He does, indeed, use the human Adam and his wife as figures and refers to the historical events recorded ; he does also insist on a certain standard of human behaviour as flowing from a true understanding of this feature of Headship, but the main pre-occupation of the Holy Spirit, in this presentation of the truth, is with Christ and the Church.

When the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, an event held from early times to be typical of the death of our Lord, He removed a rib from the man’s side and with it He ‘builded’ a woman. The verb, builded, seems a most fitting expression to be used in this connection. When the Lord presented her to Adam he recognised her instantly as being homogeneous with himself. She was so characteristically ‘of’ his substance that there was no possibility of error. Adam had already reviewed the different members of the animal kingdom and had given them their names, but the fact that among them there was found no help meet for him cannot be over-looked. These creatures could provide no suitable companion or consort for the man. The woman, on the other hand, was not provided from a different family, but was specially created for him from his own substance. The formation of the assembly partakes of the same nature and exactly fulfils what is so beautifully portrayed in the type. The Lord Jesus recognises His bride as being characteristically ‘of’ Himself ; formed from Him and for Him through His death, for He gave Himself for her. So we can not only say correctly, the head of the woman is the man, but the Head of the Church is the Christ.

2. The second point is the Headship of the body. Here we have an **Organic** thought rather than one relating to origin. In Colossians 1 : 18 we read, “And He is the Head of the body, the church.” In this epistle the thought of Headship of the body seems to be brought in to emphasise the idea of control and supply. Therefore, the danger of slipping away from control is stressed and the necessity of ‘holding the Head’ firmly insisted on. In a marvellously intimate way links have been formed between the Lord Jesus and His people on earth—Spiritual links.

“By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body,” scripture tells us. The unity of the body is utterly Spiritual, and in the same way the whole body is Spiritually united to the Head in heaven, the entire organism being pervaded by the Personal presence of the Holy Spirit of God, to transmit control from the exalted Head to His members on earth, and to provide every supply the body needs to carry out each function the Head requires it to perform. The Colossians had no need to attempt to form other links, angelic or of any other sort. The bonds are already there and the entire formation is a living system, pulsating with vitality. The interposition of the tiniest substance between the head and the body of any living organism would bring in separation from the controlling centre which would introduce the element of death. This cannot, in fact, take place so far as Christ and the church is concerned but, nevertheless, this would be the ultimate tendency of such a principle. Therefore, to change the figure from the body to the vine, we are to abide in Him, for, as separated from Him, no spiritual life would be possible. (John 15) So He is the Head of the body in this organic unity of so vital and wonderful a nature.

3. In Psalm 118 : 22 a third feature can be seen. “The Stone which the builders refused is become the Head of the corner.” (The word, stone, after head, in the text of the *Authorised Version*, is in italics and may be omitted.) This is so important an aspect of the Headship of the Lord Jesus that it is quoted in each of the Synoptic gospels : Matthew 21 : 42, Mark 12 : 10, and Luke 20 : 17. It is also cited in Acts 4 : 11 and in 1 Peter 2 : 7. The Head of the corner seems to bring in the thought of **Orientation** in relation to the church considered as a building. Foundations are normally underground, out of sight. The Ephesian reference to the foundation of the apostles and prophets clearly alludes to this thought. (Ephesians 2 : 20) Their teachings are full of Christ and bring Him into prominence as Head, the whole building taking character from Him. The false apostles are easily discernible because they bring themselves into prominence ; the true apostle keeps himself out of sight. The builders rejected this Stone but God intends It to give orientation and character to the building of which He is the Architect. Builders are exceedingly active today but they are working, many of them, on the wrong structure which will not be acceptable to God and will not endure because it does not derive its character and design from Christ.

The story is told that when Solomon’s temple was being built, a stone was sent up from the underground quarries, of such size and shape that none of the masons working on the site could work out where it was supposed to fit into the structure. So it was laid aside. Workmen kept falling over it and bumping into it so it was pushed to one side out of the way. Later, when the headstone of the corner was required it could not be located. The quarrymen asserted that it had long since been shaped and sent to the site, but the masons hotly denied having received it. Then, one of the workers remembered the stone which had been pushed out of the way. It was found, overgrown with grass and on examination, proved to be the missing corner stone. No wonder the Psalmist goes on to say, “This is the Lord’s doing : it is marvellous in our eyes.” Saul of Tarsus was filled with amazement to find that the One he had so bitterly opposed, supposing Him to be an imposter, was in very deed, the LORD of Glory. What will be the astonishment of mankind to find that the One

whom they refused is the Anointed One of God? What will be the astonishment of Israel in a day to come when they discover that their Messiah has long since been here and that the nation refused Him and handed Him on a tree? Cf. in this connection Zech. 12 : 10-14, etc.

Sing, till heaven and earth surprising
Reigns the Nazarene alone !

There is a fourth allusion to the Lord's Headship in relation to the assembly but as this involves God's ultimate thought it may be better to refer to it last.

4. Psalm 18 tells us of the Lord's Headship over the heathen, or nations, as **Overcomer**. Jehovah is recognised throughout the history of the nation as Israel's King but lest it should be assumed that the other nations may freely go the way of their own will, the Lord's Sovereignty over them is here, as elsewhere, insisted on. The last verse of the Psalm shews plainly that Christ is in mind, though, historically the reference is to David. V. 50 speaks of, 'His King ;' 'His Anointed ;' and of 'David and . . . His Seed.' Moreover, the eternity of the thought, 'for evermore' rules out its ultimate application to the earthly David. The true Seed of David is Christ and He it is who is the Head of the Heathen. That there is opposition to His Headship is unfolded in the Psalm, so it is not achieved without conflict, and the history of David serves to illustrate this fact. He was, for many years, in conflict with the Philistines and other enemies of the Lord and of His people, in order that the kingdom should be established under his hand and secured from internal rebels and from foreign domination. We require the two kings typically, David and Solomon, to demonstrate how this was achieved and what were the consequences in national security ; peace with surrounding nations and submission to the dominant role of Israel's king. So, in the Psalm we have first of all conflict (v. 34 et seq) and finally submission. (v. 43, 44) This great King, our Lord Jesus, will be the Head of the heathen as overcomer of all enemies.

5. A further step is taken in 1 Corinthians 11 : 3. Introduced for reasons relating to disorders which had arisen in the Corinthian church, the Lord's Headship of every man is specified. It would seem that sisters in that assembly were ignoring divine order, so the apostle makes reference to Headship as an **ordered** arrangement in the wisdom of God and instructs us that we are to keep our proper rank in established relationships. God is stated to be the Head of Christ, Christ to be the Head of every man, and the man to be the head of the woman. Evidently the word for man is the one which means 'male' and not the generic word normally used for 'manhood.' There can be no thought whatever of inferring anything in the nature of inferiority, for many a woman is her husband's superior in intellect, spiritual understanding and perhaps in many other respects also. The fact that God is stated to be the Head of Christ is also significant in this context. But there is a divine pattern in creatorial order which man ignores at his peril. In this way, as to order in creation, man is in headship over the woman, and this applies throughout creation. That this order is flouted today only serves to underline the prevalent rebellion against divine order which will result in man's accept-

ance of the 'man of sin' instead of the Lord Jesus Christ. The race will eventually say, what the Jew has already said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Yet Christ is the Head of **every man**. This is not confined to the believing company alone. There His Headship is normally recognised ; but whether owned or not, God's anointed Man is Head. God has not yet publicly enforced the authority so plainly asserted, but there is little doubt that He will do so before very long.

6. We refer again to the Colossian Epistle where we read in chapter 2 : 10 of the Lord as "Head of every principality and power." This text raises His Headship to even greater heights and includes moral creatures other than men. There are other groups of intelligent and responsible beings in the universe. The epistle to the Ephesians tells us of "every family in heaven and on earth." (3 : 15 N.Tr.) Many of these families, in the heavenly department, perhaps all of them, are superior to man in his present order, and Paul may be referring to them, among others as principalities and powers. Several scriptural allusions to angels demonstrate the immensity of their power. Some of these families have been maintained in subjective conditions of blessedness while others have left their first estate and lapsed into rebellion ; but all, whatever may be their present status, are under the overall Headship of the Son of God. No doubt this truth was communicated to the Colossians particularly in relation to their elevation of angels into a kind of ritual stairway of approach to God, according to some dangerous philosophy they were inclined to accept. This will never do. The control of all these families of beings is under the direct **Overlordship** of Christ, and, as the angel in the Revelation reminded John, they too, despite their relative greatness, are servants, not objects of worship.

7. Lastly we may look at Ephesians 1 : 22 where we reach the topstone of thought in the matter of the Headship of our Lord and Saviour. The **Omnipotence** of the Lord is in the mind of the Holy Spirit in this allusion, but, in outstanding grace the assembly is seen as in association with Him in His Headship. He does not assume this position of lofty grandeur in aloof dignity as Omnipotent Head over all things, but with His redeemed consort at His side, sharing with Him in the supreme elevation and power of the position. He is given to be the Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. My reason for leaving this thought to the last will be obvious ; this is the great thought of the Father and the ultimate secret of His heart, divulged now for the edification, blessing and pleasure of the assembly and that they may be perfectly informed as to what He is busy doing. Everything in the universe will eventually be brought into subjection to God's beloved Son and His own assembly will be with Him then, at His side, intelligent as to what He is doing, in perfect accord with Him in it all, sharing with Him in the place of universal Headship which will be His ; typified for us, no doubt, in the headship of Adam and Eve over the earth prior to their disastrous fall.

What a thought for our hearts ! We have no personal qualifications for such a place, no claims, no rights more than any other beings, many of whom are so much greater than we in so many ways and have never disobeyed their Creator at all : but infinite grace has reserved this unique and blessed place for the assembly.

IN my possession is a tape-recording of the voice of a little girl about to start school for the first time. First, there is a parental voice : "Will you cry when you go to school ?" To this question there is an immediate and firm answer : "No !" Then comes a long pause, and at last an addition with much less confidence : "I might feel like it though". While we all know the Christian affirmation, "We do not lose heart" (2 Corinthians 4 : 16), frequently we have to add, like the little girl, "I often feel like it though." Perhaps it is partly to supply us with the antidote, that we have in this passage the apostle's detailed explanation of the facts which enable him to say, "For which cause we faint not". For our purpose we will consider in detail 2 Corinthians 4 : 16-18, and bring in the context as may be necessary.

None can afford to be uninterested in the tendency which besets us all at times to lose heart. What would you say from your experience are the main causes of the 'lose heart' feeling ? Perhaps your list would run something like this : the sorrows, sufferings, perplexities, and difficulties of life ; the frightening confusion and uncertainty in the church and in the world ; disappointment with persons, often friends ; and behind all, the instructed Christian knows that ever and again the voices of the world, the flesh and the devil are heard within, insistently magnifying all these experiences and urging us to give up.

Not losing heart is the subject of 2 Corinthians 4. This is proved by the repetition in verses 1 and 16 of the declaration, "We do not faint or lose heart". The positions of this sentence indicate that the verses which come between, (2 to 15) as well as the verses which follow (16 to 18), and perhaps the whole of chapter 5, explain the grounds in Paul's experience for his making such an affirmation. The antidote in vv. 16-18 is conveniently seen as consisting of three parts :—

(i) v. 16. Our outward man is perishing. This tends to make us lose heart. But the inward is renewed day by day ; and therefore we do not lose heart !

(ii) v. 17. Our experiences of affliction tend to make us lose heart. But we have the certainty of a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; and therefore we do not faint !

(iii) v. 18. The things which are seen tend to make us lose heart, because they underline the transitory nature of this life. But we fix our eyes on the things not seen ; and in the light of this paradox, we are not downhearted !

The space available will permit us to consider only the first of these in a little more detail. The outward man is perishing ! We are all growing older ; and linked with this lengthening of the shadows "across the little landscape of our life", is the saddening fact that "other lights are paling, which for long years we have rejoiced to see ; the blessings of our pilgrimage are failing". This inexorability of the aging process is realised not only by the older, but even by the comparatively young. It has not been an uncommon experience with me to hear the remark almost

despairingly, "I'm nearly thirty years old!" There is no question that the aging process, considered alone, together with all that goes with it, is a potent influence towards our feeling downhearted.

The Christian, however, while he has to face it, does not face it alone. He faces it with Christ and can therefore add, "Our inward man is renewed day by day". This is the confession, or rather the vigorous, victorious assertion of Paul's developed Christian experience, stated so that it might be ours also. It need hardly be remarked that the 'inward man' is not that portion of our being which delights in steak pie or coq-au-vin. It is something entirely spiritual in nature, and what its nature is, is clearly seen in the other references to the inward or inner man.

Romans 7 gives us the knowledge gained by a renewed mind from introspection. The truths about man on which Romans 6 is based are obtained by looking backward to the beginnings of our race's history. "By one man sin entered into the world". By contrast, the truths about man on which Romans 8 is based are derived from the individual's looking within, that is, by introspection. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do". (7 : 19) The conclusion is two-fold. There is found in each individual Christian a part of his being which delights in the things of God. This is the inward man we are enquiring about. (7 : 22) But, warring against it, we find "sin that dwelleth in me". (7 : 20) We are perhaps accustomed to dwell on the latter, and this is necessary, but for the moment I concentrate on the former, often forgotten. Every renewed mind, on looking within itself, finds a part of himself which, like the righteous man of Psalm 1 : 2, delights in the law of God. This part of me is named 'the inward man', and by its nature revealed at the moment of discovery, it delights in the things of God. How immense a discovery, that there is in me a part which delights in the things of God. If this were not true, you would not be reading this paper.

So far as Romans 7 is concerned, the inward man is without strength. This lack is answered in Romans 8, but for our present purpose, it is Ephesians 3 : 16 which brings in again 'the inner man'. The prayer is that "He would grant you. . . to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts". Thus, for the strength the inward man requires to enable him to delight, the Spirit of God, indwelling the believer, is available. For these reasons and by these means it can be said, "though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day".

Notice the phrase 'day by day'. This brings in the daily habit of delighting ourselves in the things of God in His word, and the strength of the Holy Spirit to forward this. This is a process continuing 'day by day', and by it the inward man is renewed. The Christian is not a person who hobbles along on texts of Scripture used like crutches, but the inward man is renewed day by day through his delighting in the things of God, by Christ dwelling in the heart, by the Spirit's power. Doing this, the Christian can say, "we are not downhearted".

STUDIES IN THE REVELATION J. S. BLACKBURN

6. THE TWO CITIES.

I. Introduction.

Read Matthew 25 : 1–13, Revelation 3 : 7–22.

EVERY person who professes Christianity is now engaging in building one of these two cities, Babylon or the New Jerusalem. To which building am I contributing, is a serious question for everyone. In one city is and shall be all that is pleasing to man's senses, but nothing save hostility toward God. In the other city is and shall be that immeasurable treasure the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

One of the climactic points in Bible prophecy is the point in time when the two divide. We are not without previous light on this subject. The parable of the ten virgins is a case in point. Ten virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Here we have, not the full New Testament truth of the Church as the Bride of Christ, but the development of revelation is moving towards it. All the virgins had certain marks emblematic of a true Christianity ; they took lamps—witness ; they went out—separation ; to meet the Bridegroom ; but they all *slumbered and slept*. The *midnight* cry aroused them all, but the coming of the Bridegroom separated the true from the false. The true went in with Him. The door was shut, and the false were left outside to wailing and lamentation. Thus, by the first stage in the coming of Christ (the Rapture) we have the true separated from the false. From that moment the true are inside with Him, where there is light, feasting and joy. The false are left outside.

Where can we find confirmation of this ? The developments in Revelation 2 and 3 issue in one Church where the Lord finds nothing to condemn. To it He says, "I am coming soon : I will take you away before the great tribulation". (paraphrase) These developments also issue in a Church where there is nothing to commend. To it He says, "I will spue thee out of My mouth". Here also, at the end of the Church period, we have a moment when the true are taken in with Christ, while the false are spued out of His mouth. They are rejected by Him.

Let us pause here and note carefully the finger pointing onward to the New Jerusalem. In Revelation 3 : 12, addressing those to be taken away at His coming, Jesus says as a matter of present truth in view of the future culmination, "I will write upon him. . . the name of. . . the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." We shall show that the culminating visions of chapters 17 and 21 present only two church systems, a true—the New Jerusalem, and a false—Babylon.

We could not be more clearly taught than we are in Revelation 3 : 7–22 that now, during the church period, both Babylon and the New Jerusalem are being prepared and worked for. It is all clear under the eye of God. It is all set down here amongst the things which must come to pass for the enlightenment and stimulus of His servants who are at this moment reading the Book of the Revelation. So we do well to examine Babylon and the New Jerusalem most carefully so that the truth of them shines abroad for us on the contemporary world. Then the wise will understand.

That they are both church systems is proved by comparing 17 : 1–3 with 21 : 9–10. Since the latter is the Bride, the Lamb's wife, it is undoubtedly the true Church. It is impossible to escape the inference that Babylon is the false church. I say **the** false church, because she is clearly one, even though she may be a mother, with a hideous brood of children around her.

II. Babylon the Great.

Read Revelation 17 : 1 — 18 : 4.

In earlier papers we have already considered several of the details of chapter 17 : the love-hate relationship between Babylon and the Beast, which leads on from the fact that the Beast is the Serpent's agent for the promotion of his designs hostile to Christ and His people : and the moral truth symbolised by the fact that John is taken into the wilderness to see the Scarlet Woman.

(a) **The Beast.** The Beast is the head of the Roman Empire of the future. This is the first point at which it is clear that the re-emergence of the city of Rome as the seat of the power of the western nations takes a central place in the understanding of this Book.

The details in Revelation 17 respecting the Beast are easily collected together. (i) It was "a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns". (v.3.) (ii) It existed formerly, ceased to exist, but will exist again. (v.8) (iii) It is destined to go into perdition. (v.11).

These details reach out and identify both with disclosures made before and also with some made later. The ten-horned beast of Daniel 7 is the Roman Empire, presented continuously from its beginning to its fall by God's judgment. There is not even a hint in Daniel 7 of the period during which that Empire has ceased to exist. Like so much which belongs to the church period, it passes without hint in the Old Testament. The Beast of the Revelation is the same Beast as Daniel 7, but new details are added.

Also, the Beast of Revelation 17 is the same as the Beast of Revelation 13, identified by the seven heads, ten horns and names of blasphemy. The main points of chapter 13 are its emergence as the direct agent of the Serpent ; its blasphemies against God and war against the saints ; the number of its name marked on its men ; and the worship of its image forwarded by the False Prophet. There is a hint of its downfall and revival in 13 : 3.

The details of chapter 17 reach out also to the later parts of the Revelation in that the Beast and the False Prophet are overcome and

destroyed and go into perdition at the appearance of Christ with the armies of heaven. (ch.19)

The proofs that the Beast as the head of the future Roman Empire is to be centred literally on the city of Rome are as follows :

(i) The identity with Daniel's fourth Beast.

(ii) The Beast's seven heads are the seven mountains of Rome. (17 : 9)

(iii). The woman sitting on the Beast is the city of Rome. (17 : 18).

The last two of these are absolutely indisputable. There cannot be any question at all that Revelation 17 : 9 and 18 identify the Beast with Rome in the Imperial sense, as well as identifying Babylon with Rome in the ecclesiastical sense. The re-unification of Western Europe taking place in front of our eyes must be seen in the light of Revelation 17. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast." The E.E.C. as at present constituted is clearly not the Beast's Empire, but its treaty already holds the torch high over Rome.

(b) **Babylon.** A vision must be intended to set a matter in the most vivid light for the person experiencing the vision. John was introduced to this part of the vision with every tremendous impression of horror, astonishment and warning. We have to remember that he had already seen the crashing downfall of Babylon. What could be the reasons for such a judgment ? Vivid colours and forms representing the most seductive vice—the monstrosity of the scarlet Beast—all must have prepared him to question the nature of a system coming in for such treatment. The first element in the explanation was the mystery name, Babylon, mother of all spiritual vice, which means idolatry and illicit association with the world. What does Babylon mean in the Bible ?

Babylon is an Old Testament word and it is there we must seek its meaning. Remembering with what detail the first Jewish disciples knew the Old Testament, we can be sure that John would immediately take his main impression of frightful evil issuing in a tremendous downfall from such passages as Jeremiah 51 : 63–64. "Bind a great stone to it, and cast it into the river Euphrates ; and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise." Two things would be at a stroke clear to him. The Babylon of Revelation 17 cannot be the literal Old Testament city, destroyed and never to be restored. "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation". (from Isaiah 13 : 19–22) The second is that any system to which the Spirit of God applies the mystery name Babylon is certain of a complete and final destruction.

Babel, (Hebrew form of the Greek Babylon), appears first in Genesis 10 : 10 and 11 : 1–9. The whole of mankind, journeying from the east, came to Shinar, and held council together, saying, "Let us band together, and we shall make a bigger name joined in one than if we worked separately". (paraphrase). Thus, the first principle of Babylon is 'make a unity', which soon turns out to be against God. The contrast between Genesis 11 : 3, (modernising the quaint "Go to"), and Genesis 12 : 1, where God said to Abram "Get out" has very often been noted ; "Come on"—a unity formed against God, and He blows on it ;

“Get out”—the nucleus of the unity formed by God in separation from the world. These are respectively the beginnings of the two threads which issue in Babylon and the New Jerusalem.

The other major appearance of Babylon is in the Old Testament prophets, as the city where the Jews were first enslaved and then taught idolatry. Isaiah 40 to 48 is an exquisite and tender reasoning by Jehovah with His people against the idols of Babylon. Nothing could be more moving than the opening verses of chapter 46, where the Lord appeals to His people, describing beforehand the scenes at the fall of Babylon, with its idols in which it trusted, (and which Judah was in danger of trusting), Bel and Nebo. Bel and Nebo, so far from supporting their devotees, had to be carried themselves! These idols were burdens for weary beasts, trying to fly from the destroyer! But Jehovah says, “even to hoar hairs will I carry **you** : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and will deliver you. To whom will ye liken me ? ”

In Revelation 18 : 4 the Lord addresses His people about Babylon. “Come out of her, my people, . . . for her sins have reached unto heaven”. In order to obey this call, do we recognise any current movements aiming at the features of Babylon? Indeed we do ; and they are (i) the Ecumenical movement, and (ii) the Roman Catholic Church. And they are explicitly joined together in two contemporary events. The first is the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, aiming to re-structure Christianity so that its fellowship consists in a single visibly united church for the service of the world.* Its true colours (not hidden) are well seen in its current concern for political anti-racism in South Africa—**not** a concern for the evangelisation of all, black and white. The second event is the Vatican Council of the Catholic Church called by Pope John XXIII in 1962, when a principal theme was the re-union of all Christians with the Church of Rome.

Such a re-union will come about, and, we have its character before us in Revelation 17 : unmistakably Rome, (vv. 9 and 18) ; its mystery name Babylon, indicating to the initiated a visible unity ultimately found to be hostile to God and taught idolatry in place of the true worship of the Father ; in the past drunk with the blood of the martyrs, (v.6) ; and its end in 18 : 21, “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.”

Now is the time for personal decision and choice, for eschewing all that bears the marks of Babylon, for finding the heart's delight in the New Jerusalem, and working for it. The first stage of Christ's Coming will fix everyone where he stands. He that is unjust will from that moment continue unjust, with no hope of repentance. (22 : 11). It is to be the moment when the door will be shut and every individual's place fixed. For Babylon it remains only to develop the evil. The second stage of Christ's Coming will execute the judgment. For the living this will be at the beginning of the Day of the Lord. For the dead, small and great, the last judgment will be at the great white throne at the end of the Day of the Lord.

* See Andre Gibert in “Scripture Truth” November 1971 to July 1972.

III. The New Jerusalem.

Read Revelation 21 : 9 to 22 : 5.

The main story of the Revelation closes with the glimpse of eternity which appears in 21 : 1-8. It is here that we have the first appearance of "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It is impossible to present to oneself the unearthly radiance of this part of the vision—the city shining with the glory of God, its streets ablaze with gold, its gates pearls, and its foundations flashing with the beauty of the stones most precious. Its light is indeed "the light that never was on sea or land," (Wordsworth), for it is the light of God and of eternity. Was it descending slowly, moving with majesty, coming down out of heaven yet never said to come to earth? As is the case with Babylon, after the vision in due order is closed, one of the angels which had the seven vials of wrath came to John to give him a special explanatory view of this woman-city.

The New Jerusalem does not look back for its antecedents to a different, mystery name, like Babylon, but to the city of Kings and Gospels. The position occupied by Jerusalem in the Revelation is an interesting one, and one senses glimpses of truth not yet fully perceived. The earthly Jerusalem, not anywhere named in it, comes badly out of this book. The city and its rebuilt temple and re-constituted worship in 11 : 1-12 form the scene for the two witnesses during the 42 months of the Beast's rule. In this passage it receives a decisively determining title, heavy with woe, "the great city. . . where our Lord was crucified". No title could be more emblematic of the accusation lying over the earthly city, and it is unrelieved by any reference to its future glory. That future glory is not less certain because for knowledge of it we are practically confined to the Old Testament. A central passage is Isaiah 2 : 1-4. "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem". All this is excluded from the Revelation, which by this fact confirms its position as the extension of the book of Daniel to include the future of the lands which have known Christianity. The Old Testament prophets are left alone in the field of detail about the earthly reign of Christ, and its centre, the earthly Jerusalem.

Within the confines of the book of the Revelation, the contrast between the descriptions, "the great city. . . where our Lord was crucified" and the **New Jerusalem**, where the Lamb is the light, is very striking. Let us then, as we consider the description of the Holy City in Revelation 21 : 9 to 22 : 5, while looking back over the bright lights and deep shadows of the Jerusalem story up to the crucifixion, ever savour the beauty of the epithet, the **New Jerusalem**. It belongs to the time when God makes all things new, and we must ever give it a great place in our thoughts of the new creation.

As in the case of Babylon, (14 : 8 and 16 : 19), there are two references to the New Jerusalem which provide the pointers to this detailed description by the angel in chapters 21 and 22. We have noted the nearest in 21 : 2 "the new Jerusalem. . . prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", and this leads us back to the first, the marriage supper of the Lamb in 19 : 7-9. From this we learn without possibility of error that the New Jerusalem is the Church. In Ephesians 5, at several repeats, the husband and wife are 'as' Christ and the Church : and at the end of the passage, (Ephesians 5 : 22-33), on husbands and wives, the apostle adds "This is a great mystery : but I speak concerning Christ and the church". At the present moment, the Church is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11 : 2). It is the time of the betrothal, and the serpent's aim is to corrupt the hearts of the saints from true-hearted fidelity to their absent Lord and Lover. In resisting the serpent by maintaining faithful love for Christ is preparing in the present for that glorious city of the future. The great rejoicing of the marriage supper is proclaimed in 19 : 7, 8, and thus there is no possible doubt for the Christian heart that this city, (seen in the vision, like Babylon, as woman and city) is the Church, the Bride of Christ, for evermore dwelling in that unchangeable nearness to Himself which has been its hope during the long night.

These are the basic facts identifying the being of the holy city, the new Jerusalem ; the great city, the holy Jerusalem. Without ever losing its original character as the Lamb's wife, nevertheless the main description is that of a symbolic, visionary city, which could not exist literally. It is a syndrome of symbols. What do the symbols present ? They represent nothing less than the dwellingplace of God with and among men, which engulfs and transcends the former manner of God's dwellings, either seen only by faith as in the Church period, or hidden in the thick darkness of an earthly sanctuary. Here God's glory lights the city and shines for the nations. There are a few hints, (not conclusive), that the description of 21 : 9 to 22 : 5 is principally millennial, whereas we have learned from 21 : 2 that the city belongs to eternity.

It is not possible to deal with all the details, but after a general survey, we will conclude with thoughts on 21 : 23, 24 ; "the glory of God did lighten it" : and 22 : 11, "they shall see his face". The description is distinctly ordered, and the sections have subjects as follows :

- 21 : 10, 11 John's general view of the city descending.
- 21 : 12-17 construction and measurements.
- 21 : 18-21 materials of construction.
- 21 : 22-27 persons dwelling in and around.
- 22 : 1-5 occupations and pleasures for evermore.

The centre of the description is v.23, "the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof", and as such it will repay the most devotional meditation. It is the fulfilment of the Lord's prayer of John 17 : 23, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one". The glory of God, the unveiled mystery, is the light, and that light is in the Lamb as the lamp or light-bearer. Every eye beholds the Lamp in the midst, and it is not hid from the nations of the saved. The un-

measured treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is no longer deposited in the poor, battered earthen vessels of the bodies of the suffering saints, but is here displayed in a glorious vessel, the city, composed of all the saints in a visible and perfect unity.

Although the nations of the saved walk in the light of the city, within it there is a special portion. "His servants. . . shall see his face". Here is the consummation of the hopes of the righteous in all ages, to see God in resurrection. There is a suggestion of a special beatific vision for the children of God in 1 John 3 : 2. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." With the hope of such a vision, our souls are satisfied, and we are moved to know Him and to serve Him now, as indeed in that day "his servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face".

THE COMFORTER

E. H. SAPP

OUR Lord's legacy, in departing out of the world, is the sending of the Holy Spirit, "another Comforter", to abide with His people for ever. Much is told us in the "last words" of the Lord Jesus (John 14 to 16) of what blessings would accrue to the saints by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Rather than impoverishment by being made "orphans" there is increase and enrichment.

Hitherto the Spirit of God had visited men for special purposes, but consequent upon "the finished work of Christ", He, the Holy Spirit, would indwell the redeemed ; He would abide with them for ever (John 14 : 26). This promise was fulfilled ten days after the Lord Jesus was "received up into glory". What demonstration is this of the efficacy of our Saviour's blood whereby in consequence every believer is sealed with the Holy Ghost, and indwelt for ever. For us an "eternal redemption" has resulted in the Eternal Spirit securing us for eternity. Here is a present fact : may we have increased realisation of it by walking in the Spirit, being led of the Spirit, having "deliverance" by the Spirit ; never "grieving" or "quenching" Him who is "in us"—the Holy Spirit of God.

In the same verse (John 14 : 26) we Christians are in the school of God, for the Holy Spirit is the Teacher—"He shall **teach** you". There is a thirst for the word of God in the believer ; a thirst which is satisfied daily yet is never assuaged even to old age. May we "grow in grace and increase in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" and for this boon, be men and women largely of "one book".

Yet again in John 14 : 26 we read "**He shall bring to your remembrance** whatsoever I have said unto you". Here is the secret of the inspiration of the Evangelists. Their recording of the words and works of Jesus was no feat of human memory but of exact quotation of the Saviour's words by the omniscience of the Holy Spirit. For instance, the theory persists in the schools of theology that Mark was but the penman of the apostle Peter, but how much firmer is the ground for faith when it is averred that the Holy Spirit will bring the sayings of the Master precisely to mind ?

In John 15 : 26 another and blessed activity of the Spirit is revealed. "**He shall testify of me**". Oh ! the delight to read the Scriptures and be moved in heart Christward, or to listen to ministry or gospel which makes much, yea all, of Christ. This is the Spirit's doing. We can always test true ministry by this quality.

Coming to John 16 : 13, 14, three more things are said which the Holy Spirit will do. "**He shall guide you into all truth**", "**He shall shew you things to come**", "**He shall glorify me**". What fulness is there in these promises ! Truth is diverse yet one whole in the Scriptures and we need it all for balance. The New Testament is the volume of Divine revelation, fulfilling these precious promises. Herein are the great co-related truths of the Gospel and the Assembly. Herein we embrace past, present and future, the Person and Work and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation of "the mystery" hid in ages past but now brought out for co-extensive ministry to all creation with the "glad tidings" (Romans 16), also "things which must shortly come to pass" at the appearing, Kingdom and Glory of Christ. Altogether as we devoutly study and feed on the truth which the Holy Spirit has indited, is not Christ "glorified", is He not formed in us and His Name engraved on the fleshy tables of our hearts ? Truly "He richly feeds our souls".

Finally, the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the world, and the implications thereof are given in John 16 : 8-11. His presence in the stead of the Lord Christ (whom the world cast out) **convicts** the world of sin. The presence of the Spirit is also evidence of God's grace to the sinful world. "Righteousness" is enthroned. The epistle to the Romans unfolds the consequence. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, where sin abounds grace over abounds. Is it not wonderful that once more the Holy Spirit hovers over this guilty, corrupt world, beseeching men "be ye reconciled to God", and that in the gospel the call of it is the Spirit's voice unto repentance and faith ? Today then, "if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts". Rejection of this overture of mercy will leave "no remedy" but judgment.

So the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, has come. We who are Christ's are vastly and richly endowed. The evil world has yet a testimony that God is love and light and that God is righteous and just.

WELLS

JOHN BARNES

Genesis 26 : 18

A BROTHER once said that while our forefathers bought the truth with their life's blood, we could buy it for twopence in pamphlet form. This is not strictly true. It is true that a great deal of valuable ministry is available in printed form and that it is sold very cheaply, considering the immense value of the matter offered, but this is hardly buying the truth. Another brother said that he had not been spoonfed with the truth from childhood, like so many in the assemblies ; "I learned it the hard way," he asserted. But is there any easy way of learn-

ing the truth of God? Is it not rather the case that believers of each succeeding generation have to face up to the questions the truth raises and to face them anew; to meet the same difficulties former generations met with, and to meet them for themselves; to fight the same enemies with the same weapons? I do believe this is so, and I suggest that we look again at this chapter and seek to stir up our minds by way of remembrance. It may be the Lord will grant us some renewal of zeal and energy in the conflict.

The chapter opens by telling us that "there was a famine in the land." There is always a famine in the land but this is to be experienced by each one of us for himself. The passage goes on to inform us that the famine referred to was "besides the former famine which had been in the days of Abraham." The famine may be thought of as always present but in Isaac's experience it was, so to speak, a new famine. Abraham had experienced the rigours of the land's barrenness in his day, but Isaac did not endure the famine at second hand, as it were, by proxy. To Isaac it was not merely a doctrine which he had learned from his father and to which he had given his assent; not a mere experience his father had passed through and of which he had been informed. He learned for himself the aridity of the land; he bought his knowledge of it at personal cost, learning the same lesson experimentally. The analogy can be continued into the life of Jacob, the next patriarchal generation, since there was also a famine in his time which he experienced for himself as Isaac had done before him and as his grandfather had done in his time. Abraham alone had made the long journey of faith from Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan; Isaac and Jacob were born in the land but they had, personally, of choice, assumed the place of stranger-ship along with the patriarch Abraham, as we see recorded in the epistle to the Hebrews 11:9. "Abraham. . . sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." If the problems are the same so are the promises and the promises are the same because the God who made them is THE SAME; He remains unaffected by changes in the environment. He is unchanged and unchanging, nevertheless, in order to avail ourselves of the power and help at our disposal in Him we have to be in exercise to make these blessings our own in experience. They ARE ours; purpose has so decreed it, but we want to be in the good of it all in our own experience. Paul in writing to Timothy (2 Tim. ch. I) was thinking of the unchanging God. The same God his forefathers served was the God he served. There had been a change in the dispensation but not in God. (v.3) The apostle goes on to speak of his young yoke-fellow's own forebears, his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, and he remembers that they were women of faith. This wonderful principle, however, is not passed on in a natural way and we may observe how the persons and the faith that marked them are carefully separated by the conjunctive; ". . . faith. . . which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, AND in thy mother Eunice AND I am persuaded. . . in thee also". The path of faith had to be entered into personally by each member of each succeeding generation, and the principle remains unchanged down to our own times.

In conditions similar to those passed through by Abraham, and,

feeling the emptiness and unfruitfulness of conditions in the land, Isaac received the wonderful promise of v.4. "I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven. . ." There may be aridity in conditions here but there is abundant fruitfulness with God, and Isaac became great as his father Abraham had done before him. (v.13) But he busied himself with the things that promote fruitfulness ; he sowed seed. (v.12) Seed contains the life principle. Isaac sowed seed and God greatly enriched him, and he received in the same year an hundredfold and the Lord blessed him. There is no occupation so fruitful or so enriching as the pursuit of divine things. The profit in such engagement is incalculably greater than in any other field of labour or sphere of interest. If we set our affections on things above, where Christ sits at God's right hand, that hand will be moved to our help and our spiritual advancement and blessing will be assured.

Abraham had busied himself digging wells. He benefitted himself by making use of resources available in the land but these sources were not readily apparent. There were supplies of life-sustaining water available under the munificent provision of the Lord hidden from view, and Abraham diligently sought them out and made use of them. It is instructive to remember the simple fact that the digging of a well entails the removal of earth, and it is a hard and sometimes dangerous enterprise. Earthly things are a hindrance to the believer in his search for the provisions necessary to maintain spiritual life in health in a barren climate which can offer nothing to sustain the new life. Earthly things must, then, be removed. This is costly work and occasions serious effort ; it means counting as loss things that men in general would reckon as gain to them. When John took the little book from the angel (Rev. 9 : 10) it was sweet to his taste but bitter to his belly. All of us have had similar experiences. In meetings for ministry or in private readings of the Word our hearts have often been thrilled at the unfolding of new, and hitherto unsuspected beauty in the truth, but when we have been faced with the dilemmas entailed in the working out of that truth in our everyday lives so often lived in most unhelpful circumstances, we have known the bitterness of the struggle. To learn, for example, the truth that "in me, that is in my flesh, no good dwells," may be fairly easy in terms of language, but it is desperately difficult in terms of reality. The severity of the conflict recorded in Romans 7 may serve to shew how hard and bitter a lesson it is to learn. If we have come to know this truth, even faintly, we shall have some practical appreciation of the sorrowful, heartsearching path trodden by the writer of those words. This is an experience I must pass through myself. My father's experience cannot be mine. Paul does not say, "I know that in us good does not dwell," as though stating the truth in general terms, and this would be true, but he says, "I know that in ME good does not dwell." Here, as indeed in every aspect of the truth which relates to experience, I must tread the road in my own person, I must dig the well myself.

Isaac not only re-opened the wells his father Abraham had dug before him but it is worthy of note that he called them by the same names. This is not intended, surely, to indicate that we must use the very terminology of our ancestors (though we may very well do that ; there may be no better words available) but there seems to be the sug-

gestion that what we find in a given set of circumstances is similar to the conditions our predecessors found in the same kind of situation. We find the same enemies, the same help in need, the same resources to meet our requirements and the same encouragements in the journey of faith. It is not without interest to see, also, that the pitfalls are the same and that they, too, are called by the same names. Compare the experiences of the patriarchs in connection with the Abimelechs. Genesis 26 : 7-11 and Genesis 20 : 1-18.

In his quest for these sources of water Isaac found that the work his father had completed at such great expenditure had been undone. Abraham had carefully made the wells by removing great quantities of earth and the Philistines had just as industriously filled them up again. There are similar invaders of the spiritual sphere today whose object is to prevent the continuance of life after the pilgrim character ; life lived outside of conditions morally in the world ; life with heaven and heavenly things as its goal. In writing to the Philippians Paul mentions those who "mind earthly things." The Philistines may represent people of that character. They had not come into the land at the call of the Lord and were really interlopers there without exercise, so to speak. Isaac, on the contrary, taking up for himself the exercises which had brought Abraham from Ur and had moved him to dig the wells, began to dig for himself. Perhaps there are many in the assemblies who were born in that environment, who never knew the exercises which brought their fathers out of formal religion, and who have never themselves made the moral journey which cost their forefathers so much. I ask my brethren who like myself were born into such privilege ; do we know why we are where we are, or is it a mere accident of birth ? Isaac was not content with a passive acceptance of things as they were. He dug a well of springing water. (v.19) The margin gives "Living water." There is a clear link with the fourth chapter of John and we shall see that there is a kind of progress to be discovered in the order in which the wells were reopened. But this is where we must all begin for ourselves, at the fountain of living water. The woman of John 4 began here. It is this precious fountain which, while it fills and satisfies the heart causing us never to thirst for ever, gives us also such a thirst for God's precious benefits that we go on yearning for them and exploring the land to avail ourselves of the infinitude of its valuable resources.

But we shall find that we are not allowed to occupy the land unhindered. The enemy has entrenched himself in the heavenlies, the true heritage of the saints, and will not allow us to enter into the value of our inheritance without resistance. (Ephesians 6) Are we content to have **our** inheritance held by the enemy ? Caleb, old man though he was, was not happy that the sons of Anak should be using part of the portion assigned to him. He had been promised a tract of land and he determined, in the vigour of his ardent nature, to make it his own. The land is ours but we are to enter into the good of it in our own experience.

The little prophecy of Obadiah considers a lovely thought. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." (v.17) Lower down the prophet gives a comprehensive list of recovered possessions. (v.19) There are seven in all, suggesting a complete occupation of the great heritage opened to Israel. 1. They of the south shall possess the mount

of Esau ; 2. they of the plain, the Philistines, the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria ; 3. Benjamin shall possess Gilead ; 4. they of the captivity shall possess that of the Canaanites ; 5. the captives of Jerusalem in Sepharad shall possess the southern cities ; 6. saviours shall sit as judges on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau ; 7. and "the kingdom shall be the LORD's." And here, surely, we have the reason for the perfect occupation by the saints of their proper heritage ; the Lord has His true place ; He is in supremacy. A somewhat similar idea occurs in Ezekiel 36. Israel will know that Lordship in that wonderful day of full recovery and complete possession ; "I am the LORD." (v.11) The land of Israel has been theirs for millenniums but for the greater part of that time strangers have occupied it. Israel ought to have been in the full enjoyment of the possessions so richly bestowed on the nation by the Lord but apostasy had deprived them of these benefits. Shall we be content to see our inheritance trodden down by the enemy and fail to go up and possess the land ?

V. 20 informs us that Isaac was not allowed to possess the well in peace. The herdmen of Gerar clashed with Isaac's herdmen over the possession of the well and the place was named Esek, i.e. "contention," because of their provocative behaviour. We shall find this in our own day. There are many professedly in the christian circle who have no true right to the inheritance, who are there in their own right as invaders, and they will contend with the true heirs and make themselves disagreeable, making life as difficult as possible for the truly called ones. We cannot expect to escape conduct of this kind today but it should not deter us in our search for sources of living water. It did not deter Isaac. He and his men continued their patient search and dug another well. The local shepherds strove for that also (v.21) so Isaac called the well 'Sitnah', Hatred. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," John advises us. (1 John 3 : 13) The Lord Himself had already told the disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." It surprises some to hear religious people called "the world," but can we ever forget that it was the most religious people who ever lived who demanded the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, while one of its most godless, Pilate, tried to stop this crime of all crimes ? So we may expect not only non-cooperation but actual hatred from the religious world and we need not be surprised to find it, nor should we be dismayed.

There may, on the other hand, be much about the invaders that is so plausible that we may imagine ourselves to have found allies, but we ought not to be deceived by appearances. These are enemies who fill up sources of divine refreshment with earthly elements. When the Lord was here on earth, demons recognised Him and sometimes publicly owned Him as the Son of the Most High, but the heart-knowing Lord was not taken in by these unctuous recognitions of Himself and He habitually exposed these enemies. Paul, too, at great cost to himself and his travelling companions, refused to be linked with anything pseudo-christian. (Acts 16) There are foes everywhere who hate the Lord and His testimony and will do all in their power to prevent true spiritual expansion.

However, if the saints continue to move forward in faith, undeterred by enemy activities, the Lord will make room for them. Isaac dug again (v.22) and as they did not contest this well with him he named it

‘Rehoboth,’ that is, ‘Room.’ The Philadelphian assembly, was, no doubt, subjected to great pressures but the ascended Lord caused John to write to them, “Behold I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it.” (Revelation 3 : 8) Indeed, the door is spoken of as having been OPENED. Divine power had opened this door ; no other power in the universe would be able to shut it. If we are prepared to go on, in faith, in the exercise of our souls to acquire divine wealth, the resources will be there for us and none will be able to hinder our entering into their greatness.

Finally Isaac dug again, at Beersheba, and found water. The circumstances of the digging of this well and of the oath are so similar to those of Abraham’s experience that infidel writers have sought to make capital out of these passages to support their blasphemous attacks upon the Holy Scriptures. But we need not worry about that. The circumstances were the same because the problems were the same problems repeated in the succeeding generation. We shall have to face the same difficulties our fathers in the faith had to meet if we are to derive the benefits of the land as they did. And if we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know as they did.

We do not seem to have any information in Scripture that Jacob had to redig the wells as his father Isaac had in his day, but it is not without interest that the last named place he visited in the land during his last journey, into Egypt, was Beersheba, and it was there that the Lord graciously strengthened the aged saint, and there re-affirmed His covenant with him and his seed. For Jacob it was a place of hallowed memories and a place of worship, and he offered sacrifices there to the God of his father Isaac, clearly indicating that he was entering, experimentally, into the benefits of the covenant ; making them his very own. And the Lord assured him ; “I am God, the God of thy father.” He was Jacob’s own God, too, by choice and by experience. May such blessing be the blessed portion of each of us.

CORRESPONDENCE

The following letter has been received from Dr. D. W. Paterson :

“Thou” or “You”

I write to ask if there would be space in your magazine for a note in regard to the topic of how we should address the Lord Jesus. That some, more particularly those who are younger, and also linked with men’s school of learning, are addressing our blessed Lord as “you” has distressed the spirits of those who are older, and protests have been made against the practice. Various reasons such as accuracy of language, and, also reverence in speech have been brought forward to support this view. A more sinister aspect of the subject seems to have been overlooked.

In recent years there has been a spate of new translations of the bible coming from both Britain and America. Everyone should recognise that almost every translation is an interpretation as well as a translation.

In other words the views of the translator consciously or unconsciously come to light in the "translation." It is beyond the scope of this short note to prove (but it can be proved if any will look at the facts) that since the King James Version of 1611 there has been a steady erosion of texts supporting the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Clear evidence of this is seen in the Revised Standard Version, a version which is increasingly popular in the universities, and is being used in very wide circles, even by Evangelical Christians. It is revealing to consider who the committee of translation were, and what their views :—

"Dean Weigle, the chairman, says he agrees with W. N. Clarke in his statement : "It was a day of mingled good and ill when Christianity adopted the Old Testament as its original sacred Scripture." Dr. W. Russell Bowie (Union Theological Seminary) states that "the incarnation of the Divine Jesus was not some lonely miracle. It was the flowering in him of that which in some measure is meant to come true in all of us. Jesus does not depend upon the explanation which the early Church thought appropriate and convincing." Dr. Millar Burrows (Yale) is convinced that verbal infallibility must be definitely abandoned. The Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28. 19 is not authentic. H. J. Cadbury accepts the findings of modern criticism. Dr. C. T. Craig says that Mark's account of John the Baptist is "a popular legend", and asks, "How early was Jesus called "the Lord"? Luke puts the term in the mouth of Peter at his first sermon, but it is unlikely it began that early." According to the S.S. Times, Philadelphia : "In 'Christendom' he sets forth his religious views, he does not believe in the pre-existence of Christ. This is mythological presentation." Dr. J. Moffat, known for his own translation, has no compunction about displacing verses to suit his own ideas. He follows the reading of the Sinaitic Syriac in Matthew 1. 16 which makes Joseph the actual, not the adoptive father of Jesus.

If these men were content to translate only, we might have no fears, but let us consider some of the principles which actuated their efforts. Their views are revealed in their own words in answer to challenges made to them by conservative orthodox scholars. When charged that the deity of Jesus was watered down in the Revised Standard Version by the use of the word "you" in referring to Him, while "thou" was always used with reference to God, Dr. Craig admitted the charge and said in explanation that this principle was followed on the ground that the disciples in referring to Him were not aware of His deity. This shows that the American scholars were not translators but interpreters according to their own modernist views. Consistently they address the Lord Jesus as "you", even in Acts 1.6 after the resurrection. They address God as "thou" and reserve the "thou" for God alone except in Revelation 18.10 addressing Babylon ! Any unbiassed student will see that it is a conviction of translators working itself out.*

If desired a list of definite verses can be given. It is constantly affirmed that those who advocate the use of "you" do so with a view to

* This quotation is from "A Modern Defence of the Historic Christian Faith." The R.S.V. Challenged : F. A. Rayner (by kind permission of the author).

getting down to the "man of the street", of using language that he will understand, etc., etc. Sad to say unconsciously those who indulge in this practice are but adding momentum to the modern drift of humanising Christ and deifying man. To be "with it" souls are unwittingly in league with the god of this world who blinds men's eyes to the glory and greatness of Christ. We pray that any of our readers, especially those who are younger, may be lovingly extracted from this hole into which they have fallen, and those who have their care at heart will find grace in continuing themselves in the old paths, and helping others to do the same. We address to our Brethren the appeal, let us still address our blessed Lord as "Thou". It is not only the language of reverence, and accuracy, but also a clear testimony to the Lord's Deity in a day of deepening darkness where this truth is being increasingly denied.

We give below an extract from a letter received from Herr Eckhard Bubenzer of Gummersbach, W. Germany :

We have all need to humble ourselves before the Lord as to the apparent weakness regarding effective gospel work, clear-cut separation from the world, missionary zeal and profound doctrinal and moral teaching as well as a considerable lack of pastoral work. All this has the same root ; the materialism which is adored in the whole western world has entered the minds and hearts of the saints as well. (See Haggai !) May the beginning of this year be a beginning afresh with the Lord.

The following extract from a letter refers to the paper, "Two Masters of Meditation", Scripture Truth, Jan./Feb. 1972, p. 108 :

I've just finished reading with great profit and pleasure Richard Baxter's "The Saints' Everlasting Rest", . . . and do think it deserves mention in connection with your short series on the exercise of Contemplation. His message seems epitomized in a passage. . . from Chapter Thirteen :

"If thou wouldest have light and heat, why art thou then no more in the sunshine ? If thou wouldest have more of that grace which flows from Christ, why art thou no more with Christ for it ? Thy strength is in heaven, and thy life is in heaven and there thou must daily fetch it, if thou wouldest have it ? "

QUESTION AND ANSWER

The following question has been received from Mr. J. D. Gale of Hull.

In respect of the word 'worship', while it is clear from the context that in many instances the word should be rendered 'homage', there are other instances, as in John 4, where the meaning is worship in the highest

and fullest sense of the word. So far as the New Translation is concerned I have not traced all the references, but its rendering 'do him homage' in Matthew 2 : 2 seems to be wrong. J. N. Darby does of course deal with this very question in the 'Revised Preface to the Second Edition', but does not, for me, resolve the matter completely.

For my part I am inclined to the view that in the context of the passage the wise men should be said to worship rather than do homage, for the following reasons : (1) The incident itself, affecting the wise men, Mary and Herod is of extreme importance and the culmination was of the highest order in respect of the offerings made. (2) Verse 12 says they were divinely instructed as to their departure. (3) Verse 11 speaks of their exceeding great joy. (4) The distance travelled and the guidance by supernatural means. (5) If the wise men were divinely instructed as in verse 12, would they not also be divinely enlightened as to the true worship ?

I was interested to find out whether you had anything to say in your book 'The True Worship,' and note that the Greek word is **proskuneo**. This is the word used in Matthew 2 : 2 and 2 : 11. Unfortunately, in the instances you give you do not mention Matthew 2.

I suppose this is where the real difficulty lies in translation, that is where the same word (original) is used in different senses, the translator has to be guided by the context, and his own viewpoint on doctrine, or even prejudice in some cases, hence the different renderings.

Answer. I can see that your primary interest is in the action of the wise men in Matthew 2 : 11. The question is, did they render homage to a very great human being, or did they understand that the infant Jesus was God manifest in flesh ? You argue very cogently for the latter, and I think probably correctly. However, many would adhere simply to "the King of the Jews" in v.2, and conclude that 'do homage' adequately represents their action. It is a question on which we must be satisfied with something less than certainty.

On the general understanding of translation differences, you have expounded the matter quite adequately. In the case of the word **proskuneo**, the difficulty is that it is used in Scripture (as also in English) in two senses ; one offered to men, as in Revelation 3 : 9, ("I will make them come and worship before thy feet") ; and the other to God alone, as in Revelation 22 : 9, ("Worship God [alone] "). If the translator uses always the same English word, he must be false to one or other of the two meanings. Otherwise, he may use different English words according to his view of the context. The New Translation does the latter since **proskuneo** is translated 'worship' in John 4, but usually elsewhere 'homage'. He states in his footnote to Matthew 4 : 10 his view that the Greek **latreuo** is the nearest equivalent to the English word 'worship'. We believe that God has so superintended the translation of His Word that we are in no doubt as to any essential truth.



Notes of an Address

Read : Romans 2 : 1, 5 : 1, 8 : 1, 12 : 1, 1 Corinthians 15 : 58.

I WISH, brethren, to speak a word to you on the Book of Romans. I am aware that we are covering ground that has been covered many times. But I say with boldness that unless, young men, you are in some measure established in the Book of Romans, you will never preach a clear gospel. We all need this book. We will need it to the end of the chapter, for are not the deep things of God in this book also ? They are, beloved ; the full knowledge of God is in this book. Purpose is in this book. Sonship is in this book. Have they become formal to us, or have we lost the joy of them, and the power of them in our Christian lives ? If tonight we just became renewed in this wonderful Book of Romans we would be encouraged to go on our way. There is a word in each of the verses read which the Holy Spirit uses as a lever to prize home the truth of God to us ; the word is 'therefore'. The first (Romans 2 : 1) is the 'therefore' of man's **ruin**. The second (5 : 1) is the 'therefore' of God's **remedy**. In 8 : 1 it is the 'therefore' of the grand **result** and when you come to 12 : 1, it is the 'therefore' of **response**. I am sure it is fitting to include 1 Corinthians 15 : 58 where is found the 'therefore' of **resource**.

The 'Therefore' of Ruin

When Paul wrote the 'therefore' of man's ruin, he was not writing to sinners ; he was writing to saints. He wrote to Christians this gospel, this word of ministry, and we need it today. We need a verse like this, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man". We live in a day when we are almost carried away with the thought about an advanced age, that man has reached a point when he needs neither God, nor the bible, nor the gospel. He can manage fine without them. This is maintained in spite of the fact of a world in hopeless turmoil. Never was there a darker day than that in which we live, and we need to be persuaded of this. Young people during their education are in great danger of being carried away with the thought that maybe after all the world is advancing. My friend, bring this verse again to bear on your heart. Man is a total wreck. He is altogether unfit to be for God unless God comes in and does something for him. This dark picture is true to life. The grossest sin is committed in the cultured west—in this very land we live in.

The Jew, also the religious man, comes under the same condemnation in spite of all that God blessed him with : "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art." The heathen, the cultured, as well as the religious man, are altogether undone, and God condemns the lot.

What a list of sins is found in this first chapter of Romans ! We have nothing to be proud of, men and women. Your history is recorded in the first chapter of Romans. It is true of us all and apart from the grace of God we would be carrying out every sin in this life and despising grace. Hallelujah ! What wonderful grace of God to reach us through His Son ! Are you glad you are saved ? I'm glad I'm saved. It is wonderful to belong to the Lord. He has brought us out of this having put forth His hand and snatched us as brands from the burning.

How wonderful, as you read this book of Romans, that before he ever portrays the awful sin of man, he gives the key-verse to the remedy : "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek for therein is the righteousness of God revealed." (Romans 1 : 16) It is revealed on the principle of faith. The power, mind you, is not to enable man to keep the law, or to enable man to make himself better, but power to deliver completely a man, spirit, soul and body from the domain and power of sin. What gospel is this that our God has committed to us ! Do you not want to take your stand beside Paul in this verse, even with your knees trembling ? Over twenty years ago I heard a definition of salvation proposed and it has never left my heart. "Salvation is the power of God put forth for the complete emancipation of the creature from every power that holds his soul in bondage, that being delivered he might serve God by the Spirit in holy liberty in this world". Do we experience this, beloved ? Is it so that we are free in the enjoyment of this gospel ? This is what is on my heart to speak to you about—this freedom.

Why is it that the enemy should almost make a football of us, kicking us from here to there, instead of our enjoying to the full this freedom from every power that holds the soul in bondage ? According to this book that freedom can be ours now, freedom from the guilt of our transgressions, freedom from the power of indwelling sin in our lives. This freedom is to be had. Why should we not enjoy it as our God has meant it to be ?

Listen to chapter 6, verse 22, "Being now made free from sin and become servants to God ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life". Four things : free from sin ; servants to God ; fruit unto holiness ; the end, everlasting life. What a wonderful gospel truth this is, beloved brethren !

But to get back, in that first scripture we have the total ruin of the human race. Do not let anyone rob us of this. Man is utterly ruined, no matter how you cultivate him or educate him. Do not think I am speaking against education. If it were not for some measure of this I could not speak to you tonight. We need to be educated, but if it is with a view of bettering the human race, then we are losing the battle because it will not produce the result. Man is a total wreck.

The 'Therefore' of Remedy

When we reach chapter five we find the 'therefore' of **remedy**. And just one moment to go back to the basis on which it all rests. There may be some young people who have not just grasped this. How could God, being holy, set you and me free from the guilt of our sins? He is light and He is love. How could those two things meet? How could He uphold His righteous claim against sin and at the same time show His matchless love to me? We see the answer in the cross of Christ. I say again, young men, unless we grasp this we will not preach the clear gospel. The claims of God's throne were met, and He is eternally glorified at the cross of Christ.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". To be justified does not just mean that you are forgiven your sins. Though that is true, it is more. I was taught that it means "just as if I had never sinned". This is the believer's standing before God, altogether based upon that precious death and resurrection. We are justified by faith in that Person, through that death, and on no other ground at all.

Then he unfolds the blessings of this gospel: "We have peace with God". This is not a peace that changes from day to day. Do get hold of this. This is peace from a conscience that all is absolutely settled; your sins have been gone into and you have a right standing before God by faith in Christ, and that peace is a settled thing with God once and for all. And in the end, "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ". What a climax to this part of the Book of Romans! To joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! It goes back to the source whence it came. If God is the source of this gospel, all that has been done goes back to Him again, and we find our joy, not in ourselves, but joy in the very source of this gospel, "the blessed God".

I may be speaking to some who, while conscious that you have peace with God, and joy in God, yet to your dismay and disappointment and almost despair, you find there is still evil in you. What an awful discovery is this, that it is not only a question of sins, but of indwelling sin.

Why is it that we are not enjoying our Christianity to the full? I am persuaded that this has largely to do with the tremendous truths found in chapters six and seven of this Book of Romans. I may be speaking to someone who is just discovering it for the first time. You have sung "O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away"; your step was lighter; you felt almost bursting with joy—and then it hit you—an evil thought, an unbelieving thought. You then discovered yourself where Paul was when he got to this part of his letter and says, "that which I do, I don't want to do; what I would, that do I not". He says, "what I hate, that do I". I used the words disappointed, dismayed, and almost despair. For the enemy comes in with his suggestion, "Maybe you are not saved after all. Better give it all up, you are just a hypocrite".

If you have not experienced this, you **will** if you are going to go on with the Lord. The remarkable thing is, God does not help you to better the flesh. What is within us is what the Bible calls "the flesh". This sinful, evil nature can never be anything else than evil. When I want to

read my Bible, I find that it is there. When I want to pray, I find it is there. Evil thoughts can penetrate the soul and seek to spoil your prayer time when you are alone with the Lord. The very language of the people you work alongside, language you hate from the depths of your being, you find penetrating your soul and spoiling your enjoyment of the Lord. When you take up your Bible to read, unbelieving thoughts about the very Book itself and about the Lord you adore, find inroads into your soul.

That is the point at which you almost say, "Well, am I a Christian or not?". Why, friend, if you have got that feeling, leap for joy. You say, "leap for joy" when I am absolutely miserable? Yes, leap for joy because it only serves to prove that you have a new life. If you feel like that—that you hate those things—hate that temper—hate that pride, and yet you fall a prey to it: when you want to do something for the Lord, pride is in your heart and you want your brethren to see you do it and you hate that—absolutely hate it; all this experience only proves that you have got that new life, because it is only the new life that can hate the evil. You have it within, born of God. O my friend, leap for joy because there is a way out for us.

We learn of this way when Paul says, "I know that in me good does not dwell". I heard a beloved brother say, when he must have been 80, that at twenty years old he cried, "O wretched man that I am". He said, "Twenty years later I cried it again, and forty years later I cried it again, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me' ". You cannot tell me that he was not in the good of Romans 8, but he was saved in the deepest sense as he got older. Have you arrived at this truth where you fully recognise that in us good does not dwell? That is, in the sinful nature, good does not dwell. Why do we always look for it? Why is it that we are disappointed when we fail? I believe it is simply because we have not judged that nature which God has judged at the cross of Christ. We have not given it the place that He gave it. We are always prone to trying to better this sinful nature. Beloved, it can not be cured; and what could not be mended, has to be ended; and God ended it in the cross of Christ.

"Our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin might be destroyed". But you say to me, "O but preacher, I feel it very much alive". So do I. But whom are we to believe, God, or ourselves? He says, "You are dead to it in Christ". He has died to it. Take up that standpoint and "reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord". It is the secret of freedom now, not from the guilt of our sins but from the power of sin dominating our lives, bringing us into bondage, spoiling our Christianity, robbing us of our joy, when there is a way out. "I thank God", says the apostle. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord". There is a word for you—deliverance from the power of sin—that indwelling sin.

The 'Therefore' of Result

We can now see the force of the word 'therefore' as it comes again in 8:1 with its levering power, "There is therefore now no condemna-

tion to them that are in Christ Jesus". You might think, when we realise the evil within us, and what we are liable to do, that we are subject to condemnation. No! "There is therefore now no condemnation". God does not look on that nature to be better than before, but has condemned it, and has taken you and me from under that old head called Adam, from whom we derived our sinful life, and has put us now in Christ. You possess in Him a life from a source that is undefilable, which sin cannot touch at all. Oh, to be in it more and more!

Perhaps you will now say, "What happens if I sin?" Do you sin? "Sometimes I do follow the flesh". There are times, thank God, when you can say "No". There are times, alas, when you fail. What then? Are you condemned then? No, my friends, you have become a child in the family. You have to go to your Father and tell Him about what you have done, and the scripture says He will forgive and cleanse you. But you go as a child, and never again as a sinner. I want you to get hold of this point, that you are never as a sinner again before His face. You are His child, and when there is sin to be dealt with, it is as a child with a Father and as a Father with a child. You never cease to become His child for one moment.

Some might say, "This doctrine you are giving tonight might give a person licence to sin". If you want licence to sin, I am bold to say you have never been born of God, for the Scripture says that He has given us a nature that cannot sin: "Whatsoever is born of God does not practise sin". If you or anyone want licence to sin, you want to look inside and see if you have ever been born of God. No! this book is to enable us to flee from sin so that its power may be broken in our lives.

The 'Therefore' of Response

What is the answer to all this in your life and mine? We have that answer in Romans 12:1—the 'therefore' of response. Notice the tone the apostle uses when he is writing this. "I beseech you therefore brethren". The line which he uses is one of appeal. "I beseech you therefore brethren, that ye yield your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service". Beloved, are we responding in this way? I remember when some of our boys were young they had something to do with cubs or scouts. It only lasted a little time and they once had an effort to raise funds. I went along, and there was a man giving a talk. I was struck by what he said. He said, "When you get older, put something back in return for what you have got out of this movement". Thought I, let us put something back into what we have got out of Christianity; let there be a response in our lives.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service". Young people, your body belongs to the whole of the Trinity. In Romans 6:13 you have to reckon yourself dead unto sin, and this body that we once used to commit sin, must be yielded up to God. In 1 Corinthians 6:13, the body is for the Lord and in verse 19 of that same chapter "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost". This body is in relation to the whole of the Godhead. We need to be careful with it! In the day in which we live, men and women cannot get low enough. In their way of living and in their literature they can-

not get low enough in everything to do with this body. You and I have been wrought upon by the grace of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and this body that was once given over to sin is now to be given over to God, a willing sacrifice. It will cost you something. I am sure of that. Everything in Christianity is on the basis of sacrifice—your lives, money, etc.—a willing sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, altogether set apart for Him.

Do not let it be thought that this means our being eccentric or peculiar in our dress or in our manners. Does it mean that you have to leave home and go away and preach? It is for a sister to carry it out in the home as well as anywhere else, and for us, too, in our work, young men. We often forget these little details. We think we have to be preachers, but the greatest preacher is one who is living this out in his life day by day. The thing is to give our bodies to the Lord—to give them to God, to be usable by Him for His service in this world, and amongst His people. In our whole deportment let us be marked as those that have been delivered from the power of sin. And let this body in which we have committed sin now be used to carry out His works as instruments of righteousness in our lives. "Be not conformed to this world". O, beloved, let us take this word home to our souls. In a world where **self** is the order of the day, for those of us who give our bodies to the Lord, it is not **self**, but Christ. "Be not conformed to this world—Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind". You have a renewed mind and it is because you have a renewed mind that you can be transformed.

The 'Therefore' of Resource

In closing, in 1 Corinthians 15 : 58, it is the 'therefore' of Resource. What a resource this is ! In the chapter which is brim-full with truth—about the gospel, about the resurrection, about the millennium, the time when death is going to be destroyed, and on to God's eternal day ; the grave is spoiled, death is to be swallowed up in victory, and with that behind him, he says "therefore". Whether we leave by way of death, or whether we be alive for the Coming of the Lord, we are absolutely sure of victory. God will have the last word. And He is going to triumph. He has triumphed through the death and resurrection of Christ. He is going to triumph over the very grave. Death is going to be swallowed up in victory. I like that word, 'swallowed up'. In 2 Corinthians 5 : 4 he goes even further. He says there is a time coming when mortality is going to be swallowed up of life. If the Lord were to come tonight, the course of death would be arrested in us. You would never die. And that is why it says that mortality, which means, subjection to death, will be swallowed up in the all-powerful life of Christ. No wonder he says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord".

2. BROAD OUTLINE OF PROPHECY AS A WHOLE.

History, Creation and Time.

PROPHECY is closely bound up with human history, including its future developments. The whole story of humankind is itself a small part of the great complex of processes going on within the created order of things. **Creation** with the unimaginable extent and detail of its many parts, and **time** with its enormous variety of events going on throughout the ages ; all this adds up to something bewilderingly vast and quite beyond our comprehension. Even in the most limited areas it is far beyond full inspection, to say nothing of understanding. Man is completely dwarfed by it all. The question "What is man that thou art mindful of him ?" (Psalm 8 : 4) needs still to be raised today, perhaps with more amazement than ever. In asking it, the Psalmist was thinking not only of the relation between man and the universe, but of the relation between man and God. Man is in a real sense quite insignificant alongside the vast environment in which he finds himself. But the immense creation itself is nothing compared with God. Comparisons here are totally out of place. God is altogether unique and alone, different in kind in an absolute way from all else (Isaiah 40 : 18, etc.). The immanence of God in His creation, interpenetrating it, involved intimately in all its processes, initiating it, unfolding it, sustaining it in all its parts, folding it all up and terminating it too in due course ; this is part of the biblical truth. Yet so also is His transcendence, above, beyond, outside it, all around it, not restricted to it in any sense, nor to any part or instant of it, ever present and everywhere present, inhabiting eternity not time, sovereign in all that He intends and does.

These are some of the grand and massive facts about God which the bible makes known to us. We must think of creation and time as limited, and dependent entirely upon Him. We must think of them as a kind of arena in which greater things by far are manifested. Here **moral** issues have been opened up, and resolved too. We must marvel that man who is so completely small in his own background, is yet at the centre of a larger story than that of the whole universe. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him ?" In one sense he is indeed small, and yet in another sense he is the key person in the story. The whole picture of the activities of God revealed to us centres upon man. God has been mindful of man in a special way. God has **visited** him ! God became man ! God was manifest in the flesh. Man is **not** on the periphery of the biblical account, but very much at the crux of it, and (of course) at the apex of it in the long run. The self-revelation of God, the fulfilment of God's sovereign will, the resolution of the great conflict between good and evil, the disclosure of the moral basis of everything ; all these are associated with the story of mankind. Prophecy, then, is part of **this** great story ; a story worked out on a

limited stage, but which has to do with deeper issues than historical events and processes.

Moving towards a climax

Human history is moving towards a sure and wonderful end-point. This is a prominent theme of biblical prophecy. There is to be a great consummation soon ; the concluding stages are almost upon us. "The time is at hand" ; the things written "must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1 : 1 ; 22 : 6, 10). Often the New Testament refers to this. The prospect was somewhat more distant in Old Testament times, but it was nevertheless frequently foreseen. "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion," says Jehovah, in a context that stresses the certainty of it, in spite of united and determined opposition (Psalm 2). An everlasting kingdom is to be set up, never to be destroyed, which will fill the whole earth (Daniel 2 : 44). Processes of judgment in the earth must come first ; when all that has misrepresented God, or has resisted Him, will receive its exposure and retribution. The day when Christ will be openly supreme, having put down all that is offensive to God, finds its description in several Old Testament passages (as examples, see Psalm 72, Isaiah 35, Isaiah 60, Malachi 4 : 2). Impressive terms are used to portray the joy and blessings of that day. The first chapter of the Bible shows clearly that the creation, and the "making" of the earth, was done with a clear end in view. **Man** was to be the crown of the whole sequence of actions. While the chapter speaks primarily of the preparation of the earth for its first human occupants, other inspired comments show that it means more than this (Psalm 2 ; Hebrews 2 : 6-8 ; 1 Corinthians 15 : 27, 28). Adam was set in the place of primacy over the handiwork of God : but, in a far more wonderful way, **Christ** is to be pre-eminent when God's objectives are really fulfilled. The world to come is not to be subject to angels, but to Man. The benefits of His sovereignty will extend to heaven and to earth. Antagonistic elements will find their Master in Him ; heaven, earth and hell will confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. God has decreed that He is to be supreme, and no power on earth (or elsewhere) can prevent it. Not only is this a matter of unalterable purpose, but it is a matter of justice too that He should be acclaimed and honoured in this way. It is His compensation for the cross ; it is God's recognition of Christ's faithfulness in all that concerns God's honour ; it is the mark of God's complete pleasure and confidence in Him, appointing to Him that place of sole trust and authority, to suppress the adversaries and to hold the reigns of government for Him.

When that day comes none will deny Christ's glory, nor gainsay His right to it. Every eye shall see Him. Today "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus. . . crowned with glory and honour." Faith sees and knows enough already to be assured of the end of it all. There is indeed a glorious period ahead at the climax of human history.

The cross at the centre

The critical point in the whole human story is not in the future but in the past. "Now is the crisis of this world, now shall the prince of this

world be cast out " (John 12 : 31). When our Lord spoke these words the hour of His death was imminent, and it was to that He referred. In that hour the adversary was defeated, and the moral glory of the One Who did it became clear. The cross is indeed the turning point—of the whole story : but what words are adequate, or reverent enough to speak of such a theme ? Heaven and earth will pass, but **this** will be a constant and eternal source of wonder and gratitude. The throne of God and the throne of the Lamb are one. That supremacy is unassailable, and fills all who behold it with respect and wonder. An ageless and ever-fresh response to the once-despised Sufferer on the cross is a proper response to God Himself, fully revealed and honoured in that way.

We shall have more to say about the central position of the cross ; indicating how the preceding stages led up to that point in many ways ; how it was also the starting point for new, unexpected developments. But we conclude the present sub-section by dwelling a little longer on the wonder and glory of the deed itself. Some words written previously may perhaps be re-quoted here, with this in mind : " In its implications regarding the unfaithfulness and sinfulness of men, the cross of Christ was the darkest of all events. Yet other profound issues were also settled there. Surrounding that momentous event there are special glories which are of an inward and inexpressibly deep character. There, in a transcendent way, God was displayed. His limitless love was demonstrated, His high standards upheld and underlined. There too the qualities of another Man were shown. There the Lord Jesus, sinless and holy, showed His devotion to God to the limit, honouring Him, obedient to Him in the severest test. There the Son of the Father Who had said of Himself ' he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ' showed clearly that divine love would hold nothing back in self-giving, though this was done on behalf of loveless and worthless objects " (Scripture Truth Vol. 44 page 117 ; 1969).

The gospel of John, in the account of the crucifixion, picks out in a special way the **glory** of the work of the cross and the **dignity** of our Lord as He suffered. In simple terms he draws attention to the central action : " And he, bearing his cross, went forth. . . ". Could simple words be more profound than these ? Behind all the other actions and actors in the story, the act of our Lord Himself has the prominence. Lightfoot, referring to the omission in this gospel of the part played by Simon the Cyrenian, asks " Is it possible that St. John wishes to emphasize that, whatever may have been the outward circumstance, the Lord in truth bore His own cross, and alone ? He carries out this work unaided, He alone can achieve it ; it is a divine act. Whatever may have been the facts about the bearing of the cross of wood, no man can lighten the Lord's burden for Him, or share His achievement with Him " (St. John's Gospel : a Commentary page 315). The glory of that hour is His alone, as was the load that He carried there. Let us always retain a sense of awe and wonder, as well as of unending gratitude, as we think of the cross. That indeed was the pre-eminent and central hour of all.

A succession of stages

The idea of a succession of stages in which God has revealed Him-

self, and into which the course of history may be divided, is undoubtedly present in Scripture. While it is true that extreme advocates of what is termed "dispensationalism" seem over-systematic and naïve in their rigid understanding of these things, it is also true that those who use the term in a derogatory sense give the impression of seeming to wish to be abreast of current thinking, rather than to be totally fair to the bible.

Our approach here can by-pass many of these problems, since we hope to concentrate on what is clear from any straightforward reading of the biblical passages, assuming that this will be the more essential material for a general understanding of prophecy. With such an approach, a break-down of the whole biblical account of history, based on clear high-points of the story, would be as follows.

1. Adam to Noah.
2. Noah to Abraham.
3. Abraham to Moses/Moses to Christ.
Israel made a nation, but ultimately in captivity ;
Gentile rule, not a success either.
4. The church period.
5. The end times/judgment.
6. The Kingdom.

It does not seem possible to vary this sequence to any substantial extent, though there may be some flexibility in the way it is presented. The periods noted correspond to real biblical distinctions. There is a school of interpretation which inverts the order of periods 5 and 6 ; but, while noting this, and recognizing the fair-mindedness of some who take this view, it is not our intention to weigh the merits of that alternative.

Stages 1 to 3 can be viewed in various ways. In the first place this is the long period of progressive revelation from God. He revealed Himself in partial and intermittent fashion ; it was a revelation which unfolded and accumulated over the centuries. Nevertheless the whole Old Testament revelation was far from complete. The terminal point of it all, the full expression of God in Christ, outshone all that preceded it. That disclosure was perfect and final ; everything to be known about God was now in the open. Secondly, the long period covered by the Old Testament can be considered as a succession of failures. Mankind on probation, under varying degrees of light from God, always proved to be weak and inadequate, and often antagonistic to Him. Their final action, rejecting Christ, ended all hope for man on the basis of what he could be for God. His trouble was too deep-seated for cure. Removal in death, and a new beginning from God, was the only hope. The death and resurrection of Christ have this significance to faith. Thirdly, alongside the dismal story of the repeated failure of men, God's sovereign hold over all that transpires is also clear. Promises are embedded in the story which the weakness of men cannot cancel, nor their opposition prevent. The light of prophecy shines in many a dark place in the Old Testament. The promised seed, the promised king, the promised kingdom, the sufferings and the glory of Christ, the deliverer to come, the servant of Jehovah, the arm of the Lord, the One Who will grapple with all that is offensive and antagonistic to God ; these are some of the

features of the strong line of hope which runs through the Old Testament. In all these ways the Old Testament has its focus towards the coming of Christ.

But His coming was not only a long-awaited end, it was also a new beginning. Stages 4, 5 and 6 spring out of the momentous events associated with His advent. Especially is this true of stage 4 ; something entirely new takes the foreground here, which is founded in a special way upon the person of Christ, His incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension. This merits a special paragraph to itself ; it is so different in character that it can be treated as aside from the mainstream of prophecy. Indeed a major key to the understanding of prophecy is the recognition of the parenthetic nature of stage 4, and the realization that stages 5 and 6 link up (almost without discontinuity) with stage 3. Here particularly we are in the main field of relevance of prophetic teaching. If men have failed woefully in every area of responsibility entrusted to them by God, it is in the hands of another Man to sort out and deal rightly for God with all the evil and chaos which has arisen. Our Lord's competence for this, His unfaltering faithfulness to God, has been demonstrated at the cross. The Lamb slain is worthy and able to open the book and to loose the seals (Revelation 5). He alone can set in motion the processes of judgment, and see them through to their intended conclusion. He will assert God's mastery over everything, dealing in a drastic way with all forms of evil as they take open shape in that day. All this comes within stage 5, and there are of course many parts to this story. Finally, the long-promised day will arrive, the day of the righteous rule of Christ, the day of peace and prosperity for this earth (stage 6), the end-point towards which everything is moving. By Him (the Lord Jesus) God will reconcile all things unto Himself, in heaven and in earth (Colossians 1 : 20). "The blood of his cross" is the basis and the surety of this.

An interlude in the sequence

The church period is a kind of interlude in the whole story ; and strictly speaking it is not the direct subject of prophecy. Nevertheless it is a special high-point in the whole scheme. Here is an interposition within the stream of time of something which has an other-worldly quality about it. Eternal plans come into realization here ; something is formed which belongs properly to the eternal realm, and will find its full destiny there. Characteristic of this period is the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, indwelling each and all of the people of God today. He is their link of life and union with the ascended Christ, the bond which makes them one. Appreciation of all that is now revealed, and responsive life and action in the light of it, are possible by the indwelling Spirit. Relying on His provision and guidance, the people of God can live purposeful lives, which are energetic in devotion to Christ and guarded against unholiness. The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5 : 5). Hope for the future is bright and real. They are destined for the unique place of bride and consort for Christ in the coming day, and the Holy Spirit is the earnest of this. The love of Christ for His church will only be satisfied in having it in the closest place with Him-

self, where He dwells, in the eternal realm. His promise is "I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John 14 : 3). The church expects His coming in **this** sense ; and the fulfilment of that promise will be the close of the church period.

Though the inclination to dwell on the privileges of belonging to the church of God is strong, we refrain from this in the present context. In conclusion we draw attention to the dangers of applying Old Testament prophecies to the church by a spiritualizing method. Confusion can arise if prophecies which clearly relate to Israel and the nations are thought of as fulfilled (in any complete sense) in the church. A constantly repeated theme of the Old Testament prophecies is the restoration of Israel to the heart of a universal kingdom on earth and the plain sense of these prophecies must be preserved. "Unless the promises given through the prophets to Israel are interpreted with reference to the same people and in the same sense in which they were originally given, the exegesis of prophecy becomes a guessing game controlled only by the predilections of the expositors" (E. H. Trenchard on the book of Acts, in "A N.T. Commentary" ; Pickering & Inglis, 1969). Careful adherence to this principle would seem to be necessary for a well-focussed reading of the bible, especially in its prophetic parts.

THE RIVER OF EZEKIEL 47 --- JOHN BARNES

ITS RELATION TO THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN THE ACTS

THAT the prophecies of Ezekiel 47 will have literal fulfilment is not to be doubted. There will be an actual river flowing in the channel described, in the land of Israel, and its healing waters will bring refreshment and rejuvenation to desert regions so long deprived of the blessing of water. However, other views of these ancient scriptures are certainly permissible, and I should like to apply some of the details of this interesting chapter to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit of God, as recorded for us in the book of the Acts.

There is, firstly, the formation of the house, brought into being by the descent of the Holy Spirit. There was no spiritual house on earth prior to His coming on the day of Pentecost, except, of course, in the Lord Jesus personally during His earthly life in the sense that He "tabernacled" among men the True Dwelling-place of God. A typical house had previously existed, as the epistle to the Hebrews points out, in which Moses served faithfully as a servant. That was the movable tabernacle where God was pleased to dwell and where He signified His presence by the glory cloud which rested there, when the structure was stationary, on the ark of the testimony. The temple, as we know, succeeded this, as a more permanent house, but owing to national apostasy, was, at a later date, abandoned by the Lord. But now a spiritual house has been formed, as the writer to the Hebrews indicates ; "Whose house are ye." When the Lord Jesus returned to glory to sit at the Father's right hand, having made purgation for sins, the Holy Spirit came down, according to promise, and the awaiting company of believers was

baptised into one body. At that moment the spiritual house was also formed, and God was pleased to take up His abode there. Ezekiel tells us in chapter 39 : 29 of the pouring out of the Spirit, and immediately we are introduced to the thought of the house.

We begin Ezekiel 47 with the house already in existence, established according to divine measurement, and we can see the counterpart of this in the Acts where the house is brought into view at the commencement. The suddenness of the structure's appearance seems to answer to the vision in Ezekiel, where there seems to be no record of building. In chapter 40 the house is seen as already there and it is the prophet's happy task to measure it in its interesting detail. In the Acts the house is suddenly formed and immediately begins to fulfil its functions.

The river, Ezekiel tells us, flowed out **from under the threshold** of the house eastward. There is wonderful blessing brought within the reach of all mankind. Under the threshold may suggest the bringing of the marvellous flow of blessing into complete accessibility to all. It is not in the heavens or beyond the seas, available only to the technically clever or to the wealthy, but it flows from **under the threshold** in happy availability to all. In Acts chapter 2 the multitude, who came together on the day of Pentecost, noted with amazement, "We hear them speak **in our tongues** the wonderful works of God." (2 : 11) There was no distance, no vagueness, no obscurity, but in language of the utmost clearness the truth was put within the reach of all.

The river flowed eastward, towards the sunrising. The Spirit's Day has in view the Son's Day. (Acts 2 : 35) The Son is to emerge from His present place where He is concealed from public view into glorious epiphany and the blessed Spirit works with that day of revelation before Him. The Lord Jesus instructed the apostles concerning the Holy Spirit ; "He will shew you things to come." He brings into view the immanent Sunrising and causes the Morning Star to arise in the hearts of the saints. This is a wonderfully uplifting outlook to have as a settled policy. Someone has wisely written ; "Keep your face to the SON and the shadows will always fall behind you." The glory is eastward, brethren ! The name "Eothen" which is linked with the aged believers' homes the brethren take an interest in, reminds us of this truth. Our older friends in Christ, called away from us in death, die in the faith of that glorious dawning. "Towards the sunrising" is a much happier description of the believer's hope than "eventide."

The waters of the great river flowed from under the **right side** of the house. In Scripture, the right hand generally suggests the thought of authority and power. The outflow of living waters is in divine power. The coming of the Spirit in Acts is associated with an expression of great force ; "A rushing mighty wind." Acts 2 : 2. The J.N.D translation gives, "A violent impetuous blowing," or "breathing." This immense exertion of power was felt, not only in the room where the believers had assembled, but in the city outside, and it brought together an interested crowd to investigate the matter. (2 : 6) Where the Holy Spirit is present, **there** is power. The idea of blowing, or breathing, seems to suggest the thought of God having a deeply personal interest in this ; breathing this divine Breath Himself, as He once breathed into the man He had formed the breath of life. (Genesis 2 : 7)

The stream is stated to have flowed at the south side of the altar. The altar instantly brings to the christian's mind the thought of the Lord's death, and the basis being laid for all blessing for the creature. No doubt the altar of burnt offering is in the mind of the writer, and while we cannot ignore the solemn fact that sin had to be dealt with, that altar also recalls that aspect of atonement in which the Lord Jesus, by the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. It was at the bottom of this altar that the blood of the sin offering was poured out, though the offering itself was burned without the camp. The value of the Lord's work in death derives from what He is in Himself, and His death released the rich stream of blessing conveyed to needy man in the power of the Holy Spirit, sent down from an ascended Lord and from the Father, glorified in the finished work of the Son.

Geographical features in the Bible seem to relate to the land of Canaan, and south is, therefore, south of Israel. This is suggestive of the warmth and sunshine of the tropics. The north winds blow down from the snow-capped Ararat range in the cold Russias. The One who gave Himself for us on the altar, bore in His own body the cold blasts of judgement in order that the warmth and sunshine of spiritual blessing might be freely available to you and me.

The river is seen flowing on and gaining in volume as it flows. There is no suggestion of tributary streams used to augment its volume, nor yet is there any diminution of the healing waters in spite of the abundant use they are put to and the fruitfulness they promote. Instead the river grows bigger and bigger. A measuring line is used to intimate that there is no guesswork here, no rough estimate. At exactly 1,000 cubits by the line from the threshold of the house, the water is already ankle deep. This takes us, in thought, to Acts 3 where the miracle of the healing of the cripple is recorded. This man was **carried** daily to the temple gate called "beautiful." He could in no way help himself to get there on his own feet because there was no strength in his ankles. Though the gate was called the "beautiful gate" of the temple, no healing stream issued from beneath its threshold. That house was an empty, abandoned shell, for its officers had rejected its true Lord. He had called it, "Your house," and left it judged, desolate, powerless and lifeless. There was a rich stream of blessing flowing onwards in mighty, divine power, but it issued from beneath the threshold of another house, the true house, and was linked with the true Altar. Those apparently poverty-stricken men, Peter, John and the others, seemingly jobless and homeless, were, nevertheless, the repositories of this amazing blessing. They had no silver, no gold, no formal education, no position, but they had access to the "Originator of life," (Acts 3 : 15. N.T.) and the power resident in that glorious Person, now exalted, was available in the Spirit's energy as a potent stream of blessing, but newly issued from beneath the threshold of the house and already running ankle deep. The lame man, in response to the authority of the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, (v.6) the Lowly One, the Man of the threshold, stood up strengthened in his feet and ankle bones. How great the efficacy of the healing waters ! He stood, he walked, he leaped, he entered into the temple, he praised God, he held Peter and John. He **held** them. This may be suggestive of the whole christian testimony, for Peter was its first spokesman and John its last.

The newly conveyed strength to stand and to walk was also the power to hold the christian testimony till the Lord's return, and meanwhile to endure the sufferings such faithfulness would entail. Of John the Lord had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come what is that to thee." And to Peter he had said, "Follow thou Me." We all know what that entailed for the apostle Peter.

A further 1,000 cubits were measured and the river was found to have deepened and now reached to the knees. The immense energy already expended had in no way depleted the infinite reserves of power in the great stream of blessing. By now knee deep it swept onwards. 3,000 had been converted and soon the number had swelled to 5,000. The period of great blessing was not marked by a spirit of self-reliance but was rather one of absolute dependence on the Lord. In Acts 7 Stephen prayed, "kneeling down." It is recorded too of Saul; "Behold he prayeth." The apostles gave themselves to prayer. A great company of the **priests** was obedient to the faith. The disciples prayed and the place where they met was shaken. It was a period of prayer. Prayer puts man on his knees before the Lord as dependent and enables him to lay hold on resources outside of himself. The believers were filled with the Spirit—God took them up; they spoke the word with boldness—men heard them. The vast river was now too big for Jewry alone to contain; the dimensions of the Jewish vessel were too small. Israel's household was too little for the **lamb**. (cf Exodus 12:4) The neighbour next unto him, the dark Gentile, was about to be given access to the blessing. The Holy Spirit wrought in the heart of an officier of the Roman army, and true to the character of the time, he "supplicated God continually." (10:2) His prayers reached the ear of God. (v. 4) We next read that Peter went up on the housetop to pray. (v. 9) No consciousness of personal power marked these men but rather an utter reliance on the power of their risen Lord, exalted to the Father's throne. The knee-deep river swept impetuously on bringing blessing and joy wherever it reached. Later, while Peter was still preaching in the house of Cornelius, as those assembled there listened to the message of grace and blessing, the Holy Spirit fell on them. The same blessed Spirit who had fallen on the Jewish believers in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, baptising them into one body, fell on the Gentile believers in the house of the centurion, merging them into the same wonderful organism. The floodgates of blessing were now divinely opened to the thirsty Gentile world. (cf Isaiah 49:6)

Yet even this does not plumb the depths of this ever growing stream. The waters flowed on, still deeper, widening all the time. A further accurate 1,000 cubits was measured and the prophet found himself in waters now loin-deep. Here we reach deeper exercises in relation to the testimony, moving the whole inner man, and this takes us in thought to Acts 18 where we read that Paul was "pressed in respect of the word." (v. 5) The J. N. D. footnote tells us that the word may mean, "earnestly occupied," which may correspond to waters up to the loins. We do not now see a praying company, earnestly seeking divine enlightenment, and with hearts prepared to receive the word sent from God by His servant, but a godless, licentious city, devoted to debauchery and immorality. Serious resistance to the truth was soon to be seen, (v. 6) but the Lord encouraged His servant, in a night vision, to carry on fearlessly for He

had great blessing in mind for the place. How vast, how deep, how holy was the stream that could reach to the depths of that sin-polluted morass of pagan iniquity and rescue men and women for God ; that could make such people to be "epistles of Christ !"

But even this does not expend its fulness, for it flows onwards still, deepening and widening yet more as it flows, fed from its own resources in infinitude. A further 1,000 cubits was measured and the prophet now describes the river as a great river which he could not pass over, bottomless and boundless, with waters to swim in.

This takes us, in its counterpart in the Acts, to chapter 20, where we read the record of Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders on the seashore. The Ephesian epistle ! How we love this great document with its mighty themes and incomparable unfoldings of divine truth. The very name, Ephesus, meaning "full purpose" is full of significance. The expanses unrolled before our minds are massive. Length is there and breadth and depth and height. What dimensions this letter brings before our hearts ! Here, if anywhere, we find that there are waters to swim in, a grand, inexhaustible flood. When Columbus discovered the river Orinoco one of his officers hinted that they may have discovered just another of the Carribean islands, but the great navigator knew better. "That mighty river drains a continent," he affirmed. Paul refers in Acts 20 to "the whole counsel of God." Here is an incalculable channel that conveys to us "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ."

There is no reason to assume that this great spiritual Amazon has in any way diminished. Certainly we have not availed ourselves of its grand fulness, but its plenitude is still here. The Lord Jesus promised concerning the Holy Spirit Whom He would send from the Father ; "He shall abide with you for ever."

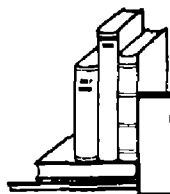
CORRESPONDENCE (Further letters held over.)

"Thou" or "You"

The following letter has been received from Mr. E. H. Chamberlain of Rye, Sussex :—

I was interested in Dr. Paterson's letter regarding "Thou" or "You" in speaking to the Lord, but I feel that the truth will not be served by partial statements. Granted that the R.S.V. translators are influenced by their own views, it cannot fairly be maintained that they use "You" in addresses to Christ to **deny** His deity. For Ananias uses "thy" in addressing Him (Acts 9 : 13, 14) ; so does Paul (Acts 22 : 20). Presumably the translators considered both men believed in His deity **then**, and this I think is all we can fairly deduce.

As to the use of "You" in worship or prayer, those whom I have heard, use it **equally** to address the Father or the Son. Here again, it is no question of accuracy, for as you know, the plural pronoun could not have been used in Greek as it is in modern English. Neither, in my view, is it a question of reverence, as though God were interested in ancient or modern speech ! Reverence is a matter of the spirit.



THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE

JOHN BARNES

I Corinthians 13

IS it not significant that the first thing to be mentioned in this wonderful appreciation of love, and emphatically rejected, is 'tongues'. Apart from the special meaning of the term 'tongues' in 1 Corinthians, how easy, how effortless and how empty of real meaning is a lot of speaking. It is relatively simple for some people, endowed with good memories, to read up ministry and re-issue it in the form of preaching without its having had the slightest effect on their own lives. This is **not** the way of love. A paraphrase of v. 1 may be permitted. "Though I speak in the terms of the most eminent teachers and have not love I am no better than a soulless tape recorder or a mindless gramophone : " nothing but noise, wearing or even irritating to the listener. The great teachers were not men who "trafficked in unfelt truth." The truth, as they learned it, formed and adjusted them and their walk corresponded with it. When we see selfishness, indifference to need and suffering, irritability, coldness of heart, covetousness and other ugly features of man subsisting alongside a pretentious ministry we know we are looking at examples of the sad truth of v. 1. Ministry culled from books but not worked out in living is a perversion of its purpose. The great men whose wonderful ministry is valued so much among us were marked by a becoming humility and simplicity of life. If the truth they taught does not produce a similar spirit in those who read it, it has been mislearned. If I speak their language, however accurately, but am not energised by christian love, my voice will be a grating, irritating noise, no more.

A man may have singular ability in the exposition of Bible teachings ; he may have prophetic gift ; he may "know where he is" doctrinally, (to use a catch phrase of the students) ; he may understand assembly principles ; he may be well instructed in the typical teachings of the Levitical economy, and other most valuable aspects of truth so carefully conveyed in Scripture, and so ably expounded by the writers, but if this is not counterbalanced by genuine christian love, divinely wrought in the life, he is nothing. He may look big on the platform ; he may be a force to be reckoned with in the debate ; his acid voice may cut ruthlessly through the weak arguments of the shakily taught, but he is still zero.

A man may, on the other hand, be acutely aware of need and suffering, and not unmoved by it. He may give generously of his substance to alleviate want ; he may devote his time, he may ruin his health, he may

even give his life (who can give more ?) in the service of his fellows, but unless that supreme sacrifice is motivated by love the profit is nil. This is one of the most devastating of Paul's statements in this context. Is it possible that such generosity, such altruism, such devotion can be wrong, wrongly conceived, wrongly directed ? Clearly it can. If so the whole venture is a waste of time, effort and sacrifice.

The man who wrote this famous chapter could put words together to some effect. Some of his passages rank among the finest in all writings considered from a purely literary point of view. This chapter surely has a place among the 'top ten' of all time, but Paul decries the mere manipulation of words. He was a prophet of unusual insight and competence but he sets bare prophetic ability aside. None knew the deep truth of the faith better than Paul, and his extraordinary knowledge was recognised by the apostolic leader, Peter, as being of the highest order, but Paul looks beyond knowledge to something greater. He had faith, great and admirable, but he minimises it in the light of a greater thing. He was surpassingly generous in the cause of Christ, gave all, gave up all ; his health, his position, his liberty and eventually his life, but he lumps it all together and sweeps it all aside as of no value at all unless the spring of it is love. This is a serious consideration and we cannot, we dare not ignore it.

How, then, does love shew itself ? How can we know that it is in activity ? Certainly not by words or by talk. Love is seen, to use the language of John the Apostle, "in deed and in truth." The mere expression, "I love you," if not accompanied by real affection shewn in active good, counts for nothing.

Paul now proceeds to tell us how real love works out in life. "Love", he says, "suffereth long." Love is patient with the trying brother. In assemblies of the Lord's people, as indeed in every walk of life, there are difficult and exasperating people to be found. We all meet them in the office or factory, and even in the assembly and the family. How do we react to such people ? By shewing similar prickliness, similar lack of tact or grace ? Love, says Paul, deals patiently with the exasperating brother ; and I should remember that, probably, many people find me difficult to work with.

"Love is kind." It is kind to the unattractive person. There are those who are less well taught than I, however poor may be the level of my attainments. How do I treat the struggling brother ? Perhaps he is poorly educated, not markedly gifted, unable, maybe, to express himself very intelligibly. How do I react to the prayers or expressions of an ill-instructed brother who prays or speaks irrelevantly ? Do I bristle with righteous indignation or is my manner understanding and kind ? Love is kind ! The love that looked in wondrous kindness on ignorant, faltering me in all my stupidity expects me to look charitably on others who do not come up to even my low standard of expectation.

But there are hosts of others who are far beyond me. How do I behave towards them ? The love that looks uncritically on the less able looks also unenvyingly on the more able. 'Love envieth not.' Here is a prime source of trouble among men, even saints. Provocative things are said by brethren who envy and suspect the superior ability of more gifted brothers. True love, however, neither patronises nor provokes.

“Love vaunteth not itself.” It is not for ever seeking to establish its own reputation and find platforms for the parade of its own acquisitions. Where there is talent opportunities for service will be available. Love does not vaunt itself ; it does not advertise itself. The word ‘minister’ and its cognate ‘ministry’ have attained a stature well above their original. Minister is a diminutive word from the root ‘minor’ ; ‘less’. Today it has been clothed with a positional connotation out of keeping with its former meaning. The Lord Jesus Himself keeps ministry where love puts it ; “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.” In another place He said, “I am among you as he that serveth.” Lowly service is the true import of ministry, not plaudits and acclamations.

“Love is not puffed up.” Its own advancement in ability does not give love a swollen head. Where heads are swollen hearts are small. The Corinthian church is an example of this. Paul’s loving heart was enlarged towards them but they, filled with pride of their gifts and powers, were narrow in their affections. (2 Corinthians 6 : 11, 12) We need enlargement of heart not of head, and love is large hearted.

“Doth not behave itself unseemly.” Love is goodmannered. The Apostle is not writing about formal etiquette ; probably he had little use for it. There is a social training that develops what is called ‘good breeding’ but love produces its own brand of good manners, for love is never offensive. It assumes right attitudes towards all, whatever their station. Love knows how to behave, instinctively. There is a dignity about love which the schools of deportment could never imitate. Formal deportment can be cold—cruelly so : love is warm and generous as well as good mannered.

Nothing on earth is so thoroughly unselfish as love. “Love seeketh not her own”. If someone is constantly trying to force his way up the ladder and establish a position whether in the so-called secular world or in the church, we may know with certainty that the power which activates him is not love. The Lord Jesus said, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.” The current phrase, “There’s plenty of room at the top,” could not be further from the truth. There is, in fact, a lot more room at the bottom ; there is hardly anyone there. Who wants to be the world’s doormat ? Who wants to be a doormat even for the saints ? Who wants to be stuck on the bottom rung of the ladder for every aspirant to tread on as he jostles his competitive way upward ? That’s where there is room, at the bottom. Only One has really experienced the **bottom** : the Lord Himself. Philippians 2 shews the extent of His self-humiliation, unequalled and inimitable, but the closer a believer is to where the Lord humbled Himself, the less crowded will he find conditions to be. Higher up men are wrestling to get or to retain some position on the ladder. Sad to say this is sometimes as true in the church as in the world. Love is not there. Ambition is there and greed ; indifference is there, ruthlessness and cruelty, but not love, for love seeketh not her own. The Song of Solomon speaks of a place being ‘paved with love’ (3 : 10) This is suggestive of the spirit that is prepared to be trampled on in the interests of the Lord.

“Love is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth.” Love is not touchy. The Spirit that

sees a slight in every word, an offence in every statement or even omission, is not love. Love will always attribute the best motive possible to what is said or done. It does not, on the other hand impute an evil one. Love does not ignore evil when it is clearly there but it does not nose out evil. The inquisitorial spirit which does this, whatever ecclesiastical pseudonym it masquerades under, is not love. Love does not rejoice in or gloat over discovered evil but rather sorrows. Love rejoices in good ; rejoices with the truth. The love God brings into the believer's heart will be in affectionate sympathy with the truth, and the question, "Is it true ?" will be on the lips of love should a suspicion be aroused or an evil suggestion be whispered. Love will wish to be true, to be on the side of truth. Love takes no part in the maintenance or propagation of error but of truth, and if truth is impugned love will be awakened to defend what is true. Truth is positive, active, living ; love rejoices with it positively, actively and livingly.

And how great is the scope of its activities. "Beareth all, believeth all, hopeth all, endureth all." Assailed on this side and on that ; attacked from above, sapped from beneath, anything else would crumble ; but not love. Love stands up under pressure when other things fail ; love remains trustful when others lapse into suspicion ; love continues to be buoyantly confident when others give way to despair ; love perseveres at the front when others abandon the struggle, for love never fails. Even natural love is charged with marvellous qualities ; divinely inspired love has qualities about it which cannot be seen elsewhere. Paul says, "The more I love the less I be loved," but he loved on and on nonetheless.

Paul now returns to some of the things he mentioned earlier ; tongues, knowledge, prophecies. Can they last ? What about prophecies, for instance ? They perform a great function but, having been fulfilled, they have completed their task. They are of the deepest interest but prophecies seem to be mainly for certain contingencies, and the voices having said what is for contemporary benefit pass into history. They reach their conclusion.

What of knowledge ? Someone has said that the discovery of today is the curiosity of tomorrow. This is true of human knowledge which is advancing at such a rate today that many a clever invention never leaves the drawing board. But even our knowledge of divine truth is fragmentary. We know nothing yet as we shall know eventually ; but love continues.

And tongues ? The Pentecostal tongues passed away. Attempts are continually being made to revive them. No one who really understands this chapter would have much time for such efforts. Tongues cease. How well it is in other senses of the word, in this noisy world with its million efforts to capture our attention. How we sometimes crave for silence to reflect. Love gives the silence of adoration, and it is still there, positive, grand and eternal.

The apostle shews us the transient nature of tongues and other manifestations of that kind, and likens them, somewhat, to the playthings of childhood which give place to the worktools of manhood. The knowledge of childhood is partial and, in practice generally faulty. It disappears before the more advanced knowledge of fuller growth. Tongues and knowledge sometimes partake of the nature of the spiritually

puerile but love belongs to adult christianity. Where we find insistence on the spectacular we shall find an immature christianity ; where love predominates **there** is mature christianity at its best.

Even Paul, with the wealth of revelation he enjoyed, confessed his knowledge to be only partial. We shall certainly have to admit that of ours. When the perfect day has come and the transient has been replaced by the permanent, and the partial by the complete, then we shall know perfectly, but whether then or now, love remains pre-eminent. 'Now abideth faith, hope, love : the greater of these is love.' (J.N.D.) The apostle uses the comparative where we should have used the superlative ; as though there were two rather than three elements to the proposition ; as though he puts faith and hope into one basket and considers them, for grammatical purposes, to be one, so that love may have the place he wished to give it in his exposition. Possibly this is so. Whatever may be the explanation of this unusual grammatical construction, one thing remains indelibly imprinted on the mind as one reaches the conclusion of this superlative essay : "Love is supreme."

THE SERVANT OF GOD --- E. H. SAPP

THE gospel of Mark opens with the announcement of the good news beginning with the presence in the world "of Jesus Christ, the Son of God", truly news to arrest attention, for the Lord has visited His people and given them bread to eat.

Peter's sermon in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) could be a summary of this gospel ; while Paul writing to the Philippians (chapter 2) provides inspired words of the motives of Him Who made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant. Mark concludes with an epilogue in chapter 16 : 9-20. In spite of doubts cast upon these verses by their omission in the text of two important manuscripts, they are amply authenticated in several others. But the best attestation are the words and commands and comforts of the now risen Lord, all in perfect keeping with the gospel as a whole. That which the Lord "began" He now commands to be continued. "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". To this quotation from chapter 13 these recorded directives of the Lord to His servants are in perfect accord. There are three features in Mark's gospel worthy of note—the Master's humility, the Master's methods and the Master's sympathies.

Having taken a bondman's place it would scarcely be appropriate to find a genealogy in this gospel. What slave boasts a family tree ? "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" and such a course He follows unswervingly to the end. No cry reaches His ears unheeded ; no human wretchedness before His eyes goes unnoticed. Yet, as Mark records Him, not one in Israel calls upon Him as Lord. To Israel at best, their appreciation of Him was as Prophet or Teacher. Blind Bartimaeus

goes a little further calling Him "Son of David" and "Rabboni"—but an adequate title of appeal to receive his sight. Only the Syrophenician woman, taking the lowest place in His presence, calls upon Him as Lord. Amidst the miseries on every hand in city and village His compassions flow out ; the multitudes are healed. A certain class of case is cited here distinguished by His personal ministry and peculiar method of healing. For example, in chapter 7 : 33, the deaf and dumb man is taken aside from the crowd and healed in two stages. In the next chapter the blind man of Bethsaida is taken by the hand and led out of the town—there alone with Jesus, remarkably dealt with, receiving his sight in two stages. We cannot but think these cases are detailed for our instruction in methods of especial patience in dealing with hard cases. As to the Lord's sympathy, note that Mark alone tells us of the compassionate enquiry the Lord makes with the father of the demoniac boy. This was, no doubt, to provoke faith in this distraught parent, before the multitude came running together to witness the power of Christ. Yet one further touch in Mark chapter 10 : 17-23 : "Jesus, beholding him, loved him." Can we not think that that rich young man returned later, yielding to love divine ? The following verses tell us of the great obstacle of riches, and the command to forsake them for Christ ; but we also read "with God all things are possible". And do we not sing meaningly "Love so amazing, so divine, demands our soul, our life, our all ?" Whoever glimpsed the face of the Lord Jesus and the love that shines in His eyes and has not surrendered to Him ?

Returning to consider the closing verses of this gospel of Mark, we find the Servant of the Lord has finished the work given Him to do. He has sealed it with His blood and God has raised Him from the dead. Now risen, He is Lord ! (See the last two verses). He has servants to command, and does so ! They have the gospel to proclaim to all creation, an administration of grace, yet also solemnly to warn of judgment to come upon the impenitent and unbelieving. But the Lord Himself would work with His servants and give the "signs" following as promised. They will meet with satanic opposition and overcome. The daunting task of acquiring uncouth languages is met by the promise of "tongues"—He gives the ability. The very real hazards of missionary service are fully known by Him Who, in the Temptation, "was with the wild beasts", Who is also Lord of creation. Lastly, the devastating scene of human suffering and misery all around will inspire His servants to put forth their hands to heal. Consider these wonderful provisions and providences. The history of missions confirms these faithful words. The work is His ; we who obey and "go" are tools in His hands.

In Romans 16 :25-27 there is an epilogue to the epistle, to which all evangelists do well to take heed. Here, the Eternal God commands. The secret locked in His heart from eternity and hitherto unrevealed is now declared and is to be known abroad as widely as the gospel of His grace is preached. Surely it is of the utmost importance that every servant knows **the secret** (or disclosed mystery) of His Lord's mind and heart. The gospel is preached with an end in view : namely the outcalling from every nation, tongue and people of God's elect. This is the company destined to be the joy of Christ for eternity, and He, their's. In the light of such "glory" no toil, suffering, disappointment or sacrifice is too much

to give or endure. Indeed, fortified by the truth of the mystery and inspired by any appreciated participation in the counsels of God, conscious of the grace and presence of our loving Commander and Lord in this gospel day, endowed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, well might we "continue" the service "begun" by Jesus Christ the Son of God. "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15 : 58).

A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE — COLIN CURRY

3. ASPECTS OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

A General Survey

1 PETER 1 : 11 summarizes in a single sentence the message of the Old Testament prophets. "The Spirit of Christ which was in them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow". With this as our guide we shall first take a general view of Old Testament prophecy, aiming to see the main lines it follows and the coherence of the whole. Later, we may look at some of its parts in more detail.

According to this verse the main element in Old Testament prophecy is its forward-looking character. It looks on to Christ with expectancy and certitude. What it foresees has two sides to it, suffering followed by glory. In the Old Testament alone these two aspects of His coming are often somewhat merged together, and it is not always apparent that there are two stages involved : but the New Testament makes it clear that the two parts of His advent are well-separated in time. Indeed the very standpoint of the New Testament is between the two advents, basing its teaching on what occurred at His first coming and looking on with hope and patience to His return. We shall first give some examples of various ways in which the Old Testament looks on to these great happenings. Later we indicate briefly the setting in which the whole prophetic story is placed. The Old Testament is closely concerned with the unfolding story of the nations (in particular, of Israel in relation to the other nations) ; and it is in this same setting that Old Testament prophecy will be fulfilled.

The Forward Look to Christ

For convenience, it seems possible to distinguish various kinds of prophetic passage in the Old Testament, and we refer to these in turn.

(i) Many passages had a **clear and complete fulfilment at the first coming** of Christ. Appendix 1 (prepared by the writer's daughter) lists some of them. The phrase "then was fulfilled that which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet" is frequent in the New Testament, especially (it may be noted) in Matthew's gospel. A footnote to Matthew 2 : 23 in the translation by J. N. Darby will be found helpful on this point. His

birthplace, the manner of His birth, His devoted service for God, His sympathies for men, even small details about His death, His very words on the cross, are among the many things "written beforehand". The actions of men, freely done, were foreseen and clearly described. "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink"; "They parted my garments amongst them, and for my vesture they cast lots". What they refrained from doing is also noted as fulfilling Scripture (John 19:36). The accuracy of these fulfilments is clear. Other unfulfilled prophecies will be realised with the same kind of decisiveness.

(ii) There are passages **awaiting fulfilment at the second advent**. Two or three examples will suffice here. The choice is again very wide. "A king shall reign in righteousness"; "the government shall be upon his shoulder"; "they shall look on him whom they pierced" (Isaiah 32:1, 9:6; Zechariah 12:10). Our Lord Himself made it clear that Daniel 7:13 referred to a day yet future. The fullest authority underlies these passages, quite as much as those which have had some fulfilment already. Reference has already been made in the previous paper to passages which speak in the clearest terms of the future kingdom on earth.

(iii) There are passages with a double aspect, **partly fulfilled and partly awaiting fulfilment**. The best known of all the prophetic passages have this character. Psalm 22 is a profound example, binding together the dark critical hour when our Lord was alone and abandoned, with those future scenes of widespread response to Him, when "all the ends of the earth will remember." Isaiah 53 is another. As is well-known the closing verses of chapter 52 provide a lead into this chapter, and in a sense they summarize it. Many nations (and not least their rulers) are to be astonished and dumbfounded in the day of Christ's open splendour. Paradoxically there is a similarity here with another event of a vastly different kind; just as once the multitudes had good cause to be shocked and aghast at the maltreatment and the disfigurement our Lord received, so also will the masses be stunned by the glory given to Him. Readers will have no difficulty in adding to these passages which show how inseparable is the link between His glory and His humiliation. (Appendix 2, prepared by Mr. K. Wood, lists the passages in the Psalms which the New Testament explicitly states to be prophetic in kind. Some of these are of the kind now under discussion).

(iv) There are passages with **an immediate partial fulfilment** which also look ahead to a more distant and complete accomplishment. The great prophetic books have much in them of this nature. The second part of Isaiah (chapters 40-66) is a good example. These chapters are dominated by the expectancy that God will intervene to release His people from captivity (in Babylon) and break the power of their enemies. The prophet is exultant as he senses that their liberation is near. One soon realizes, however, that a deliverance and re-instatement of God's people in a more distant day, and out of a far greater tribulation, is also being envisaged and celebrated. Intermingled with this there is much about their deeper inward bondage. Their guilt, both personal and national, and the release in that area which was so sorely needed, is the basic problem. And so we read in the central chapter (chapter 53) of the One Who took the place of others, and Who was wounded for their

transgressions as well as ours. We quote this as a sample of the way in which future things can be interweaved in passages which arise in the first place out of more immediate prospects. The view ahead towards a range of mountains includes some peaks which are in the foreground and others far further away. As one looks at the skyline the vast distances which really separate them (in the line of vision) are not noticeable. The prophetic view often merges together things close at hand and others further ahead down the years.

(v) The anticipation of Christ is embedded in the fabric of the Old Testament in other ways. The borderline is not easy to draw between what is truly prophetic and what foreshadows Christ in a more general way. "The shadow of good things to come" could be written broadly over much of the pre-Christian Scriptures. The law, moral and ceremonial, was not complete in itself. It awaited One Who would fulfil it, keeping it perfectly in the spirit of it as well as the letter. Its sacrifices and ceremonies found their meaning and end in Him. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the experience of chosen men is the means of highlighting basic inward needs common to all men. The answer to those voids in the hearts of men is found in Christ. How can a man be just with God? The most righteous man of his day had no answer to that question. What is the point of life? The wisest man could see best its emptiness and its frustrations. Men can raise no more profound questions than these. There **are** wonderful answers to these questions, but not in the Old Testament. The New Testament relates to the Old in the sense that deep questions call out for an adequate answer; the profound needs of humankind require to be settled and satisfied, as well as exposed and recognised.

The Setting of O.T. Prophecy

Old Testament history is selective in what it includes. Long centuries are passed over rapidly in the opening chapters. Within a dozen chapters in Genesis the half-way stage in the time-span covered by the Old Testament has already been passed. The general early history of mankind gives way to the emergence of Abraham and his seed in the twelfth chapter. Everything is narrowed to a single family through which all families of the earth will be blessed. The forward thrust towards those parts of the story which are central from the divine viewpoint very soon becomes apparent. The singling out of Abraham, his reliance upon the bare word of God, the Seed of Abraham through Whom all blessing was to come, the line of succession leading towards the fulfilment of God's promise, the chosen family through successive generations, the children of Israel, the beginnings of a nation soon to be redeemed from bondage and to occupy a land sovereignly destined to them—all these features come rapidly into view before the close of the initial book of the Bible. The pattern of God's overall intentions is seen at a very early stage. The persons involved are sometimes in the current of what God is doing; at other times it comes about in spite of their weakness, and sometimes in spite of their deviousness or plain unawareness of what is happening. (Contrast for instance, Abraham's confidence in God with his occasional lapses into compromise and failure of faith. Or contrast Jacob's immedi-

ate and tenacious valuation of God's blessing with the lifetime he spent in learning that devious ways were inconsistent with God's favour).

Not only for her own sake was the nation of Israel singled out and favoured in this way. By this means the intention was to convey the knowledge of God to the surrounding nations, to provide a centre of light and blessing to the world, a place where God's Name and character could be known. Israel's shortcomings in the fulfilment of this plan are a constant theme in the Old Testament. There are, of course, highlights in the story when something of God's purpose was fulfilled in a temporary way. Special high points come in the times of David and Solomon, when the adversaries of the people of God were subdued, the temple built, and the glory of the God of Israel enquired after by people from afar (see, for example, 1 Kings 10). Later, too, there were times of revival, of rediscovery of the law of God, and renewed obedience to it amongst His people. But, generally, the trend was in the other direction from this. Again and again God has a controversy with His people because of their unresponsiveness to His favour, because of their misrepresentation of Himself. Their witness to God should have benefitted the nations, but more often the nations are seen in a totally different rôle. Though unaware of it, the nations in their hostility were the instrument of God's judgment upon His unfaithful people (Isaiah 10 : 5-15, for instance). It is a sad and repeated story, alleviated a little here and there, but deteriorating in the later stages in an almost hopeless way. The kingdom of Israel was ultimately split into two, one section going faster downhill than the other, though both ultimately going into captivity. Israel nationally reached a point of such total unfaithfulness to God that other nations were put in the position of rule and government. Restoration (of Judah) from the captivity to Babylon took place in a partial way, though the "former glory" was never restored (Haggai 2 : 3). Gentile dominance, in several successive hands, continued to the end of the Old Testament era and beyond it.

The handing over of sovereignty to the Gentiles began a period which our Lord spoke of as "the times of the Gentiles", and the Old Testament sees this as a new development, beginning at a distinct point in time, and placing a new responsibility on the Gentile powers, thereafter permitted to be in control. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian emperor was the first to have this charge ; and it passed to successive kings and empires in the wider realm of the Gentiles. Tested by this means, Gentile rule was no more true to God than Israel had proved to be. A certain splendour marked the early stages of Nebuchadnezzar's eminence, but deterioration quickly set in even in his own career. His pride and forgetfulness of God earned for him (in a humiliating way) the lesson that the most High rules in the kingdoms of men. Succeeding kings, and succeeding empires, all had their peculiar marks of misuse of the power entrusted to them. The various brands of bestiality and proud ignorance and opposition to the God of heaven are all foreseen, especially in the prophecy of Daniel, and taken up again in New Testament prophecy in a large way.

We have indicated the background against which Old Testament prophecy is set. The light of prophecy does indeed shine in a dark place ; dark with the unfaithfulness of God's own people, with their unworthi-

ness of His favour, with their misunderstandings, their disobedience, their false representation of Himself. There is darkness, too, connected with the pride and resistance to God which is natural in the hearts of men ; with the corruption which power brings to men and to nations. Many are the forces which seem to be arrayed against God. Truly the Old Testament is not primarily a comforting book ; it does not foster complacency in any way. It lays bare the state and the shame of mankind in a forthright way ; it exposes things just as they are. It shows that a merely nominal proximity to God makes men and nations no better ; it seems almost to make them worse.

But nevertheless there is light amidst this darkness. God does not reveal His intentions merely that men should fail to accomplish them with such shameful consistency. One part of the function of the prophets was to rebuke disobedience and failure, to call God's people to repentance and to renewed obedience, and to pronounce judgment upon their continued flouting of His rights. But another (and brighter) part of their message is that God **will** fulfil all that He has planned. No amount of perverseness will deny to God His sovereignty, nor gainsay His right to bring all His intentions into reality. Accompanying and reinforcing the severer aspects of the prophetic passages, attention is drawn to the great reserves which God can call upon within Himself. What He determines will certainly come to pass. His grace and His lovingkindness cannot be frustrated ; all His actions and attitudes towards men are founded upon flawless righteousness. Lines of hope run through all the prophetic Scriptures, hope which looks towards the future, focussing upon **One** Who would embody and substantiate all these divine qualities. A moment is anticipated when God would visit His people. A time would come when a Man would be found utterly faithful to God in every area of human responsibility. All the damage and dishonour to God would be countered in Him. He would lay the basis for redemption, freeing men from the shackles of sin, fitting them for God's favour. The human situation, with all its shamefulness, was to be a place where God was honoured. **Basically** this took place at the cross, and **ultimately**, too, Christ will sort out in a totally God-honouring way all the morass which human sin has introduced. All this is anticipated and asserted, in a germinal way, in the prophetic parts of the Old Testament. It forms the essential core of the prophetic message.

Appendix 1

Old Testament References to the First Coming

Psalm 2 : 7	Isaiah 53 ;	Psalm 22 ;	Psalm 69
Genesis 22 : 18	Luke 1 : 32, 35	Isaiah 40 : 3	Matthew 3 : 1, 3
Jeremiah 23 : 5	Galatians 3 : 16	Malachi 3 : 1	Luke 7 : 27
Isaiah 7 : 14	Romans 1 : 3	Deuteronomy	
	Matthew 1 : 18,	18 : 15	Acts 3 : 22
	22, 23	Isaiah 9 : 2	Matthew 4 : 16
Micah 5 : 2	Matthew 2 : 1	Zechariah 9 : 9	Matthew 21 : 1-5
	Luke 2 : 4-6	Psalm 118 : 22, 23	Matthew 21 : 42
Hosea 11 : 1	Matthew 2 : 15	Psalm 22 : 18	Matthew 27 : 35
		Isaiah 61 : 1, 2	Luke 4 : 17-21

Appendix 2

Passages in the Psalms cited in the New Testament as Prophetic.

Psalms 2 : 1-3	Acts 4 : 24-30	Psalms 78 : 2	Matthew 13 : 35
„ 2 : 7	Acts 13 : 33 ; Hebrews 1 : 5 ; 5 : 5	„ 97 : 7	Hebrews 1 : 6
„ 8 : 1-2	Matthew 21 : 16	„ 102 : 25-27	Hebrews 1 : 10-12
„ 8 : 4-6	1 Corinthians 15 : 27 ;	„ 109 : 8	Acts 1 : 20
„ 16 : 8-11	Hebrews 2 : 5-9	„ 110 : 1	(Matthew 22 : 41-45 (Mark 12 : 35-37 (Luke 20 : 41-44 (Acts 2 : 34-36 (Hebrews 1 : 13
„ 18 : 49	Acts 2 : 25-32 ; 13 : 35-37	„ 110 : 4	Hebrews 5 : 6 ; 7 : 17, 21
„ 22 : 1	Romans 15 : 9	„ 117 : 1	Romans 15 : 11
„ 22 : 18	Matthew 27 : 46 ;	„ 118 : 21-23	(Matthew 21 : 42 (Mark 12 : 10-11 (Luke 20 : 17 (Acts 4 : 11 (1 Peter 2 : 7
„ 22 : 22	Mark 15 : 34	„ 118 : 25-26	(Matthew 23 : 39 (Mark 11 : 9 (Luke 13 : 35 ; 19 : 3
„ 34 : 20	John 19 : 24		(John 12 : 13
„ 35 : 19	Hebrews 2 : 12		
„ 40 : 6-8	John 19 : 36		
„ 41 : 9	John 15 : 25		
„ 45 : 6-7	Hebrews 10 : 5-9		
„ 68 : 18	John 13 : 18		
„ 69 : 4	Hebrews 1 : 8-9		
„ 69 : 9a	Ephesians 4 : 7-10		
„ 69 : 9b	John 15 : 25		
„ 69 : 25	John 2 : 17		
	Romans 15 : 3		
	Acts 1 : 20		

OF MAKING MANY BOOKS

 J. STODDART

OF making many books there is no end ; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” (Ecclesiastes 12 : 12) Perhaps we would be right to conclude that King Solomon made this statement as a result of personal experience ! And doubtless there are many who would heartily agree with him, for a variety of reasons, of course ! Some might find it a convenient excuse for neglecting a gift of writing, while others could equally feel exonerated from studious reading. But, we may ask, would this be fulfilling the intention of the Preacher King’s admonition ?

It is certain that he looked for no such explanation of his own neglect, if such were needed ; for we recall that of him it is said that “he spake three thousand proverbs : and his songs were a thousand and five.” (1 Kings 4 : 32). Whether this was the sum total of his works, or whether all were in book form may be in doubt, but we only need to read the miscellany of his studies as listed in 1 Kings 4 : 33 to conclude that many books must have come from so fertile a mind. Of course, we readily understand that the “books” of Ecclesiastes would scarcely be

recognised as such to-day. Indeed, it is affirmed by one writer that the earliest promoters of the prototype of our modern book format were the Roman Christians. We cannot completely vouch for this but it is understandable that to them the preserving of the Scriptures in the most durable form would be paramount. Parchment already in use in those days was the obvious, if not the only choice. Subsequently, the secret of paper-making was wrested from the Chinese, and all this we now take so much for granted in the making of many books.

Much could be written—and probably has been written on the fascinating history of making and writing books. It has been estimated that in the sixteenth century some 520,000 book titles were published, while to-day more than 500,000 are printed in a single year. How right was Solomon, that “of making many books there is no end”, little dreaming of the veritable flood-tide of literature, good and bad, that rolls from our modern presses. Surely this is the more remarkable when other popular media of communication are so much in demand. We are aware of the tremendous challenge of this feature of our day, especially for the conscientious Christian who dislikes the feeling of being “behind the times” on the one hand and yet is confronted with the most bewildering and interminable range of reading matter—even that of good quality, disregarding entirely the deluge of evil and erroneous material which bedevils the modern book market.

It becomes evident, therefore, that some careful discrimination is necessary in our choice of reading, the first obvious consideration being that of time limitation, and closely linked with this the matter of cost. Perhaps some of the time and money indulged in our enjoyment of reading could be profitably spent in visiting the sick and tending to the needs of the aged and less fortunate. Next in priority would be the wise selection of subjects for our perusal. Firstly students in their legitimate pursuit of general and advanced educational subjects must devote themselves to such things to be successful. The discipline of this in later life has been amply proved by those of us who have been required, sometimes reluctantly, to spend early years in such secular studies. This is by no means an excuse for gross neglect of more spiritual exercises in our reading, which can have a surprisingly helpful effect on the more mundane occupations.

For the mature (and perhaps less mature) Christian there is abundant guidance and help in the Scriptures as to the value of books and reading generally which would encourage us all in discerning our choice. A discreet variety in literary diet cannot be outruled, such as necessary, if brief, scrutiny of reliable Daily Press reports on world conditions, etc. The writer was acquainted with a brother who disdained to be seen buying a newspaper yet had no compunction in borrowing a colleague's copy as soon as he settled at his office desk! We claim no right, of course, to judge his motives, but his action could be reprehensible. Poetry for some has a distinct fascination, and at least some acquaintance with Shakespeare, Milton, Emerson, Gray, Keats and others formed part of our elementary education, although often long forgotten. We remember how Paul, with superb eloquence, rebuked the intellectually proud Court of Areopagus at Athens by quoting some of the writing of their own poets (Acts 17:28). With what resounding

wisdom this must have fallen upon their sceptical ears ; but the prince of preachers took as his main theme, "Jesus and the resurrection." (V. 18)

Without contradiction, the Christian possesses the finest library of books in the world. The sixty-six books of what is called "The Holy Bible" do not treat of mathematics or our modern sophisticated sciences or the many art forms known to man, but these ever-changing subjects occupy "the making of many books" to which there is no end. These words of Solomon could not be applied to the making of the inspired Scriptures, which we believe to have been Divinely begun, continued and terminated. It must be admitted, however, that the statement could be applied to the making of books **about** the Scriptures which cram and overflow our book-shelves. Here lies the need for maximum care and discernment by the Christian reader who could be deceived by attractive titles and covers within which is often concealed the most heinous and misleading error. "But how is one to judge?" one may ask. Long years of experience have convinced one that books which expound Scripture, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2 : 13) thus giving no meaning to any passage which would be inconsistent with the whole teaching of all Scripture, are the books of greatest value. For variety some have found help and inspiration in the biographies of well-known men of God who were guided by the Word and the Holy Spirit and there are many such.

While it may be claimed that "lighter reading" is desirable when more studious intake is temporarily not feasible (and undeniably there are such moments) and the "Library book" seems more digestible, then we must be on our guard as to the time-consuming element in such relaxation. The taste for such literature, even if it be good, can effectively erode the appetite for the "Bread of Life" and time for such essential intake be squandered. Some of us have a great liking for good music and certainly Scripture assures us that Heaven will be filled with it. But we sing, "On **earth** the song begins" and surely our hearts have been thrilled and elevated by the singing of words based on Scripture especially when sung from the hearts of those who know the truth of the words. Our finest hymns are those which may not rank high as classical poetry, but extol the revelation of the Father and the Son and rejoice in the "faith once delivered to the saints." Thus the Christian is preserved from that "weariness of the flesh" envisaged by King Solomon, whose outlook, alas, was limited to "things under the sun", where as he repeats, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit".

An interesting and important statement occurs in the last verse of John's Gospel thus ; "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (ch. 21 : 25) Nor could we have lived long enough to read them day and night, so that even the divine record had to be limited not only to practical dimensions, but to the specific intention of the book, as clearly stated in ch. 20 : 30/31, "And many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which **are not** written in this book ; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name." Surely the principle inculcated in these passages would inspire Christian writers of

our day to concentrate upon the subject under consideration with such brevity as is compatible with wise and adequate treatment of the theme. As these lines are written how very conscious one is of falling far short of this standard !

In conclusion, let us encourage one another to more assiduous reading from the history, romance, poetry, biography, auto-biography, prophecy, mysteries and thrills contained within the sixty-six books of Scripture. And let us never forget the apostolic exhortations and inducements contained in verses like these :—

“ Till I come, give attendance to reading. . . .” (1 Timothy 4 : 13)

“ Study to shew thyself approved unto God. . . .” (2 Timothy 2 : 15)

“ Bring with thee the books, but especially the parchments ”
(2 Timothy 4 : 13)

“ Write what thou seest in a book. . . .” (Revelation 1 : 11)

“ Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein : for the time is at hand ” (Revelation 1 : 3)

Thus being “renewed in the spirit of our minds” (Ephesians 4 : 23) we shall know no “weariness of the flesh”, and mental stimulus and profit will result from the study of the “many books” written specifically for our blessing.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

The following question has been received from Mr. E. H. Sapp :

What is the ‘rest’ of Hebrews 3 : 7 to 4 : 11 to which we are travelling ? What is the force of the injunctions ‘to fear’ and ‘to labour’ ? If the rest is the Father’s house, then the exhortations are incongruous, since our going there is ‘all of grace’. But if it is the Kingdom, these exhortations are applicable since there we get the reward of faithfulness.

Answer. We ought to see the difficulties presented by 3 : 7 to 4 : 11, and the explanation of these difficulties, in the light of all the other hard sayings of Hebrews. The principal ones are 6 : 4–6 and 10 : 26, 27. “ It is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again to repentance. . . .”

At first sight these passages appear to contradict what we know from other Scriptures, the unchangeable security of the believer. Our faith is that there cannot be real contradiction. The eternal security of the believer is taught in absolutely unmistakable terms, even in Hebrews. (e.g. 10 : 14 and 18 : ‘perfected for ever’ and ‘their sins and iniquities will

I remember no more'). The explanation, therefore, must be in the application of the difficult verses to some special class, who have never believed in the sense of receiving eternal salvation. These warnings are addressed to **Jews** in a particular stage on the road to reception of the new revelation in Christ (Hebrews 1 : 2)

Imagine a person who is approaching the door of a house at night. It is dark and cold outside. He comes to the door, even to the vestibule, and is near enough to see that there is real light inside, to savour the odours of the meals ready for the dwellers inside, and to sense the warmth. But the person who has approached so near as to savour these delights, might yet decide, due to fear of losing friends, or suspicion of the inhabitants of that house, not to enter, but instead to turn away. The parable hardly needs application. The whole drive of the exhortation and warning sections of Hebrews is therefore to 'go on' the whole way to faith, (6 : 1) ; not to 'draw back to perdition' (10 : 39) ; not to fail to 'enter in because of unbelief' (3 : 19)

The Jews to whom the gospel had been preached, (4 : 2) are being urged to enter in, instead of failing to enter because of unbelief. They are being urged on to full commitment to faith in Christ, and by this to the possession of salvation.

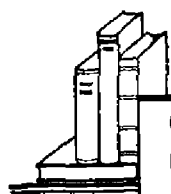
What is 'the rest' in this passage ? The two Old Testament pictures of it are Canaan and the Sabbath of Genesis 2 : 2, 3. The two pictures are connected by the lengthy and exact quotation of Psalm 95 : 7-11. This occupies Hebrews 3 : 7-11. In the remainder of ch. 3 almost every phrase of the Psalm is applied to warn the recipients of the letter not to turn back, but to enter in. The warning is quite specific. It is not against those who, having entered, failed to fight, but against those who, turning back after seeing the grapes, perished in the wilderness.

In 4 : 1-11 the writer takes up two words from the Psalm to give a further application of the Psalm : 'today' and 'My rest'. If in David's time, the Holy Spirit says 'today', then it is clear that Canaan (not now the wilderness) under Joshua, was not the rest, 'My rest'. For the meaning of that rest, we are still shut up to the Sabbath and Canaan. In John 5 : 17, in the context of the Sabbath day, it is implied that since God is now at work in a new way in the face of man's need, there will also be a future sabbath when God rests from the work stated in John 5 : 17.

If we enquire as to the meaning of the days of creation, the sixth day is the period when all things are put under man. This is the age to come, the Kingdom, the Millennium. The seventh day is what follows, that is, eternity. Therefore the spiritual meaning of the Sabbath day is the eternal rest of Revelation 21 : 1-4.

Canaan, for the New Testament people of God, means the final rest to be possessed in heaven. There is, of course, a foretaste of this rest according to Matthew 11 : 28, 'Come unto Me. . . and I will give you rest.'

The second question is, What is the force of the injunctions 'to fear' and 'to labour' ? They were to be motivated to go forward to faith in Christ, and not to turn back by **fear** of missing the blessing. The word 'labour' in 4 : 11 is the same word and with an exactly similar meaning, also addressed to Jews, as 2 Peter 1 : 11 ; '**give diligence to make your calling and election sure**'.



"MY BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT"

IAN I. ROSS

Luke 22 : 7-22

The Substance of an Address

JUST a few years ago I visited in Edinburgh an exhibition given by a Mission to the Jews. One of the most striking things perhaps, at that week's exhibition was the enactment by a Jewish family wearing Jewish dress of the time of Christ, of the Passover, the great Jewish feast. I was very greatly moved by this reverent representation of what used to take place at a Jewish table as a Jewish family kept the Passover, just as it would take place on the night of which we have read when the Lord kept the Passover.

The Passover feast was not over in half an hour ; it lasted several hours. At the commencement the head of the family pronounced a blessing and the first cup of wine was handed round from one to another down to the youngest. Then a preliminary course of bitter herbs was eaten to remind them all of the anguish of their bondage in Egypt. Thirdly, came the main meal of unleavened bread, more bitter herbs, preserved fruits, and the Passover lamb was served, but not eaten. Then the youngest boy would ask the question, "What mean ye by this service?" and the father would recall the story of how God had delivered His people out of Egypt by a mighty hand. Then they would sing part, if not all, of Psalms 113 and 114 which speak of that deliverance, a song of thanksgiving, and then a second cup of wine was passed round. Then the main meal was eaten, and thanks was given to God for the bread. Then the third cup of wine was passed round, down to the youngest, and this was called, significantly, the cup of blessing, because in drinking this cup they blessed the Lord. Then there was thanksgiving for the meal. A fourth cup was passed round and then they sang together Psalms 115 to 118, the Hallel of praise at the end of the Passover service.

It was during this Passover service, a covenant service, because God had made a covenant with His people, that the Lord Jesus Christ instituted that which is so precious to each one of us if we truly love the Lord Jesus, this feast of remembrance called in Scripture the Lord's supper, the Lord's table, the Communion, or the Breaking of Bread. The Lord instituted it on that momentous night after He kept the Passover with His disciples. He took that bread and gave thanks and spoke of His body, the body which had been prepared for Him. "Lo, I come seeking Thy will, O God". And in that precious body He bore our sins

at Calvary. "This is my body which is given for you". And then very likely that third cup, the cup of blessing, He took and handed to His disciples, saying, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you". Precious blood of Jesus shed at Calvary! I want to think with you of this new covenant. What did Jesus mean when, on that night, seated with His own, He took that third cup and handed it to them and said, "This is the cup of the **new** covenant". They were very familiar, I have no doubt, with the old covenant. He gave it a completely new meaning, "This is the cup of the **new** covenant in my blood which is shed for you". I want to think of it under four headings :

- I The nature of the new covenant
- II The ratification of the new covenant
- III The benefits of the new covenant
- IV The obligations of the new covenant

The Nature of the New Covenant

Covenant is a great word which denotes a contract made by one party by which the other party may benefit on the conditions stated by the covenant's maker. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "This is the cup of the new covenant", clearly in absolute distinction to that which was so well known to His disciples and to the Jews, the old covenant.

God had been pleased in the past to enter into covenant relationship with mankind. Think of some of these. Think of the covenant that God made with Abraham. God gave a promise to Abraham, a promise consisting really of three parts. God promised Abraham that he would inherit the land of Canaan. Secondly, his seed (his descendants) would be as numerous as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. And thirdly, God promised to Abraham that He would always be his God. Three wonderful promises! And the amazing thing is this, God promised this to Abraham at a time when Abraham was old and stricken in years and had no heir. And yet we read in Romans 4 that "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God in unbelief, but was strong in faith giving glory to God". But it was more than a promise, because we read that God spoke to Moses later on of the **covenant** that He had established with His servant Abraham. God had entered into a covenant, a binding obligation with Abraham, when He promised him these things.

Now we move on to the covenant that God made with the children of Israel at Sinai. Think, for a moment, how the promise God had made to Abraham stood at the time of Moses. He would give to him the land of Canaan. At the time of Moses, what did they own in Canaan? One little plot of land, the field of Machpelah in which Abraham and Sarah were buried. That was the extent of the children of Israel's land in Canaan. Had God failed in His promise? Then the edict goes out from Pharaoh to kill all the baby boys of the children of Israel in Egypt! "And his seed shall be as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the

sand on the sea shore”. It is not going to be fulfilled, is it ? He would be always their God, and they were in bondage in Egypt !

God spoke to Moses at the burning bush and confirmed that He would keep that promise He had made to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, and He gave this new promise at Mount Sinai to the children of Israel that He would lead them into the land, and would bless them in the field and bless them in the city, and bless them in their homes if they would follow after Him and keep His word. This, of course, we know that they failed hopelessly to do. When Moses came down from that mountain and told them they said, “ All that the Lord hath spoken we will do”, and we know that time and time again they failed, and in failing they forfeited the blessings and the benefits that God had promised to them in this old covenant which He had made with them and which He had made with Abraham before. So we find it is not God that failed, but His people.

Then we read that God who had taken the initiative, took the initiative again. He saw that in this covenant His people had failed and God promised that He would provide a new covenant. God had spoken time and again through angels, through Moses, through Joshua and through the prophets. Then when Israel was in its very worst state possible, when the northern kingdom had been taken away captive by their enemies, and the southern kingdom was besieged by their enemies externally and was utterly morally corrupt internally God spoke again, and promised that He would indeed give a new covenant. He spoke to Jeremiah, “ Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”, and of course, speaking of this new covenant, the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews said, it was a better covenant and not that which was before. It is a better covenant, an eternal covenant, an entirely new covenant, and introduced entirely by the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who is the surety of that covenant and the administrator of it. The new covenant is not simply fresh but different in quality and kind, entirely new. Under the old covenant, the method of procuring a holy life was external and legal. It failed, but this covenant would be completely new, and was to produce something which was internal and spiritual. In the old covenant it depended on man’s satisfying God, but in this new covenant, wonderfully new, it depends on God’s saving and satisfying man. No wonder the Lord Jesus said on that night, “ This is the cup of the new covenant,” gloriously new !

The Ratification of the Covenant

If you or I are going into partnership with anyone, we would very likely draw up the various points of our partnership agreement, and take them together to a lawyer, and there in the presence of the lawyer and witnesses, we would sign our names binding us legally to this document. We are pledged to fulfil the various points of this agreement. In the olden days it was a religious sanction that was brought to such an agreement, so binding in fact, that we read time and time again of a man saying, “ Be it done unto me if I should break the covenant. The Lord do unto me such and such if I break this covenant”. Now what

would they mean by that ? Simply that they had entered into a covenant, and that covenant was usually sealed by the sacrifice of an animal and its blood shed. They were saying in effect, "If I break my part of this covenant or this agreement then let me be as dead as that animal". Bloodshed ! Sacrifice ! It was solemn. It was very binding.

When Abraham received that wonderful promise, he said to God, "How can I be sure ? How can I be positive ?" Imagine Abraham saying that to God. God has given His word, and Abraham said, "I want to be sure. How can I be sure ?" O the grace of our God ! God says, "Yes, I will make a covenant with you. I will give my pledge that what I have promised with My word I shall do". Then we have that mysterious event seen in Genesis 15. Abraham was put into a deep sleep and a burning lamp went between the pieces of the carcase. A sacrifice was made, blood was shed and God sealed His covenant by blood. Wonderful grace of God : His oath, His covenant, His blood. God showed to Abraham that what He had said He pledged Himself to perform. Abraham wanted the trust deed, legal proof, the signature, and God ratified that pledge, that agreement, that covenant, in sacrifice in the blood shed.

The Lord Jesus said, "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood". O the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ! God has entered into a covenant relationship with His people in matchless grace, and these words prove that the principles of the new covenant apply to us. God has given wonderful promises in that covenant and God has been pleased to ratify in the most solemn and binding way possible for God to do. He has ratified that covenant in the shedding of blood, in the shedding of the blood of His own Son. What do I see in that precious blood ? The forgiveness of all my sins. What do I see in that precious blood ? I see there the love of Christ shown forth in all its fulness to me. But I see more than that. I see in the precious blood of Christ all the grace of God. "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood".

The Benefits of the Covenant

The writer to the Hebrews refers to Jeremiah. We read a little from that about the new and the better covenant to be made with Israel and Judah. And into the benefits and the blessings of this better and greater covenant come all those who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, those who in true repentance of sin turn to Him and accept Him and His sacrifice at Calvary. Now I want to think of three that were mentioned in Jeremiah, and the first is this, the **permanent and complete forgiveness of sins**.

Under the old covenant there was continual sacrifice for sins. They brought their bulls and sheep and their offerings and blood was shed. Once a year, on the great day of atonement, the High Priest entered into the holy of holies with blood for himself and the people. It was a repeated thing because the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sins. But think now of the wonderful blessing of the new covenant. "This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood". For Christ has made one perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice for sins and that is for ever. He has met all the claims of a righteous God against your sins and mine.

So efficacious is the perfect sacrifice of Christ that He can say to you “ Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more ” because of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Under the old covenant a remembrance was made yearly of sins. Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. I want to underline that word ‘once’. “ Once at the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sins by the sacrifice of himself ”. “ Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ”. There was one perfect sacrifice, and through that sacrifice God now undertakes not only to forgive, but to forget, “ will I remember no more ”. This is the initial blessing of God’s salvation, the permanent and complete forgiveness of all our sins. And it is the first benefit of the new covenant.

Secondly, a **personal knowledge of God**. In the old days of the old covenant, it seemed that it was a limited number of people who knew God ; Abraham, Isaac, Moses, and so we list them. It was limited to a certain number who knew God in any way at all, or a very limited way. But this is the blessing of the new covenant that every true believer is brought into this place of privilege of knowing God ; and, in Christianity, we know Him in the greatest possible way. Jesus said, “ I have made known unto them thy name ”. What name was that ? The Father. And this is the blessing we come into, entering into God’s family, to know God as our Father and to have direct access into His presence. The high priest had access once a year, but because Jesus has died and the veil has been rent in twain from the top to the bottom, a permanent way has been made open for every true believer into the very presence of God Himself, for we “ have access through him by one spirit unto the Father ”. Is that not a wonderful blessing ?

Then, thirdly, **the power of the indwelling spirit**. Jeremiah said that we would receive under this new covenant a new heart, and Ezekiel says “ A new spirit will I put within you ”. Under the old covenant man tried to please God by his works, and failed miserably. But under the new covenant, God not only gives a desire to please Him, but He gives the very power to do His will through the gift of the indwelling Spirit of God Himself. “ Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ” : sealed by the Holy Spirit : indwelt by the Holy Spirit in order that we might be able to live in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. “ I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ”, said Ezekiel. The third person of the God-head is given to indwell and to empower us if we allow Him to have His way in our lives.

The Obligations of the Covenant

Let us come now with our minds quietly to that upper room as the Lord Jesus kept the Passover. He has taken that cup ; He hands it round, sitting there in fellowship with His disciples, and He says to them, “ This is my body, (as He takes the bread) which is given for you ”. He takes the cup. “ This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. This do for a remembrance of me ”. I may be speaking to someone who is young, and has never heard the Lord Jesus saying to him, “ This do, for a

remembrance of me". It may be you are very active in Christian work, and yet you have never heard the Lord Jesus saying this to you as an individual. It is a remembrance service. It is a **commanded** remembrance. You may say it is a request of love, but the Lord Jesus says, "This do". It is a **visible** remembrance. The Lord has provided these simple emblems, the bread and the wine, to picture to us, to speak of His body and His precious blood. And it is a strengthening remembrance. We feed on Christ Himself. It is a **personal** remembrance. "This do", said the Saviour, "in remembrance of me". We love Him. We respond to Him. We want to serve Him. We want to live for Him. He says, "This do in remembrance of me".

In these old days, (and we read this in the Old Testament) if a man was invited in hospitality to a table, and there he ate with his host, it was called 'table fellowship'; and if a man accepted that hospitality, he brought himself under an obligation to his host to do him no harm, nor to do anything against him, to bind himself in absolute loyalty and faithfulness to that person in accepting his hospitality. They called it 'table fellowship', eating bread at the table. We read in the book of Obadiah how this table fellowship was being broken. We read in the Psalms, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, who ate bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me", and the Psalmist grieved that one who had placed himself under obligation in a binding way in accepting table fellowship had broken that pledge. We remember most of all the words of the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal, how one who ate at the table with Him lifted up his heel against Him. It grieved the heart of the Saviour that this table fellowship had been broken.

When we come together to take the bread and the wine we remember the Lord primarily in His death. We remember Him and give to Him thanksgiving, praise and worship from our hearts. But we are bound to Him. He invites us to His table and we pledge ourselves in loyalty, in devotion, in love, in this way, that we might be for Him and for His praise and for His glory. These are obligations. How it grieved the heart of the Lord that that table fellowship was broken. So it comes to us each one to renew again and again our devotion, our love and our loyalty to the One who sacrificed Himself for us in infinite love at Calvary. "This is the cup of the new (gloriously new) covenant". Wonderful blessings, ratified at infinite cost! God has pledged Himself to the blessings of this covenant, and He has ratified it with the precious blood of Christ. May we then, each one, pledge ourselves to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, for His Name's sake.

SEPARATION AND UNITY --- T. TYSON

2 Corinthians 6 : 1, 13-18 ; 2 Timothy 2 : 19-22.

THE religious situation in which we find ourselves today is essentially different from that of 150 years ago. At that time Britain was nominally Christian and the profession of Christianity was popular and socially acceptable, even necessary. The Bible was respected as an

authoritative word of God, even though not believed vitally in many cases. Against this highly respectable, but largely empty profession, a stand for New Testament truth and principles was the Spirit's clear call.

Now the society in which we live is, for the most part, outwardly irreligious and professedly non-Christian. The truths of Christianity are largely rejected, despised or disregarded. In popular opinion the Bible is discredited. We find ourselves in an increasingly lawless society, where the basic truths of Christianity are unknown or refused, and Churches stand empty, or have disappeared.

The question therefore arises, while we acknowledge that the truth of God never alters—What is the Spirit's call today ?

With this question in mind, I wish to consider two great calls to the people of God which recur continually in the New Testament.—the call to separation, and the call to unity.

In 2 Corinthians 6 we see the separation necessary to make a—**Place fit for God to dwell in**

In 2 Timothy 2 the separation necessary to make a **Vessel fit for the Master's use**

Paul appeals to the Corinthians that they "receive not the grace of God in vain". Through Christ they had been reconciled to God, made the righteousness of God in Him, and new creatures in Christ. In view of this a walk of separation to Him is called for. The Rev. A. Motyer summarised the rebuke of the prophet Amos to Israel "They contradicted His salvation—they despised His grace". What we know of the grace of God ought to come out in our conduct, and this is particularly true of the **partnerships we allow**. We must be a separate people. Titus 2 :11-14.

Immediately separation is spoken of, the idea of restriction occurs to us. But spiritually this is the reverse of the truth. Paul's desire was that they might be enlarged. The truths we are to consider may narrow the social, business, religious or entertainment circle but they will assuredly widen the circle of Divine approval, of Divine fellowship, of service and blessing.

Our relationship with God determines our relationship with others : in 2 Corinthians 6 : 14-18 with those outside the faith, in 2 Timothy 2 with those inside, but in error.

The clear, unmistakeable call is—don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers—don't get tied up with those who have not faith. From the Old Testament comes the question "Can two walk together except they be agreed ?"

Two animals yoked together come :—

1. **Under the one code of conduct**—What participation can there be between righteousness, i.e. the code which marks the believer, and lawlessness, the code that marks the unbeliever ?
2. **Into one environment**—As believers we have been brought into the light, made children of light, exhorted to walk in the light, i.e. in the enjoyment of the knowledge and presence of God, who is light. What fellowship with darkness can we enjoy ? None whatever. Light and darkness are mutually exclusive.
3. **Under one master**—We belong to Christ, purchased by His precious blood. We cannot allow the claims of any other, nor willingly put

ourselves under any other's authority, to the denial of the claims of Christ. The word 'concord' is in the original the word from which we derive our word 'symphony'. What sort of music would come from an orchestra conducted by two opposing conductors? Nothing but confusion.

4. **To share the same reward**—What part has the believer with the unbeliever? The unbeliever's hopes are all in material things in this life, in this world, for himself. Our hopes are spiritual blessings connected with eternal life in heavenly places in Christ. Where do the two meet? Nowhere at all. How sad it is to see saints of God sharing the same nose-bag as the unbeliever. Trying to get satisfaction from the pleasures and things of the world.
5. **To live in one stable**—The dwelling place of God is marked by holiness. The society in which we live is marked by uncleanness and immorality, and fast becoming "the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird"—let us not, for one moment, make our home there.

The holiness of God demands a walk of separation from all that is unholy and unclean, but the rewards of such separation are beyond calculation.

"I will dwell among them "	—	We'll know His company.
"I will walk in them "	—	We'll know His support.
"I will receive you "	—	We'll know His approval.
"I will be their God "	—	We'll know Him.
"I will be a father to you "	—	We'll know His care.

So to make a place fit for God to dwell in, we must keep our associations clean, but for :—

A vessel fit for the Master there must also be separation regarding doctrine. The section in 2 Timothy 2 : 19–22 is set in the appeal to Timothy to maintain the truth, to shun disputes about words and vain and empty babblings because evil teaching has devastating effects.

Whatever departure from the truth there may be, God's truth itself never changes. "The foundation of God standeth firm". And while, on the one hand "The Lord knows them that are His", on the other hand the outward evidence of attachment to Christ is detachment from all that is contrary to Him.

The verses that follow indicate the requirements for vessels serviceable for the Master. This is not something reserved for the few, but open to each individual. Such vessels must firstly be **purged vessels**—separated from unrighteousness (i.e. deeds resulting from false teaching, or through neglect of the truth Romans 1 : 18)—separated from evil doctrines (i.e. departures from the truth)—and separated from the vessels that are filled with these doctrines.

This is the negative aspect. On the positive side they must be **sanctified vessels**. They must be set apart and reserved to God, available only to Him and not for common use.

Lastly, they must be **prepared vessels**. Many utensils are designed for a very special use. The work of the Holy Spirit in us is to equip us to carry out 'every good work'. This will involve surrender to His will and control, preparation in prayer, preparation in Bible study, preparation in the discipline of our lives.

If we set ourselves to follow this pathway, enlargement not restriction will be the result, for we shall find ourselves in the company of others like-minded, who have the Lord's interests at heart, and "call on the Lord out of a pure heart".

The tragedy in Christian testimony is that this truth of separation, which God intends should unite His people out from all that dishonours Him, has so often been the cause of division amongst the saints. The verses in Ephesians 4 : 1-6 provide a needed balance.

Here again we see that our **relationship with God determines our relationship with others**—this time with those who are truly His. Our walk must be in line with the height of the calling. A real sense of the love of Christ dwelling in our hearts will keep us in the right spirit towards our brethren.

Pride will give way to **lowliness**. Let us beware of becoming proud of the rightness of our teaching, or position, or practice, but in humility praise God for the way we have been led into the truth, and seek to help others to share what we enjoy.

We will be marked by **meekness**—not pushing forward our rights or ideas, but quietly maintaining the truth, while respecting the rights of others.

Longsuffering will also be seen—not the spirit that stresses the faults of others, but graciously bears with them, and goes along with them to the limit that love for them and for the Lord will allow.

So we must strive to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace".

This unity is not something to be aimed at, or achieved, but something to be recognised, enjoyed and acted upon. The unity of God's people has already been established, the whole Godhead being concerned in it.

There is one body, brought into being on the grounds of the Lord's death, and the offering up of His body, and through the operation of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. For the whole of that body there is only one end in view—conformity to Christ in glory as members of that glorious church, which He is going to present to Himself, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. When we find difficulties arising in our relationships with other Christians, let us remind ourselves that they are going to form part of that glorious church, just as much as we.

There is one Lord. The acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord is what divides every true saint from all the unbelieving world, and unites him with every other person confessing the same Lord. We become so concerned at times with the differences between groups of Christians, that we overlook this tremendous, vital difference which unites all believers, and separates them from unbelievers—to them, Jesus is Lord. Inwardly this results in faith towards Him, and is expressed outwardly in baptism.

There is one God and Father of all. The privilege of the youngest or feeblest saint is to know the Father—nor can the most mature and experienced reach any higher privilege than this. To be brought into the circle of divine relationship as children of God, is the inestimably blessed portion of all. God is above all, and from Him alone come all our blessings. He is through all and performs His purpose through each one. He is in all by His Spirit as the seal of His possession.

The unity is there, can never be broken on God's side, and in a day to come will be displayed in all its wonder, to His glory. Let us, while on the one hand walking apart from all that is unholy and dishonouring to the Lord, strive to the utmost, and seek grace to display, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE ——— COLIN CURRY

4. ASPECTS OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

The Times of the Gentiles

IN the previous paper we have distinguished broadly between two main parts of Old Testament prophecy. One part of it speaks of a future for Israel and a blessing for the nations when they find themselves in proper relation to Israel. With Christ in His rightful place and nations all in their stations under His beneficent rule, the end-point envisaged by much of prophecy will be achieved. The glory of that day requires prophetic imagination and eloquence at full stretch to portray it. Its achievement is, however, a matter of God's sovereign will, and of pure grace, and entirely undeserved by the participants in its benefits.

On the other hand, a further part of Old Testament prophecy bears on the time when the fulfilment of the promises to Israel is in abeyance. This area of prophecy relates to processes which precede, but lead up to, the time of Israel's reinstatement. "The times of the Gentiles", when God's earthly people are temporarily set aside, is a period about which prophecy has much to say. The majority of the Old Testament prophets look on, from the viewpoint of the captivity (or the approaching captivity) beyond the present disgrace of Israel, into the bright future day which will surely come for her. They have a message for her of hope in God, of redemption and release, of reinstatement and of kingdom glory. But other prophets focus more on the intervening period, upon the days of her distress, when the glory is departed and the Gentiles are in control. Daniel is the principal prophet of this kind; though others also speak of the adversaries of Israel and how God will deal with them.

We devote this paper to Old Testament prophecy of this second kind, and in particular the main features of the prophecy of Daniel will be considered.

Daniel the Man

The bulk of the book of Daniel is concerned with events in which Daniel was involved, and visions which he received. Significantly, however, there is much about Daniel himself, and his deportment in the face of all that occurred. Here we see the kind of man that God supports, and takes into His confidence. Here is an object-lesson on faithfulness to God in times of declension. Daniel appeared to be a pawn in the hands of monarchs with seemingly absolute power at their command. Yet his

presence there was a voice and a rebuke to them. In reality he was a power in the hands of God shaking the very powers that ruled empires, and awakening them to their obligations and their shortcomings in the sight of God who overruled them all. Here was a man faithful to God (along with a few others) seeing around him tragic but well-deserved judgments from God in the affairs of his own people, and their land desolated by a ruthless foreign power. In captivity himself in a foreign capital, in surroundings where idolatry and carnality were commonplace, the young man Daniel remained true to God. He showed himself a man of purpose, determined to stand clear of the ungodliness and the excesses of the royal regime. Much later, and repeatedly, we find him in confusion and deep humiliation as he feels the shame of his people's departure from God and its consequences. The gravity of the prospect seems overpowering to him. He is impelled to act in confession and intercession on their behalf. God takes special measures to strengthen a man like this, and to enlighten him. His prophecies are essentially a record of the enlightenment which he himself received. The future developments revealed to Daniel have their hopeful aspects, though it is true that many distresses are also foreseen.

While supporting Daniel, and revealing hidden things to him in a private way, God openly honoured this faithful man of God. Fearlessly speaking out for God in clear and well-chosen words, he was the object of promotion and respect (as well as jealousy and forgetfulness) in the highest circles of paganism. No wisdom of the Chaldeans compared with his wisdom, which he was always careful to trace back to God. There are lessons here about the spirit which is needed for the understanding of prophecy; and about the moral qualities which go hand in hand with a true enlightenment upon these matters.

The Events Involving Daniel

Chapter 1 tells how Daniel and his companions came to be in Babylon. They began their career there with a decisive but unprovocative stand for the God of their fathers; and they continued as they began. Here were a few of the faithful amongst the people of God, sharply in contrast with the majority.

Following chapter 1, the book divides into two sections. Chapters 2-6 relate **events** in which Daniel or his companions were involved. The second section, chapters 7 to the end, speaks of **communications** from God which he himself received. The earlier chapters describe the outward appearance of things now in progress, illustrating some of the general characteristics of Gentile rule during the entire period of their ascendancy. The second section gives more of an inward understanding of the processes taking shape over this whole period. It is to Daniel personally that **God's** assessment of these developments and something of **His** purpose in it all, are disclosed. There are points in common between the opening parts of each of these sections. The first section begins in chapter 2 with Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the four-part image, interpreted for him by Daniel as a succession of empires. The later section opens (in chapter 7) with Daniel's own vision of four successive beasts, explained to him by "one that stood by". Here are different views of the same

subject ; it is a survey of the whole course of the Gentile kingdoms, right through to the end-times when Gentile rule will be judged and replaced by the reign of Christ. There are features of outward magnificence, though of increasing hardness and baseness, and suggestions of instability at the end, in the vision granted to Nebuchadnezzar. But the fearsome nature of the powers in the hands of these rulers is more prominent in Daniel's vision, and their ruthless destruction of everything that would impede them. Nevertheless, a limit is set, and (in both visions) destruction of the whole set-up comes at the right moment, and the millennial reign is established.

Following the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, the remainder of the first section (chapters 3 to 6) is historical. We can see however that these historical events are well-chosen for inclusion. They indicate aggrandizement, the characteristics of Gentile power. Pleasure in power, self-aggrandizement, oppression of those who will not be intimidated, but who, at all costs, remain true to God, appear in **chapters 3 and 4**. Naked power in the hands of man, pride in his position of eminence, leads ultimately to lack of control, unreason, chaos, brute-like behaviour rather than truly manly behaviour. This is part of the judgment of God on those who misuse the power He delegates to them, as **chapter 4** shows. The writing on the wall is already there for those who allow luxury and decadence to vitiate their God-given powers and have no qualms about jests and blasphemy to His face. God will certainly cause them to reap the harvest of such behaviour. **Chapter 5** shows this aspect of misuse of responsibilities and resources almost at its worst. Finally, **chapter 6** takes us beyond the times of Babylonian rule. The first ruler of the new regime was a more kindly-disposed king ; yet he yielded to flattery allowing himself to be pushed around by those who had no respect for God or for His servants. Whether in their weakness or in their strength these Gentile rulers showed plainly the marks of inadequacy for the responsibilities placed upon them. Only by miraculous preservation did any of the faithful survive in the face of such mis-handling of these responsibilities, and such misrepresentation of God. Yet God **does** intervene for those faithful to Him, not necessarily saving them from trouble, but taking them through it and out of it, even accompanying them in it. Twice in these chapters we see this happening (chapters 3 and 6). It is a sample of another great preservation, through tribulation of a kind never known before, near the close of the age of Gentile domination.

The Communications to Daniel

The identification of the four beasts of the vision in **chapter 7** with the successive empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, is almost unavoidable. The Book of Daniel itself provides us with three of the four powers by name, and, as we shall see in considering chapter 9, identifies the fourth clearly. The parallel vision (to Nebuchadnezzar, in chapter 2) is interpreted directly as empire replacing empire. Figurative details (in chapter 7) describing and distinguishing the four beasts fit the real situation as it occurred.

Arising from this comment, two general points relating to the whole of this section of the book are worth stressing. First, it is important to

note that the broad understanding of these chapters is not a matter of guesswork. Scripture itself gives a clear lead to its own meaning here ; and, following that lead, we find that the history foreseen here is **accurate**. Readers with a knowledge of ancient history know that this is so. Nor do (informed) unbelieving people dispute its accuracy ; instead they justify their unbelief by conjecturing that it must have been written later, when the events had occurred. Secondly, in all these chapters the history foreseen is **incomplete** from today's standpoint. While there are parts which we can recognize as belonging to the past, the closing stages foreseen have not yet happened. We may recall a point made earlier : we have every reason to expect accuracy in the realization of unfulfilled prophecy, especially since other parts of prophecy have been substantiated in such detail.

Chapter 7 has its unfulfilled parts. The most vicious and formidable beast of all, the iron rule and devastating power of Rome, irresistible in her day, is graphically described here. One might think that this belongs to the past, and it certainly does so in a partial way. But unless we change the style of the interpretation in an unwarranted way (i.e. to something non-historical and wholly spiritual in kind) the end-stages of the vision must be thought of as still future. The judgment of this great power by the Ancient of Days (the Son of man) and the setting up of the kingdom which shall never pass away belongs to the future, as our Lord Himself confirmed (Matthew 24 : 15-31, etc.). The tenfold nature of the western empire under Rome no doubt had its realization when (in the past) that power was at its peak ; but when were the details related in verses 8-14 ever seen in the past ? The little horn, asserting its arrogance and defiance of God has no close counterpart in any past personage. Again, our Lord pointed forward, with words of advice and warning to the faithful, to the fulfilment of such passages. The coherence of all the prophetic passages (particularly Matthew 24, Revelation 13 and 17, along with Daniel 7 and 9) needs to be taken into account in understanding this. Revelation chapters 13 and 17 have strong links with this passage. There Rome is identified in all but name (17 : 9) and a fearsome ruler introduced as heading the final western civil power of the last days. The present chapter just touches on his appearance and his destruction, but there is more elsewhere as we soon shall see.

From **chapter 8** the focus of the prophecies shifts to Jerusalem and to Daniel's people. Allusions to the sanctuary, to the holy people, to the daily sacrifice, and a number of other particulars, make this clear. Here is traced the lineage of a further great adversary of God ; and especially of His people at the end. The chapter follows a side-issue branching from the main course of the Gentile empires. The he-goat overcoming the ram represents the Grecian empire replacing the Persian empire : the passage itself says this. After the death of Alexander the Great a four-fold division of the Greek empire took place. Verses 8 and 22 foresee this. Out of the northern (Syrian) subdivision of that empire there sprang after some time the person described in verses 9-12. A historical person answering to many of these prophetic details was Antiochus Epiphanes, (around 170 B.C.). Yet the prophecy merges into the future and suggests (verses 13, 14, 19-25 particularly) a final fulfilment in a northern adversary of the Jews, later called "the king of the north". One of the

first great nations used by God to chastise His people was Assyria. The scourge from the north swept down on her, long before Judah was in captivity to Babylon. Israel's early adversary may well be her last. Amongst the other prophets Isaiah has much to say about this enemy, and there are immediate and distant aspects of his prophecy.

The prophecy of the seventy weeks, in **chapter 9**, was given to Daniel in response to his genuine and deep feeling of the state of his people. His confession and prayer is answered in this way. All his thoughts were about Israel and Jerusalem, and the prophecy must be seen as relating to their future. It speaks of a well-defined limit to the times of Israel's troubles, and of deliverance for them at the end, foreseen and determined by God. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city". A clear distinction is also made between events which terminate the first sixty-nine weeks, and others which belong to the final week. Regarding the first sixty-nine weeks what is intended is really not in doubt. The word "week" to a Jew of that time could describe a period of seven years just as much as a period of seven days. From the clearly specified starting point of the commandment to rebuild the city, well defined in the bible (Nehemiah 2 : 5-8) and well known in history, 483 years bring us to the time of Christ. The end-point of this period, taking several detailed considerations into account, comes at the close of His life. This is obviously roughly correct ; and more so if attention is paid to detail. Even as a rough prediction it is plainly something very remarkable. The prophecy identifies the end of the sixty-nine weeks with the cutting off of Messiah, and certainly the facts agree with this.

Next let us consider how we are to understand the remainder of the prophecy. We may note that it speaks at one stage of a "prince that shall come", and then later of his activities. Before this, it speaks of **the people** of this coming prince (not the prince himself) destroying the temple and the city of Jerusalem. This follows closely upon the rejection of Messiah. This is revealing, since it is now well-known that the Roman army sacked Jerusalem, destroying the temple, in A.D. 70. This settles that the passage has a **Roman** prince in view, still to come in A.D. 70. Notice also that if the seventy weeks were thought of as unbroken in sequence, A.D. 70 would be long after the expiry of the last week. The prophecy cannot be understood if we think of the last week joining on smoothly with the sixty-nine. Nor do we have to rely on history to make this point. The Romans were in charge when the Jews rejected their Messiah ; and **He** spoke of days when one stone of the temple would not remain upon another, and of much else beyond that, until the times of the Gentiles were concluded. All these prophecies combine to show that the end stages of the Gentile age are still future, that Rome will be the dominating civil power, and that special tribulation is ahead for Israel. This will awaken repentance and reality among many ; though the masses will be mislead by false influences and ultimately by Antichrist (one of themselves). These verses indicate that the Jewish masses will be in league in that day with the Roman prince, though he will prove to be a false and treacherous ally. These momentous events await the final "week" of this vision for their fulfilment, and all these trends will rapidly blow up to their climax in the second half of the week.

The last vision is recounted in chapters 10 to 12. **Chapter 10** is introductory, though it has a special interest in indicating what goes on behind the scenes while vital historical processes are being worked out on earth. In the fulfilment of God's sovereign will in history, conflict takes place not only between earthly forces, but it involves powers in the unseen arena. The great issues of good and evil are really being resolved here ; all is developing towards the final overthrow of the great Adversary of God.

In **chapter 11**, the first 35 verses give a prophetic preview of what are now historical events. The accuracy of this prophecy in its details is impressive. These events followed the split-up of the Greek empire. Two of the parts, Syria and Egypt, outlasted the others. Conflicts and intrigues between "the king of the north" and "the king of the south" in successive generations are described here. There are vivid comments on ways still current in political and diplomatic circles ("speaking lies at one table", for example). The story continues as far as Antiochus Epiphanes (verses 21-25, and 30-35) ; though a few points of detail suggest a transition in the vision to the still more forbidding northerly power of the future. Certainly a fairly abrupt transition comes in verse 36, and the passage ends with unfulfilled occurrences. Verse 36 brings in another person named "the king" : this individual is more closely identified with "the land" which lay at the centre of these conflicts between north and south. He is spoken of as disregarding "the God of his fathers", and is therefore a Jew, though apostate. His self-willed, self-exalting traits are clear ; as is his reliance upon "the god of forces". An apostate Jewish king, a false Messiah, backed up by the Roman head of the western world, misleading the mass of Israel and setting himself against God, is here depicted. Revelation 13, with its **second** beast, supported by the first (Gentile) beast, agrees with this understanding of this passage. Here Antichrist stands revealed. This is the culmination of "the mystery of iniquity" (already at work), and his appearance on the scene is the signal that the great and terrible day of the Lord has come, (see 2 Thessalonians 2). With such a blasphemous leader on the spot, backed by all the power of the secular leader of the western bloc, and a vicious outside Adversary from the north bent against them and all their supporters, the nation and the land of Israel will be in the sorest trouble. Except those days were shortened no flesh would survive ; this was our Lord's comment about this period.

As the prophecy passes into **chapter 12** (and occasionally earlier) words of support for the faithful in the hour of all this turmoil and tribulation are prominent. The acuteness of their trial is recognised here ; but wisdom, understanding, strength, and patience to endure are all part of God's provision for that day. An end to their troubles is assured : Daniel's people will be delivered. All these anti-God forces will certainly be destroyed. In fact they will be used by God to destroy one another ; though the last concerted revolt will be met by Christ Himself and the armies of heaven. Other passages say more about the final stages leading to His appearance in judgment ; but the passages in Daniel leave no doubt about the total helplessness of these mighty forces when the day of intervention and reckoning comes. Elsewhere we read of awakening effects in the consciences of some, as harsh tribulation and confrontation

at the end by the One they refused brings repentance. We may well be amazed at the thought of grace reaping its own harvest in such times, and out of such horrors! Thus the nation of Israel will be reborn and reinstated, and the Gentiles humbled. Every vestage of hardness and resistance against God and His Christ will be quelled, and the day of Christ begin. Daniel, being essentially the prophet of the captivity, takes us no further than the moment of the release of his people. He ends by passing on a blessing promised for all who look with expectancy towards that great terminus of God's ways on earth. This is not the prime hope of the Christian, though we can share in the expectancy, and have every reason to delight in the thought of the open appearing and triumph of our Lord.

CORRESPONDENCE.

We believe that our readers will agree that the intrinsic interest of the letter printed below justifies its publication. It has been addressed to the editor by a brother in the assembly in Athens, a Greek-speaking national:—

Athens. 8th June, 1973.

Dear brother in the Lord,

Reading in the magazine "Scripture Truth", May-June, the article of the first page, I was impressed when I read in the original Greek Text the five verses, in all of which there is the word "therefore", and I saw that in the Greek language, there are used in all four different words. Certainly the meaning is perhaps about the same, and because I don't know your language well, I shall not enter on a discussion about it. . .

1) Romans 2 : 1 . . . **dio** . . . means literally, "for this reason". Certainly, the meaning is a conclusion from something told before, which without hesitation is the same as the English "therefore." So what the writer says is correct. . .

2) Romans 5 : 1. . . Here we have **oun**, which is the French "donc", also (introduces) a conclusion. . . This word is very frequent in the New Testament, more than 500 times.

3) Romans 8 : 1. . . Here we have **ara**, also (introducing) a conclusion and translated. . . "therefore".

4) Romans 12 : 1. . . again here the **oun**.

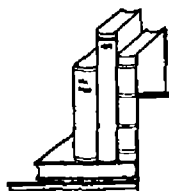
5) 1 Corinthians 15 : 58 here is the word **oste**, and it is translated "so that", "so then" (Darby), "therefore" (King James).

So, as to the five verses, twice it is **oun**, once **dio**, once **ara**, and once **oste**.

Excuse me, if, . . . without your being the writer, . . . I wrote to you these little notes, without entering at all in the essence of the article which is very good, spiritual, and useful.

Yours faithfully in Him,

J. Vourgouris.



DON'T WORRY!

J. S. BLACKBURN

Philippians 4 : 6, 7

I MAKE use of this colloquial title to introduce a most profound subject, the peace of God, and in doing so follow exactly the Holy Spirit in these two verses. The writer begins with the sentence, Do not be anxious about anything, and this leads him in a few words to our theme in v. 7, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding". On his way from the thought of the troubled sea of our little anxieties or cares, (more familiarly, worries), to the eternal majesty of the peace of God, he brings in prayer as the bridge from the one to the other. These are then the themes which occupy these two verses, the command that God's people must not worry about anything ; what remedy is provided, prayer, and above all, the peace of God.

What is peace ? Another has made an attempt at a description : "true peace is that restfulness which settles on the heart from an unshakable assurance concerning the vital issues of life". Applied to ourselves, we can sense the rightness of this description, even if it cannot be complete. Some of the vital issues readily come to mind. How can there be any peace unless there is an assurance about God, the sovereign Lord and Ruler and Judge of all ? Conscience assures us that we must meet Him. It also carries the conviction that we are not ready to do so. Through Christ, the Christian knows he is right with God, and more, knows a relationship with God as His children which never can be broken. How could there be true peace without assurance regarding the future life ? Indeed, how can anyone face life in the terrifying present with peace, unless there is the assurance from the Lord, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" ? The Christian does possess assurance on these and all other vital issues, and therefore possesses peace.

From another, perhaps simpler point of view, peace is the absence of war and turmoil, of discord and distress. Peace in this sense is available to the Christian, as we shall see.

But it is not primarily peace as known by men and women that we have to consider in this passage, but the peace of God first, and only then the way it can become His people's guard against anxiety. And these pointers we have taken from human experience to help us to reflect on the meaning of peace, are they not also helps to consider the peace of God ? God reigns in eternal peace far above the wars and tumults of earth. There is with Him no discord. All is harmoniously suitable to Him. There is no such thing, with God, as a doubtful issue of any kind. How transcendently great is the attribute of God brought before us in this

verse !

A fact which still further illustrates the truth of God's peace is that God has in all ages shown Himself willing to give peace to His people. Isaiah is preeminently a prophet of peace. It is one of several examples of his use of moving water to illustrate with great beauty his themes. "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then had thy peace been as a river." (48 : 18) Who has not experienced attention rivetted by the sight of a river, perhaps not in itself a beautiful river, but where there is depth and movement without stagnation ? When suitable conditions exist, then as it reflects the westering sun, such a view can be the very image of peace. The Lord would have given His people peace like a river. How lovely was the gift they forfeited by their disobedience ! At the end of the book, when the Lord's whole work in His people is completed, then, (66 : 12), the gift will be realised, "I will extend to her peace like a river". Another promise relates to the prospect of "that day". "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee ; because he trusteth in thee." (26 : 3)

In the New Testament, one fact, too easily overlooked, will suffice for our purpose. In every Pauline epistle, as well as in some others, peace is included in the prayer of salutation. Our Philippian Epistle will serve as the example, for the words are almost identical in every Pauline epistle. "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ". There is a credal quality about these salutations, as much as to affirm that all that follows, whether corrective or otherwise, is founded on and flows out from the revelation of God the Father through Jesus Christ the Lord. It is a repeated affirmation of the essential Christianity. All that these epistles contain is based also on the unlimited availability and outflow of grace and peace. Perhaps the idea is peace because grace. The fact of these salutations speaks as loudly as anything could, to assure the people of God in this age that God is still and always willing that His people should know peace, and that He is able to extend it to them.

Having thus stated the end in view, let us now ponder our verses sentence by sentence. In every case we shall substitute the word 'worry' for several different words which appear in A.V. "Don't worry about anything", is, quite simply a command and all it calls for therefore, is obedience. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me". Though all Scripture is from the Lord, He uses His servants according to His will, and the Lord has not only given us this command Himself, but has also given it by at least Paul and Peter. "Don't worry about your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor. . . what ye shall put on". (Matthew 7 : 25) "Casting all your worry on him, for he careth for you". (1 Peter 5 : 7) The fact that we so much honour this commandment in the breach, must not make us lower the standard, or let anything take away from us the tender care with which the Lord breathes this command into the hearts of His people.

The next word in the sentence is 'but', as much as to say, 'here is the action to put in place of worrying'. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God". Note the simple all-embraciveness of range of these commands ; we are not to worry about **anything** ; we are to make our requests to God in

everything.

At this point it is necessary to take special note of an important omission. There is nothing at all here about answers to prayer, nothing about the conditions to be fulfilled in order to receive what we ask for, nothing about the most important place of prayer in our Christian service, "that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified". What we have here is not the effect of prayer in getting the victory, in the work of the Lord, in obtaining from the Lord what is needful. It is the effect of prayer on the heart and mind of the person who prays. And what a tremendous effect is promised ! The very peace of God, in which He rules over all things in heaven and earth, will be our guard ! The peace of God, which nothing has ever disturbed, and nothing ever will, will garrison heart and mind against every assailant ! Is it not fitting that to our requests is to be added thanksgiving ? Not only does this thanksgiving glorify God, but it necessitates the supplicant's searching to recognise and to set in order before the Lord, how much there always is to give thanks for, and this will be an important ingredient in the causes of such an immense result.

The promise is that "hearts and minds" will be garrisoned. One of the saddest factors in our human plight, due to sin, is that heart and mind, that is, the emotional needs and the intelligent understanding, are so often at war with each other. The heart craves for what the renewed mind rejects. As the result of prayer, the heart and mind are alike satisfied with the peace of God. This is indeed the way of peace into which the Saviour came to lead our feet. And Luke 1 : 77-79 reminds us of the coming and the purposes heralded by John the Baptist : "to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins. . . , to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace".

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP ————— W. H. VERNON

Notes of an Address

John 10 : 27-30

I WISH to turn your attention to these verses that seem to be provoked by what the people were saying to the Lord Jesus, and yet these are verses that have been most precious to His people down through the ages. Let us consider this passage and ask the question "Are these the things that mark us, each one ?" for as someone has said, these words describe the marks that belong to His sheep. The first phrase is this, "**My sheep hear my voice**". Each in our generation, has had to meet the world which pooh-poohs the word of God ; and the first mark of the sheep is that they "hear his voice". This is especially important for the young believer. As these very words were being spoken they were falling upon a mixed company and there were those among the company to whom they were precious. They said "Yes, this is the One we follow, this is the Shepherd, the true Shepherd, the Shepherd that loves us, that giveth His life for the sheep". And as they heard Him speak these words this phrase would be precious in their ears ; they hung on His word, delighted in it, treasured it in their hearts, and in God's goodness these

phrases have been penned into Scripture where we can still read them. We cannot hear the physical voice, as a few could hear it in that day, but what we have here in the written word is better, because we all have it ever with us. We can ever hear His voice. You and I are without excuse for we have the Scriptures in our hands and in reading them it is His voice we listen to.

The Lord Jesus has spoken of this in other places. He says in verse 3, "The sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name". He knows us ; He cares for us ; He knows our names. Surely in verse 16 is where we come in, "And other sheep I have. . . them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice". His promise to us is that His voice will ever be available for our hearing as we turn to the Scripture to read. "My sheep hear my voice". Is this how you begin and end the day ? Do you keep a portion of His word in your pocket and turn to it during the day ? Do you have His word with you at all times ? I trust so, because there are times when we need to turn to a page of Scripture for comfort or help or encouragement in a difficult time. In every page of Scripture, His voice speaks to our hearts, to our consciences, correcting us, encouraging us and directing our pathway.

I think the next phrase is most beautiful. If you will seek to hear His voice, the next thing we hear in these phrases is His precious word "**I know them**". Earlier He spoke of calling them by name. I think that one of the most wonderful things is that our names are written in God's book. "I know them" says our Lord Jesus Christ.

In my frequent travelling. I have known what it is to feel alone in large cities, and perhaps you will sometimes feel alone. You can turn to this word. He knows me, He cares and He has His eye upon me. We may seek help from undershepherds and I trust we do, but He knows everything about us and it is as we turn to the Scriptures and seek to hear His voice that we receive comfort and encouragement as well as correction. All is covered in this precious word of His, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine".

If all this be true, then the next phrase, could not be other than : "**And they follow me**". They take no account of these other people ; they are not led astray, they follow Him. We are not led astray by those who seek to take from us what is written with regard to the deity of Christ. We are not disturbed by those who even question the existence of heaven or hell. We have the voice of the Good Shepherd "I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep". He knows that it is the desire of our hearts to follow Him. May this purpose to follow hard after Him have the first priority in our lives. Then, we shall not walk in darkness "but shall have the light of life" (8 : 12).

This promise has a contemporary ring, because it is common for men and women to talk about walking in darkness and ignorance of whence they come or whither they go. This is not so for us who know Christ, who hear His voice, who treasure in our hearts that He knows and loves and cares for us, and who therefore seek ever to follow Him in the Light of life. For He goes on to say, "**I give unto them eternal life**". The disclosure of the meaning of eternal life is reserved for the climax of the Gospel, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent". This is the real life ; this

is life eternal. Christ died on Calvary's cross so that it might be given to us, and He desires that we should know it and enjoy it here and now. Even when the path is difficult, or even in the valley of the shadow there is the light of this precious favour He has given us, eternal life.

"And they shall never perish". Our minds flash back to the third chapter of this Gospel, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". They shall never, no never, perish. Even this strong promise is amplified. He goes on, **"Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"**. The thought is still of him who came to steal and to kill and to destroy ; he has no power over those who belong to Christ. The Lord Jesus says of His sheep, "They are precious to Me, I have loved them, I have given My life for them and no one will ever be able to pluck them out of My hand".

Then, in this strong security, the Lord Jesus couples His name with that of His Father. **"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all"**. It is surpassingly wonderful to me to think of the sheep as the gift of the Father ; and He tells us, "My Father. . . is greater than all". If there is ever the smallest atom of doubt in our minds, how strongly He assures us, He "is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand". The Father and the Son together in unison for the eternal security of the sheep ! **"I and the Father are one"**. They are one in purpose of blessing by way of Calvary's cross. The Father and the Son have promised right on into eternity life and security to all the sheep of Christ.

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO? _____ J. STODDART

John 6 : 68.

THE context of these words is worthy of a more thorough study than the present writer's time, space or ability permits. The immediate intention of these lines, however, is not didactic exposition, but a simple consideration of the question as related to ourselves in this day.

How familiar to us all is the expression, "Where do we go from here ? " The situation envisaged is one where a change of direction or objective is prompted or compelled by a crisis. Doubtless, in the experience of many a Christian, such a situation has arisen and the question posed. Perplexing problems and unending difficulties have forced us to wonder—even if momentarily—whether our priorities, objectives and motives are right, or whether some drastic change is necessary. It may well be that a happier and simpler solution to our quandaries would be apparent if the question were shaped in Peter's words—"To **whom** (rather than **where**) shall we go ? "

In the passage in John 6 : vv. 52/71 the stumbling block was in the immediate teaching of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Jews in typically scathing mood said, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat ? " Even some of the disciples cavilled, "This is a hard saying ; who can listen to it ? ", v. 60 (Amp.N.T.) At this critical moment—"from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with

Him." v. 66. Sheer impatience, unbelief and misunderstanding of the Saviour's words and a spirit of intolerance dictated their decision to leave Him and go away. But where and to whom would they go? What options were open to them? Join the critical Jews and Pharisees? Perhaps the synagogue with its conventional Judaism was less challenging and more tolerable to uncommitted disciples than the radical teaching of Jesus. Capernaum had been favoured with more of the teaching and powerful works of Jesus than most places, but their rejection of Him was notorious (cf. Matthew 11:23/24). Now He was about to leave them for Galilee and no more would their synagogue see or hear Him. Would those who turned their back on Him be happy to retreat to a place where He would not be found?

It would appear that "the twelve" did not join the dissenters, although doubtless they faced the challenge. How would they answer the question so pertinent and searching, which the Master now puts to them? "Will ye also go away?" The force of this question was not so much whether they would actually go, but had they, like the others, the impulsive desire to leave Him? Of course, they were free to do so if that were their choice. There would be no sanctions applied against them in any case. He would not have them under any duress to stay with Him. How like the incident in the story of Ruth (ch 1) when Naomi, testing the fidelity of her widowed daughter-in-law, said to her, "Behold, thy sister-in-law (Orpah) is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law." The opportunity was open to her to go back, but Ruth's memorable reply was as decisive as it was beautifully poetic, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for where thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God: where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried; the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (vv. 16/17) The comment of Hebrews 11:14/15 on such faith and devotion is noteworthy, "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of the country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."

"Will ye also go away?" says Jesus to the twelve. Is it possible that such faith and devotion would be asserted in their reply at such a time of crisis? Or would His faithful twelve break down under the pressure and leave their Master utterly alone and deserted? There was surely more than a tone of pathos in His voice as He asked, "Will ye also (like all the rest) go away?" Would they turn away from His loving care for them since the day He called them "that they should be with Him" (Mark 3:14); would they choose to forget the gracious teaching and powerful works they had witnessed? Happily Peter, their ever bold spokesman, gives no indecisive reply. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Could language be more unequivocal and assuring? To them He was the One indispensable attraction, "the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely one." (Song of Solomon 5:10 and 16).

Let us now consider the question as related to ourselves in this day. "The Word of God is living and operative" (Hebrews 4:12 J.N.D.) when

it is seen to be relevant to our present situation and capable of application thereto. Jesus Himself said, (John 6 : 63) "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Could any question have a more pertinent bearing on ourselves than this ; "To whom shall we go ? " In this our day many are turning back and walking no more with Him. They may have said, "Where do we go from here," and have found endless answers to suit their wishes. Often the guiding attraction is that Mr. So-and-So has a great gift or that the singing along there is so wonderful. Perhaps the building is so much more attractive and commands a greater sense of reverence, and such considerations are not easily dismissed, nor could we lightly condemn them. But if the question had been, "Lord, to **WHOM** shall we go ? " would not the priorities have been different ? Would the answer not have closely resembled that of Ruth and Peter showing complete attachment to a **Person** and not a place or a company or (worse still) to an amalgamation of companies ? It is, alas, all too easy and convenient to by-pass this issue even in the professed interests of piety. An immense variety of evangelical associations seems to hold out the promise of interesting service and charismatic achievement. But as our steps move in this direction can we not hear the challenge of the voice that says, "Will **ye also** go away ? " Others have done it and appear to be satisfied ; why not we ? But His question is compelling with love (not threatening with discipline) and earnestly awaits our answer. Surely there can only be one response to so touching a question, even if it takes the form of another question, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Lord, Thou art indispensable to us for Thy words alone sustain the very life, eternal life which Thou hast imparted to us.

But the second part of Peter's answer is of supreme importance. "And we know and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Here are the very words which in another context elicited from the Lord Jesus His never-to-be-forgotten announcement, "Upon this rock (the confession of Who He is) I will build My Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16 : 16/18.) Do we test our concept of what the Church is by this standard ? If so, then the question is not, "**Where** shall we go ? " but "**To whom** shall we go ? " God's decree is "that in all things **He** shall have the preeminence." Dare we put gift, eloquence, music, meticulous order (desirable as these things are) before **Him** and the confession of His deity and Lordship ? Is there then such a thing as a perfect or even near-perfect company ? Clearly not, for before the touching scene at the end of John 6 closes the Lord Jesus uncompromisingly states that among the chosen twelve, "One of you is a devil," referring, of course, to Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. Judas may have been unique in the dastardly deed which proved that he was the devil's instrument, but if ever the words of 2 John v. 7 were true (they were certainly true at that time) they are even more so to-day and within the circle of Christian profession, "many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." How right are the words of the little hymn which says, "What think ye of Christ is the test, to try both your state and your scheme. You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of **Him**." Over-simplification ? Most certainly not.

It is a sad reflection that at the Cross we are told by Matthew that "all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled" (ch. 26 : 56). This must have included himself, so there was no self-exoneration in stating this fact. Did they hear the echo of the Saviour's words at that moment, "Will ye also go away ? " They may well have done, but Peter's bold confession of Him had been silenced by the bolder demands of the world to "Crucify Him." Only after a searching confrontation with his risen Master and Lord was Peter restored and later at Pentecost energised by the Holy Spirit to renew his bold witness now to a triumphant and exalted Christ. Our situation may be different from that of Peter or the disciples, but we live in a day of intense pressures on all sides inducing us to "go away" elsewhere and to silence our witness to our Lord and Master. No natural temerity can survive this and as Duffield's famous hymn says, "The arm of flesh will fail you : ye dare not trust your own." Only fortified by the Spirit's might can any one of us face the challenge, "Will ye also go away ? " Happily we can then say, "Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life". Only then, when our hearts accord Him the first place in every consideration, will we be right as to **where** we go in company with "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2 : 22) The clarion call will then be, "Let us go forth **unto** Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13 : 13) and if it is suggested that this is drab and negative, may we remember that Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." (Hebrews 11 : 26).

WHOLESOME NOURISHMENT --- JOHN BARNES

Leviticus 11 : 29, 30.

I SUPPOSE that no one would be disposed to deny the importance of food. We eat several times a day in countries where the food is available, and we spend a good deal of money on food and devote a lot of time to its preparation and consumption, but what we feed on spiritually, though of immensely greater importance, seems to have a small place in the thinking of many people.

In the book of Leviticus the subject of food is dealt with in chapter 11 in some detail, undoubtedly with typical intention. The whole chapter is full of interest and has frequently formed the subject of ministry, but I would like to limit my remarks to verses 29 and 30.

Several animals are referred to in these two verses and although carefully linked by the Holy Spirit in this way, these creatures belong to different families. Our incomparably beautiful Authorised Version of the Scriptures is, unfortunately, unclear in these verses. We should remember that its translators had not the benefit of linguistic studies now available nor was the wealth of ancient manuscripts so rich and so readily available then as now. Complete certainty of identification is still not possible, but we believe the applications suggested in this paper form a very profitable theme for reflection. It is now thought that the weasel is

more probably the mole, an insectivorous mammal ; or perhaps the mole rat. The mouse is not the ordinary house mouse but the field or harvest mouse, a grain eating rodent. The remaining six are believed to be different kinds of lizards, which are, of course, of the reptile family. The relationship between these animals cannot, therefore, be zoological and for this reason some infidels have ridiculed the classifications of Moses as being founded on total ignorance. The Bible is, however, largely composed of documents relating to spiritual and not to physiological matters and an expression in v. 29 may supply the reason for this grouping. "Creeping things which creep on the earth." This seems to be the common feature of these eight creatures and we may think of them as representative of the enemies mentioned in Paul's letter to the Philippians who "mind earthly things." A feature which distinguishes the believer from others is that he has an appetite for heavenly things, and since the matter of what is good to eat is before the mind of the Spirit in this chapter, we must consider anything which contributes to an earth-bound outlook as being unwholesome food for the believer. Though I wish to confine my remarks mainly to the six members of the lizard family I should like, first of all, to make a brief comment on the mole and the field-mouse.

In one of his better known poems, Robert Burns, somewhat sentimentally writes of the field-mouse as a tiny but ill-used friend of mankind. In fact, as an experienced farm worker, Burns must have known that the field-mouse is a ravager of food crops intended for human consumption or for the feeding of cattle. Great damage can be done in grain fields by these tiny rodents and if they were allowed to proliferate unmolested, heavy losses would be incurred by the hardworking farmer. (cf I Samuel 6 : 5) The English poet, Thomas Gray, took a different view of field pests as we can see in his famous "elegy." The words I refer to are :

"Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast

The little tyrant of his fields withstood."

These lines may remind the Bible lover of Shammah, the Hebrew hero of old, defending a patch of lentils, resisting those tyrants of the fields, the Philistines, in order to preserve food for Jehovah's people. We may also recall, in this context, the gallant Gideon, threshing in the secret of the winepress to secure wheat from the depredations of the Midianites. Food must be preserved for God's people and we cannot afford to permit human sentiment to interfere with spiritual judgement in these matters whether the attacks are overt or covert. The fact is that though the harvest mouse and the mole are small animals they are both destructive of crops. The mole burrows underground disturbing and damaging roots and the field-mouse works above ground consuming and wasting fruits. Some who appear innocent and harmless are, perhaps, destroyers of valuable food. Others, working secretly, could be undermining years of hard-wrought husbandry. The saints must be on their guard against both.

My main theme is, however, the lizards, and I have suggested a word heading, in each case, which may summarise the main moral features the Holy Spirit would urge us to be on the watch for and avoid. These animals were not to be used by Israel as food. What we eat is built into us, forming bone, muscle and so on, and in a way, marks us. It is

said that the delicate pink of the flamingo fades if the bird is not provided with the kind of aquatic food it normally feeds on. I am not sure of this but it could well be true. What is true is that what we feed our minds on gives character to our lives. Each of the lizards referred to in these verses has some feature about its habits or makeup which, applied morally, is not in keeping with the christian constitution and for that reason should be refused.

1. Conceit

The first of these reptiles, the tortoise, is better rendered the "Great Lizard," or, according to other authorities, the "Swollen Lizard." In Australia there is a kind of lizard which has a ruff-like appendage round its neck which it is able to erect when alarmed, so giving itself a bigger and more formidable appearance. Some similar peculiarity may be indicated here. Many reptiles have the ability to inflate or enlarge themselves in this way, as, for example the cobras; and we have all seen our cats and dogs bristle up and so look bigger and more frightening. It is a thoroughly human trait to wish to appear important before others and the spirit of conceit feeds and encourages this tendency. Anything which gratifies such an inclination is unwholesome for the christian.

The Philippian epistle seems to give us, in an especial way, the New Testament antidote to the evils these creatures imply. In that lovely letter, Paul and Timothy address themselves to the brethren, not as the apostle and his delegate, but as the "bondmen of Jesus Christ." Although in a number of his letters Paul does assert his apostleship he does not do so here. In the second chapter of the letter the LORD of glory Himself is set before our adoring hearts as taking a BONDMAN's form, and Paul's acceptance, with Timothy, of bondmanship in the service of such a Person is entirely in keeping with the tone of the epistle.

In chapter 2 before he mentions the Self-humiliation of the Lord Jesus, Paul advises the brethren, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." (v. 3) To esteem oneself better than others would be vanity. In chapter 3, no doubt with the pride of formal Judaism in mind, he writes of the absence of this spirit which marked the truly faithful servant; "We have no confidence in the flesh." (3 : 3) It is the flesh which inflates itself and vaunts its abilities. In the Colossian epistle Paul refers to man, "Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind," so full of his own greatness that he imagines he can afford to do without the control of the HEAD. (2 : 18, 19) Jude, in his short letter writes of men, "Speaking great swelling words;" (v. 16) having their own advantage in mind. Peter also, in his second letter, an epistle similar in thought to Jude's, uses an equivalent expression; "Great swelling words of vanity." (2 : 18) These traits are not in harmony with christianity. The Lord Jesus counsels us, "Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11 : 29) Here is food for the new life which would give character to those nourished up in it. Nothing which promotes the vanity of man is good for the believer.

2. Complaining

The word translated ferret is now held to refer to the Gecko. (R.V. etc.) Varieties of this lizard may be found all over Africa and the Middle East and probably further afield. It is a useful enough little reptile for it consumes large numbers of mosquitoes and other insects which plague inhabitants of countries warmer than our own. Most lizards are understood to be voiceless with the exception of the Gecko group. The type referred to in our text emits a little groaning sound (the root evidently means, "to wail") for which reason it is sometimes called "The groaning lizard." Complaining is a moral blemish which should be absent from the behaviour of the christian. Our day is strongly marked by the murmuring spirit. People complain about wages, hours of work, conditions of labour, methods of government, other nations' affairs, etc. David makes a request in Psalm 144 : 14, 15. "That there be **no complaining in our streets**. Happy is that people that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the LORD." Quite clearly the fact that one's God is the Lord should, of itself, ban the element of complaint from the life. One wonders what would be the Psalmist's comment on modern Britain, its streets choked, on certain occasions, with placard-bearing complainers on almost any theme you could imagine, many of them supported by religious leaders, some actually led by them. Do they **really** know the Lord as their God ? Anything which cultivates a discontented spirit is not the diet for a christian. A believer may be doing a useful, perhaps valuable, service, but a murmuring spirit would mar what is otherwise commendable. Martha was serving the Lord Jesus in a most acceptable way, entertaining in her home the glorious Son of God, unwanted in the world His hands had made, but her complaint about Mary spoiled what was such a fine service and drew from the lips of the Saviour a rebuke. It was a gentle word, no doubt, but it was firm and emphatic, as the repetition of the name would suggest. (Luke 10 : 41, 42) Later, at the thanksgiving supper which the grateful family arranged for the Lord's pleasure, dear, busy Martha served again, but this time without a murmur, and on that occasion we read those majestic words, "The house was filled with the odour of the ointment." (John 12) Her sister's fragrant act of worship rose to the throne unhindered by any complaint from her as she thankfully served, adding the fragrance of her own glad service to the sweetness of the occasion.

In his letter to the Philippians Paul wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Thrown unjustly into filthy dungeons, flogged unrighteously by Jews and Gentiles, suffering hunger, shipwreck, danger and all kinds of hardships entailed in his service for the Lord, he was content and no word of complaint crossed his lips. To encourage his beloved Philippians similarly to endure without complaint he exhorted them, "Do all things without murmurings. . ." and again, "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Brethren who knew Paul as well as the Philippians would not be likely to say, "It's all very well for him : he does not know the difficulties we have to encounter." They had known Paul endure frightful sufferings in their own city when, with his companion Silas he had been beaten, thrown into gaol and fastened in

the stocks. The prayers and praises which had rendered that terrible night fragrant were well known to them all, for the gaoler on that occasion was Philippi's first fruit for God, the first convert of the European mission. (Acts 16)

3. Conspicuousness

The third example cited in the A.V. is the chameleon. We shall have this little reptile later but the present case is accepted by some authorities as being the Land Crocodile and is called by others the Great Red Lizard. (J.N.D.) The size and colour of this large beast would make it a very prominent object. This idea finds an echo in the human heart since the desire to be noticed is a common human characteristic. There is much in the world's books, its philosophies and its education which would foster this penchant. We hear the advice given ; " Make the most of yourself ; assert yourself," and other words to the same effect. This kind of counsel is acceptable to man and it makes its appeal to us all in a natural way, but it is to be rejected as food for it feeds the wrong man—the man whom God has judged and set aside.

Paul writes to the Philippians of some who preached, not to promote the cause of Christ but to increase the apostle's difficulties. " Some preach," he tells us, " Of envy and strife." He adds that they spoke " Of contention, not sincerely." But he was quite unperturbed by all this furore, because by this preaching, as well as by genuine ministry in love, Christ was made known, **He** was made conspicuous. For that reason Paul was able to rejoice. He had no desire to put himself in the public eye ; his ambition was to bring His Lord into prominence and whoever did the work and however it was done was all one to him just so long as it was done and his beloved Lord made known.. The servant who was content to be called the "least of the apostles", and in another place, "Less than the least of all saints," was clearly not seeking for a conspicuous position. There is much in the world to feed ambition. We know that red, the colour of this creature, is commonly used as a warning light because it is one of the most eye-catching of colours. The Hebrews were to wear a ribband of blue, the colour of the unclouded heaven. This is the moral hue that should mark the believer rather than the scarlet which would draw attention to us ; the celestial blue directs the eye to the glory crowned Lord. We should not desire to be seen but that **He** should be seen in us. The story is told of a small Sunday school boy whose acquaintance with saints was limited to the few ancient worthies depicted in the stained-glass windows of the village church. His teacher asked him, "Could you tell me what saints are ? " He replied, "Please miss, people that the light shines through." A quaint reply, but thought-provoking in this connection. Paul tells us of his desire that " Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death." (1 : 20) He wanted only to be a glass that the myopic world might see Christ through him. He reminded the Philippians of their role in the testimony ; "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." The evil woman of Revelation 17 is seen wearing the colour of this lizard in her brazen course of iniquity. How different to the snowy robe of the bride in chapter 19 !

4. Competition

The A.V. construes the fourth example as "Lizard" to which J.N.D. adds the descriptive adjective "climbing." This appears to be confirmed by other authorities. The ceaseless urge to press upwards in the world is very much the spirit of the age. The world, however, really does not change in principle; "There is nothing new under the sun." It was the same in Babel's day as it is today. "Let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." They desired to go UP in their own power. We all need and appreciate education; we could not manage without it in our modern age. No job is open to a man without some education. Our doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers and others must follow long and arduous courses of study to qualify them for their profession and most are obliged to keep on studying in order to remain abreast of developments in their line of work. But we must be careful to maintain right views of everything. If I may be permitted to use a hard-worked cliché, we have to keep our priorities right. Unhelpful elements must not be allowed to invade the spiritual realm. The spirit of competition is thoroughly out of keeping with the christian company. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

The Philippian epistle again gives us leading thoughts on this important matter. Paul writes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and he goes on, in the following sublime statements, to describe the most stupendous act of self-humiliation the history of the universe has witnessed. Nothing can surpass the grandeur of this passage of Scripture and we rightly dwell on this absorbing theme when we remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread and think of Him humbling Himself unto death, even the death of the cross; but we sometimes forget the introductory clause; "Let this mind be in YOU." Here we find no principle of competition.

A oneness of mind and of purpose is urged on these dear saints. Consider 1 : 27 "That ye stand fast in **one** spirit, striving **together** for the faith of the gospel." And 2 : 2. "That ye be like minded." In 4 : 2 he beseeches two sisters in whom, perhaps, a spirit of competition had introduced a jarring note, to be of "**one** mind in the Lord," and writes affectionately in the following verse, not of competitors who sought to vie with him in importance, but of a "yokefellow" pulling the same load with him in the same harness; and of women "who laboured" with him in the gospel; of "Clement also" and of other "fellowlabourers." All this is far from the competitive outlook which seeks its own interests, but is rather in the spirit of Epaphroditus, brother, companion and fellowsoldier, whose lack of self-interest put his own life at risk in the service of the Lord Jesus. (2 : 30) There is no evidence of Paul and Epaphroditus striving with one another to see who should be the greater, but there was a striving together in a spirit of true, godly co-operation, to promote the interests of their Lord.

5. Conformity to the World

The fifth animal, translated "snail," according to reliable authorities should read "Chomet" or "Sand Lizard." This reptile has a camouflage, as is so common to animals, which enables it to be almost invisible against its normal background. Sand is a lifeless element, as the great deserts of the world dramatically prove, and conformity to that which is lifeless is alien to the christian way of life. The chomet's camouflage may be considered as a disguise for the purpose of advantage. This reptile would be much easier to see if it were less sandy in appearance. It is this colouring which enables it to approach its prey more easily, an advantage so necessary to it in an environment without natural cover. Conformity to the world for advantage is an immense temptation, for it can be financially and socially beneficial.

Another peculiarity of the chomet is that it is commonly noticed by archeologists and naturalists on the sites of ancient ruins, where the ravages of time and the effects of exposure to weather have made the crumbling masonry so like the surrounding wastes. The believer is called to have his interests in other regions altogether different ; not among the wrecks of earthly institutions with their lifelessness and hopeless outlook, but he is to pursue the "calling on high of God, which is in Christ Jesus," a calling vibrant with the life that is life indeed and which has a blessed and eternal destiny in view for the christian. (3 : 14) So he is not to adjust himself to a dying world but to have his whole interest in a living, divine system. "Our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour." Heaven is the place of life, the home of the living God : it is the place of hope for the Saviour is coming from there to take us to Himself. (3 : 10) The broken down Ziqqurats of man's Babels are no fit habitations for believers and the kind of philosophies which feed such an outlook are not for christian consumption, however advantageous they may appear to be in the world. Thinking of a time of breakdown a strange suggestion is made in Isaiah 3 : 6. "Let this ruin be under thy hand." Who would want to rule a ruin when he could be part of a growing, flourishing system, permeated with divine life ? I would rather be a tiny cog in a working watch than the rusty old flywheel of a discarded steamroller. My place in God's world may be small but it is better indeed to be a "living dog than a dead lion." (Ecclesiastes 9 : 4)

6. Compromise

The last creature of our verses, the 'mole', is better translated "chameleon," that well-known little reptile which can adapt itself to a wide variety of differing backgrounds. It is not true, as some believe, that it can change to any colour it wishes, but its range of hues varies from a pale green to dark brown, admirably suited to the various greens and browns of the forest. Most members of the lizard family can move rapidly but the chameleon seems to be much slower in its movements. For this reason I suggest that its extremely variable camouflage is not so much for advantage as for concealment. It can remain quite undetected if it stays perfectly still, its colour blending naturally with its surroundings.

The world is marked by continual change. "Be not conformed to this world," we are advised. To be conformed we should have to be prepared to compromise by adjusting ourselves to keep pace with changing ways. Dress styles are constantly changing, and the same is true of hair styles and many other things. To keep right up to date and not be considered outmoded we should have constantly to adapt ourselves and our behaviour to the changing ways. Christian women are sometimes accused by the brothers of being more ready to follow the world's ways than themselves. There may be some truth in this, but since men are known to be constitutionally less prone to change than women, this does not, considered by itself, stand in their favour. Today, even brothers seem more ready to adjust themselves to the fashions of the day than would have been imagined possible. There is an interesting verse in Ezekiel which has direct bearing on men's hairstyles. Writing of the priests (44 : 20) the prophet says, "Neither shall they shave their heads nor suffer their locks to grow long ; they shall only poll their heads." In today's terms there were to be no "hippies" or "skinheads" in the priestly company. Since they were to serve the Lord as priests they were to consider that it was into His presence they entered and they were not to consider how they looked among their fellowmen. Paul's assertion that long hair is shameful to a man should be remembered in this connection. (1 Corinthians 11 : 14)

The opposite of continual readjustment to the world's mutations is to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. This suggests an engagement of the mind with things of eternal quality and an absolute rejection of the kaleidoscopic changes of the world's thinking and ways. Paul says to the Philippians, not, "I do this or that as I see the changes and new ideas of the great, bustling Roman world," but, "This ONE thing I do . . . I press toward the mark for the prize . . ." (3 : 14) If, chameleon-like, we are prepared to come to terms with men in their current modes it may reduce our popularity here, but it will do nothing towards our obtaining the prize there, and this was Paul's absorbing aim.

It is of interest that, while in the advice of the verses we have studied, there are eight creatures to be avoided as food, there are eight contrasting features recommended in the Philippian letter for us to concentrate our minds on. (4 : 8) "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are of **good report**, if there be any **virtue**, if there be any **praise**, think on these things." These eight features can be seen in all their balanced perfection in the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are to be food for our souls, not the corruptible things of earth and earthlimindedness. Paul, himself, nourished up on such food, could cite his own case as an example, which he does in the following verse. The Philippians had not only learned about Paul by hearsay, nor had they merely heard it from his own lips in personal ministry, but he had lived out the truth among them and so could speak to them with power.

The christian's food is Christ Himself. He speaks of this in John 6, a chapter full of instruction on this important theme. There, the Lord Jesus calls Himself, "The Bread of God," a marvellous expression. The Father Himself found His delight and pleasure in His beloved Son.

Surely this is food for **our** souls. Moreover, there is no limit to our intake of this soul-sustaining food. It is not only life-giving, it is also life-sustaining. In Exodus 12 it is stated of the passover lamb that each Israelite was to make his count for the lamb, "according to his eating." (v. 4) The only restriction imposed on an Israelite on that marvellous occasion was that of his own appetite. There is a similar thought to be found in Exodus 16 concerning the manna. Each was to gather up that remarkable food, "the bread of the mighty" (as it is called in Psalm 78 : 25 N.T.) "according to his eating." (v. 18)

How great is our hunger for the divine nourishment made available for us in the Person of our Lord and Saviour ? It is certain that we may partake of this spiritual nutriment according to our eating—as much as we have an appetite for. Christ is not only needful for the commencement of spiritual life in the history of our souls ; He is also necessary for its continuance and support, and we would be wise to reject absolutely the poisons so liberally displayed to attract our attention and interest in the corrupt world of the 70's.

THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD ————— J. TURNBULL

The golden hours sped by of life's brief day.
The sun was sinking low, and yet I stood.
The workers in His vineyard soon would claim
The guerdon of their toil ; but I—Ah ! Lord.

He heard that inward sigh. He knew my shame.
He drew so near, I heard Him speak my name.
" Why idle standest thou the livelong day ? "
" No man has hired me, Lord ", I could but say.

" No man ? " He said. " Thou knowest I am thy Lord
One hour remains. There is a place for thee.
Whate'er is right in that great coming day
Thou shalt receive. Make haste. Leave all to Me".

Low did I bow, my stricken heart made glad
At His blest bidding. Oh ! how sweet my toil !
So I await that blest eternal morn.
My guerdon then ? To see His face, His smile.

NOTE

Please note that " Studies in the Revelation " and " A Light that Shines in a Dark Place " were completed respectively on pp. 215 and 272.