

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

VOLUME FORTY FIVE

1974, 1975, 1976

Central Bible Hammond Trust Ltd.

Hargrave Hall, Hargrave Road, London, N19 8SP

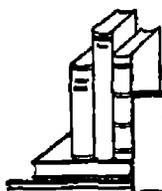
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WHAT'S THE VERDICT?

J. S. BLACKBURN

Read : Romans 3 : 19-26.
 4 : 1- 5.
 5 : 1- 5.
 8 : 28-34.
 James 2 : 14-26.

WE are going to study the word 'justification' in the passages listed, (Have you read them afresh?) and since it is by no means an uncommon word in ordinary speech, we will have to begin by asking ourselves whether any change is necessary in our ordinary understanding of it for the purpose of Bible study. A father whose daughter wants to go to some dangerous part of the world on holiday might say, "I wouldn't be justified in advising her to do this." The bank manager knows it: "I would not be justified in granting this overdraft Mr. X". I think we shall find it necessary to make quite a big change to understand it properly, and probably the first readers of the New Testament would have to make a similar adjustment. This is perhaps why Paul takes such pains to make its bearing clear.

Let us proceed by question and answer, and the first question must be; **What is justification** in Paul's sense? It often happens that the characteristic truth or teaching of a Bible book becomes clear if we first think of the character in which **God** appears in that book. For instance, in John's first Epistle, God appears as the Father, and hence it explains how His children share His nature, and what are the privileges and responsibilities of being His children. In Romans, God appears as the Judge of all, holding court, hearing witnesses, announcing the verdict and passing sentence. This is to say the least startling, because all of us must have to do with that court. There is no escaping its verdict and sentence.

There is a good deal about the judgment of God in Chapters 1 and 2, (about 14 references), and in chapter 3 the question arises, "Then how shall God judge the world?" So it appears that God is the supreme Judge, the last, inescapable Judge, and justification is the favourable verdict of His court. We find in 3 : 19 that His first verdict on every man and woman in all the world is 'guilty'. The attribute of God appropriate to His being our final Judge, is justice. This is familiar to us, for in English we use the same word for a judge. In this book it is the justice of God which is primarily in view, and primarily in this sense we should understand the approximately 40 references to the 'righteousness of God' in Romans, principally in chapters 1 to 8.

It is all-important that we should see that in the chapters read we

are dealing with **God's** verdict upon **ourselves**. Our first reading was in 3 : 19, and immediately the law is brought in, the proper basis for judgment in any court. There is no escaping the truth that here God is Judge, and is announcing the verdict. The verdict is that every mouth is stopped ; that every excuse is taken away, and all the world pronounced guilty. This is the fact that everyone must face, that all have sinned in the past, and are in the present tense coming short of God's standard. This is the realisation, conviction, and confession at which we must all begin, if we are to find peace with God.

But in simply reading these chapters we cannot but notice how many times the words 'justify' and 'justification' occur. It is clear that this also is a verdict in God's court, the final court which will be the arbiter of our destinies. This is true in spite of the fact that these verdicts are known **now**. It is one of today's most effective delusions that we have to wait until after death to know God's verdict on our lives. If there is an equivalent to 'justification' in modern speech relative to courts of law, it is 'acquittal'. Here is the most unexpected thing about God's justice. He can and does pronounce the guilty justified or acquitted. In no human court would it be possible for a just judge to pronounce a guilty person acquitted, in the sense of being cleared of the charge. The great marvel of the teaching of this epistle is that God is both "just, **and** the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus". (Romans 3 : 26.) It is not only that God in His mercy has been willing to forgive us, but to say that we are justified means that the justice of God has been satisfied, and our guilt will never meet us again. It seems to me a very good paraphrase to say that a person who is justified is right with God.

My second question is **Why is it so important** to be clear about justification ? Perhaps you think that attempting to distinguish between justification and forgiveness is a first-rate example of hair-splitting. We would no longer think like this if we realised the significance of the fact that not only has God's mercy been in action, but His justice, being satisfied is now our shield.

One very important reason why justification is important is that the benefits in our experience which flow from our being justified can be reached by us in no other way. Chapter 5, vv. 1-11 give us the results of justification, that is, of our being justified. Can anyone think of a more wonderful cluster of stars than this : peace with God, hope of glory, and (in spite of tribulation,) the love of God in our hearts ? No believer possesses these experiences in perfection, but every mature Christian would witness that what opens the floodgates and permits these experiences to pour into our lives is the realisation that God's justice has been satisfied and we are right with God.

This brings us to a deeper reason for placing importance on justification. Sooner or later we come to understand that we have to face God's justice. A person who has escaped the penalty of the law by its being side-stepped in some way is all the time aware that some time and some place justice might reach out and put its hand upon him again. And a person who realises only God's forgiveness will never have conscience really satisfied. One who is justified in God's sight knows he will never again meet the question of his guilt before God. The justice of God which he once had every cause to fear, has now become his shield. This

is the meaning of God's justice being "**upon** all them that believe". (3 : 22)

God has called His witnesses. They include the witness of His eternal power and Godhead in creation, (ch.1), the witness of our own conscience against us (ch.2), and the witness of the law against us, (ch.3). It is on the full hearing of the evidence that the verdict has been pronounced already, guilty. Yet, for the believer in Jesus, the final verdict is, justified. This is simply tremendous and the results are worthy of it, and the final end worthily sums up the importance of justification, that it is the first link in the chain which binds us to the purpose of God. Such a chain can never be broken. There is, and never can be any calling in question a verdict which forms a link in this unbreakable chain : "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called : and whom He called, them He also justified : and whom He justified, them He also glorified " (8 : 29, 30).

The third question is, "**On what grounds** can God justify the ungodly ?" It is no exaggeration to speak thus of God, for that exact expression appears in 4 : 5 ; "Him that justifieth the ungodly". The source in God, the disposition which moved Him to find "means whereby his banished be not expelled from Him", is named in 3 : 24 : "justified freely by His grace". The means in us which receives and makes our own this verdict, justification, is faith, (5 : 1). But the ground in God's just demands for His act in justifying, is the blood of Christ : "through faith in His blood". (3 : 25) : "being now justified by His blood", (5 : 9). Let none think that this great fact is capable of being fully explained or understood, but the fact is clear. God's justice is so completely satisfied by the sacrifice of Calvary, that it can now be the protection of the sinner who believes, resting over him in the same way as the blood of the Passover lamb protected the door on which it was dashed. It is unfashionable but true, to say that God has been righteously propitiated by the blood of Jesus ; this is the ground on which He can be just, while at the same time justifying the ungodly.

We ought to bring in 4 : 25 in speaking of God's being satisfied in His justice by the sacrifice of Christ. "Jesus our Lord. . . was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification". This verse means that just as our offences were the cause of His being delivered up to death and judgment at Calvary's cross, so also it was on account of our justification that He was raised from the dead. In the resurrection of Jesus our Lord from the dead, God displayed that He was satisfied and that He had accepted the work, through which the believer is justified. Small wonder that from this point, the apostle can begin his triumphant conclusions from so secure a base, "Therefore being justified by faith. . ."

Finally, our last question is, **What does James mean by justification** ? All down the centuries, Christians have been puzzled by the apparent contradiction between Paul and James. Paul says that we are justified by faith without works. Righteousness is imputed to "him that worketh not, but believeth" (Romans 4 : 5). James does not only appear to say, he really does say, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2 : 24). James even brings forward the same person

as Paul, (Abraham), and the same Scripture, (Genesis 15 : 6) in order to draw the opposite conclusion.

The greatest help to understanding, and hence being properly affected by this writing of James is to take account of his object. His object was not to start a theological puzzle, but to maintain with terrific emphasis that the life of the Christian must be filled with good works, or else the person is not really a Christian at all. He is asking, After saving faith, what? And he is supplying the answer, that is, a life devoted to good works; and if these do not follow, then there has been no saving faith.

A few remarks on the justification of Abraham according to James should help to set the question in a clearer light. Abraham's justification by faith and his justification by works were each complete in themselves. His justification by faith involves the meaning explained in the earlier paragraphs, a favourable verdict in God's court of final justice. Abraham's justification by works was also complete in itself, and it took place many years after his justification by faith. The latter occurred before the birth of Isaac, the former took place years after the birth of Isaac. The context of his justification by faith, is "before God", and in God's court. The context of his justification by works is a conversation between men (James 2 : 18). One man requires something extra to justify another's profession to be justified by faith. Have we not, in the course of this line of thought arrived at the required answer? Justification according to James is something quite different from justification according to Paul in Romans. It is justification in the eyes of man of a profession made by another man. It is thus, in a certain sense a completion or fulfilment of justification by works. "And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness" (James 2 : 23). The men in whose eyes Abraham was justified are his contemporaries, or even ourselves, so concerned in the matter centuries later. The case of Rahab is parallel, but Scripture does not specifically tell us about her justification by faith.

With this conclusion agrees the fact that the faith declared dead and ineffective is not the belief in Jesus of which Paul writes, but the kind of faith the devils have, which merely believes **about** God.

The meaning of justification according to James is therefore a favourable verdict of one man on another's profession to possess saving faith. It is a call, striking and clear, to the real faith which saves, and to the good works which must follow. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1 : 27).

ADDITIONS

JOHN BARNES

2 Peter 1 : 5-7

THE Apostle Peter wrote two epistles to the Jewish Christians of the dispersion in Asia Minor. He specifies this fact in verse 1 of the first chapter of his first letter and in 3 : 1 of his second letter he affirms that

this is the second of his communications to them. There is no difficulty in understanding that the apostle concentrated his ministry largely on converted Jews. Paul told his gentile correspondents (Galatians 2 : 7, 8) of the particularly Jewish aspect of Peter's service while his own was mainly directed towards the nations. They were each fitted and empowered for the special work given them to do.

The Jewish believers had been privileged, along with the apostles, to receive the same equally precious faith. Israel had suffered for unrighteousness, as a nation, but the God who has not cast away His people but will bring them nationally into blessing, was reaching out to individuals, in grace, bringing them by faith into the present blessing.

Faith, however, is not the conclusion of the christian life ; it is the beginning of it and carries on through to the day of salvation. So the apostle takes this matter up in v.5 where he urges the development, in the lives of his readers, of christian features. There are seven aspects to this development ; virtue, knowledge, temperance ; patience ; godliness ; brotherly kindness and love ; suggesting an orderly growth into christian maturity. These features are not considered as separate items like marbles, to be added one after another to a growing pile. Faith, in this context, is deemed to have in it the potential for this development, just as a seed has built into its tiny structure all the elements required for the growth of the plant to beauty, maturity and usefulness. "Have in your faith. . ." or "Supply in your faith. . ." The necessary elements are there and all that is needed to bring them to proper growth is the provision of a right atmosphere and conditions and the furnishing of the appropriate nourishment. The essential element in the growth of any living organism is nourishment. In his first letter Peter refers to this matter and he tells us what the needed food is ; "Desire earnestly the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby." If this divine food is assimilated into the moral constitution, growth will be ensured and the orderly development of the features outlined can proceed in the Spirit's power.

Such a result requires the exercise of diligence on the part of the individual believer. Peter emphasises this fact ; "Giving all diligence. . ." There are enemies who would seek to prevent the production of christian features in our lives, and there is, in addition, our own natural indolence and aversion to effort. Diligence is a prime factor in the search for spiritual food. Verse 3 reminds us that everything needful for life and godliness has already been provided, in divine power, but purpose of heart and energy are necessary if we are to make full use of these resources. Such a determination marked Ezra. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Where there is purpose of heart to learn the truth of God, progress may be slow but it will be there.

1. "Supply in your faith virtue. . .", they are exhorted. The word virtue, as understood by the classical Greek, appears to have signified all that was idealised by the Greek culture as masculine. The word has its root in a martial idea and the ideal Greek youth was athletic, clean, disciplined and a warrior. The Spartan heroes of Thermoplae would, no doubt, be thought of as illustrating the meaning of this word. It is fascinating, however, to see how christianity takes up an ordinary word

and elevates it to new and spiritual levels. Some of us have been privileged to see this process at work in Central Africa, but it goes on, without doubt, all over the world. This secular word, virtue, is Biblically elevated to new heights. In the first epistle (2 : 9) the believers, as royal priests, are to shew forth the virtues of Him that called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. These features of christian manhood are not associated with athletic or military prowess but are to be seen in the moral sphere and reach their apex in the life of the Son of God lived in lowly Manhood on earth. Each of the aspects of virtue in its physical sense can be seen in perfection in the Lord morally ; discipline, purity, energy, endurance, etc. There is a marathon to be run but it can be run by the physically handicapped ; there is a battle to be fought but it requires no human weapons or military training. The Lord Jesus ran this race and He fought this fight. The apostle Paul, too, tells us that he fought the good fight and finished the course. This is the kind of spiritual manhood Peter has in mind here and it is within the reach of every christian in measure, for it is the development of christian character on the faith principle.

2. Peter goes on ; “and in virtue knowledge. . .” A christian may be uneducated ; the apostles were largely so ; he may feel his ignorance and be acutely aware that he sees through a glass darkly, but the christian sphere is, nevertheless, the only truly enlightened sphere in the world. In his letters Paul uses an expression, or its near equivalent, five times ; “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren.” The Lord has made ample arrangements for the information of our minds and hearts. John uses the verb to “know” very many times in his first epistle and even his “little children” know the Father. The idea of knowledge runs through this epistle (1 : 2, 3, 12, 16, 20 ; 2 : 20 ; 3 : 3, 18) Not only has God saved us but it is His will that we should be intelligent in His service and He has made provision for us to know what He has done, why He has done it and how it has been worked out. No christian should be satisfied with the state of his knowledge of the truth ; a vast range of truth has been, by wonderful grace, unfolded for our enquiry and we should stir ourselves up in holy exercise to enter more fully into it. It is not mere academic learning that is in mind, but knowledge, the fruit of the faith that lays hold on the invisible.

3. “And to knowledge temperance. . .” The word temperance is believed to be better rendered “self-control.” Possibly because of its common rendering and the ideas normally associated with temperance, people generally think in terms of what we are NOT to do. But self-control is not only or even mainly what we are not to do but is largely concerned with what we are to do. If we are driving along the highway we may presently see a workman operating a huge, yellow-painted bulldozer. Obviously he directs the powerful machine so that other road users are not endangered by his heavy vehicle, but if all that he did was to avoid accidents his bulldozer would be useless for the purpose for which it was manufactured. He is to do useful work with it, in the course of which he will do his best to avoid accidents or injury to persons and property. The christian life which is mainly concerned with not doing this or that is scarcely a great recommendation. The Son of God went about **doing good**. Certainly He did no evil but how positive was

His self-control ! His precious life was directed in deeds of positive good ; mercy, kindness, helpfulness, grace. Growth in the knowledge of the Lord would help towards the development in our lives of the blessed features seen in His own. The negative and positive aspects are both taken up by Paul in his letters. " Let him that stole steal no more," he advises, " But rather let him labour. . . to give." And, " Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good. . . to the use of **edifying**." In these Scriptures the positive aspect of self-control is emphasised.

4. The next word, patience, is probably better rendered "endurance." The underlying thought seems to be that the believer who endures remains actively faithful to the Lord and in His service when others opt out because of difficulties of one sort or another. The man who endures stays in the fight. Self-control would help in the development of this feature. It was seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, we are told. The battle was joined and He was perfectly aware of all the implications but He steadfastly went on, utterly in control of the situation. There was no panic, no haste, but each step of His journey was controlled as He endured. Faith operating in the life of the believer would enable him to go on, to endure. How aptly Hebrews 11 puts it ; " He endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

5. Godliness or piety is the next word Peter uses. It is believed that the true idea of piety is "bringing God into our circumstances." This may be beautifully underlined by that wonderful Scripture, " Great is the mystery of piety, God was manifested in flesh." The Son of God came into our circumstances—God with us. So, bringing God into the affairs of life, relating them to Him, is true piety. The christian sees the hand of God in affairs ; the world does not. This difference is illustrated by Egypt and Canaan. Egypt receives scarcely any rain and its great river, the Nile, for the last 500 miles of its long journey to the sea receives no tributary streams. So the Egyptians, not observing that the waters of the Nile are really the result of central African rains, from heaven, deified the river instead of tracing it to its true source, the beneficent Giver of every good and perfect gift. Canaan, on the other hand, was watered by rains from heaven, and the former and the latter rains were to remind Israel of the true source of their blessings. So the true believer relates things to his God. His food, clothing, comforts, every material as well as every spiritual blessing he traces to its source, the giving God. Thus his life is not lived independantly of God but, on the contrary, is centred in God.

6. The sixth thing to be produced is brotherly affection. The more we become conscious of the blessed God the more we become aware of the family in which He has set the saints. As we grow to have a deeper realization of Him and interest in His work we find that there are many others with similar interests and outlook ; the brotherhood. Since we love God, the Begetter, we love those who are begotten, the brotherhood. The Lord Jesus had this mutual affection in His mind as He addressed His disciples in John 13 : 35. " By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another." We are to see to the promotion of this most desirable feature of christianity. As our souls are fed in the knowledge of divine love so freely bestowed on us, though thoroughly

undeserving, so shall we grow in appreciation of those who have similarly been reached by that love and who have been brought into the same family "Let brotherly love continue," the epistle to the Hebrews exhorts us.

7. Finally, Peter says, "and to brotherly love, love." Here the development of these features reaches its peak of maturity. Love is the nature of God Himself and no higher development could be envisaged. It is the production of what is true of God Himself, of what He has put into our lives in His own grace and power. John says, "We love because He first loved us." This is clearly wider than the family love Peter has just told us of. If we brothers love the brethren it is because there are brotherly features there which are loveable. The affections of brethren are drawn to one another, mutually, by reason of what we see in each other, the divine life developed in each christian in some measure; we are mutually attractive. But divine love goes out, also, to the unlovely, to the unattractive, to the dark, outside world where we may meet with ridicule, antagonism, contempt and even open hatred. Any sentiment other than divine love would be stifled by such treatment and turned away by such rebuff. But love is not to be suffocated or denied its activity by lack of response or even hatred, because it is the nature of God.

A CHAIN OF THOUGHT

E. H. SAPP

THREE Psalms, namely 14, 53 and 88 are peculiarly linked. The reader of this paper should read these Psalms before any consideration of it. On the surface it may be remarked that Psalms 14 and 53 are practically the same; they are, in fact, almost verbatim. Nevertheless there is a difference of importance. Psalm 53 is an advance on the former; moreover it has an inspired caption. This inspired caption is the link with Psalm 88. But the true link between these Scriptures is that Psalms 14 and 53 refer to man's depravity, SIN in the flesh as fallen children of Adam; while Psalm 88 brings in the sinless One who suffers in our stead, made sin for us.

The **14th Psalm** was delivered to "the chief Musician" to be set to music, thus a song to be often in remembrance. The very first lesson of Holy Scripture, that man is a fallen creature, is brushed aside by the religious teachers but God would have its solemn truth ever before the mind of His children. Here we have an indictment of man fallen, man away from God, man willingly ignorant of Him. The fool is not a weak-minded person but a wicked person, a "Nabal". Folly and wickedness follow inevitably where God is shut out deliberately. He is not in all their thoughts. They become corrupt, rotten at the core. They "do" (practise) abominable works—outward acts of wickedness. They become incapable of "good", there is none good, no not one. Godliness flows from the revelation of God in Christ (1 Timothy 3:16), it involves the divine operation of regeneration in the soul. But the opening words of this "plain" Scripture bears out the indictments found in Paul's epistle

to the Romans and indeed are quoted there. It is more than of passing interest that God Himself seeks with diligence to find a righteous man and the echo of His grief is found in the words, "No, not so much as one". The truth is that the whole of Adam's progeny is corrupt, wicked and incorrigibly evil. This is the basis of Romans, man's rottenness ! But what follows is immeasurably blessed, namely justification or "righteousness without works". Verses 4-6 pursue the course of man's actings upon the earth ; the wicked, the workers of iniquity oppressing the minority, putting the godly in fear and scorning their faith in God. Praise God that He has begun to recover His lost ones and secure a remnant from amongst men who are regenerate, redeemed by blood and reconciled to Himself. In the world these saints have tribulation, for so it has been in all ages and will be until verse 7 is fulfilled, when the salvation of God by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ is manifest. Here in these Psalms, of course, it is Israel and the distressed, perplexed and persecuted remnant who are in view. The climax of the ages of man's self-will (sin is lawlessness !) are those personifications of evil of the last days, the Beast and the man of sin, "That Wicked" ! It is they who defy heaven, God and His Christ and "shame" or deride the faith and hope of the remnant of Israel. The outward circumstance of the persecuted godly of Israel in the days of Antichrist is verily a critical or desperate situation. The godly are in terror ; but the Deliverer will come to their salvation and does so. Meanwhile the longing remains, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion ! When God bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad".

Psalm 53 is captioned "Mahalath, Maschil" and though the opening verses are verbatim with those of Psalm 14 the remaining verses view the crisis of the ages from another angle, that is, from the divine side. Man's wickedness is at the flood-tide, the time is ripe for the righteous intervention of God by and through His Christ. Verse 5 indicates the effect of the divine intervention, the enemy is scattered, put to shame ; God has despised these impious men. They boasted of their prowess even to challenge the Almighty ; they had no fear of Him. But let the King of kings appear and "there were they in great fear". Well they might be for the leaders of that rebellion are taken and cast alive into the lake of fire. Thus the two Psalms differ in regard to the deliverance of the godly. It is the enemy now in terror ; the righteous saved. Surely these events are fast approaching. "Maschil" means an instruction and is found at the head of thirteen Psalms. Of "Mahalath" I quote from an article by a scholar in "The Present Testimony" 1849, "Mahalath, despite some uncertainty, why not 'sickness or disease' ? It may be taken as the noun of the verb 'to be diseased' (or sick), e.g. 'thy father is sick' (Genesis 48 : 1) Thus the diseased state of Israel in particular and of mankind in general" !

Psalm 88 "A song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite." To quote further from the above authority, "The word Mahalath also occurs here with Leannoth after it, which may be the plural of the word other-where rendered 'wormwood' and 'hemlock' in Amos 6 : 12,—thus wormwood, the deadly bitter disease. This suits the expressions used in this Psalm."

The disease of sin has become wormwood or bitter. But for whom? Is it not the holy Sufferer of Calvary? None other it could be than Him who endured the cross, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree. One shrinks from any exposition of this Psalm. Let the reader ponder its words and let awe or wonder possess the heart. It is Gethsamane and Calvary.

“Be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

Under this new title it is intended, as the Lord will, to reprint occasional papers from a quarterly supplement to “Scripture Truth” which appeared some years ago. The general title originally used was “Christ and the Assembly”.

1. THE SECRET OF THE DISPENSATION F. B. HOLE

THE word dispensation occurs twice in our common version of the epistle to the Ephesians,—viz., chap. i. 10 and iii. 2. In both cases the Greek word so translated is one which means the law or arrangement of a house. Being closely allied with the word for steward it is sometimes translated stewardship. Speaking in general terms we may say that a dispensation is that regime or ordering of affairs which God is pleased to institute at any given time.

Ephesians i. 10 looks on to the glorious regime to be established in the coming age which will have as its crowning characteristic the gathering together in one and heading up of all things in heaven and earth in Christ. In connection with this there has been a secret, “the mystery of His will,” as verse 9 shows; though the secret is now an open one to “us,” i.e. His saints of this dispensation. This coming age is the theme of many a glowing Old Testament Scripture which must have warmed the heart of saints living in pre-christian times, and which still fire and animate our hearts to-day; still it will be found that such Scriptures view the age as being that of Messiah’s glory, with Israel gathered under Him as the head of the nations, and the Gentiles ordered and blessed subordinately to Israel. Only in very rare instances—as Hosea ii. 21—is the heavenly sphere alluded to. God’s will as to it however embraced more than earthly things. He purposed in Himself according to His good pleasure a wider and more wonderful unity of glory. Not only all things on earth—including Israel and the nations, but all things in heaven,—including the church and angelic hosts, are to find their unifying Head in Christ. No Old Testament saints would have divined that secret, though it is fully made known to us.

That dispensation is future, but in chapter iii. 2, we have a present dispensation, and one far more limited in its scope though far more

intimate as to its character. The apostle speaks of it as "given me to you-ward"—that is, he was the steward of it as far as the Gentiles, such as the Ephesians, were concerned. This being so, and bearing in mind how utterly lost and hopeless the Gentiles had been, as stated in chapter ii. 12, it is easy to see that it is indeed a dispensation of the **grace** of God; the coming age will be rather the dispensation of His **glory**.

This dispensation, too, has a secret connected with it—a secret, that is, from the standpoint of all who lived previous to the death and resurrection of Christ, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the subsequent passing of the period of transition and the revelation of God's first thought in connection with the church. At the time of writing the Ephesian epistle the secret had been divulged by the Spirit to apostles and prophets (verse 5), though it was revealed independently to Paul (verse 3), and he alone was the steward of it as regards the Gentile saints (verse 2).

What is this special secret of the dispensation now revealed to us? Only three passages furnish us with its details, though others allude to it. The three are Ephesians ii. 9–22; iii. 6; and Colossians i. 27. That the first of these three Scriptures is an unfolding of the mystery is proved by verses 3 and 4 of chapter iii. where the apostle appeals to that written previously as showing his knowledge of the subject. It is worthy of note, by the way, that he calls this passage previously written "a few words" though it is the longest and fullest passage of the three. This shows us that it is a condensed summary of the matter, and we may expect to find in it great fulness and depth.

The secret of the dispensation has then to do with God's work among the Gentiles by which an election from amongst them is brought, equally with an election from amongst Israel, into the fulness of blessing in Christ. Both come in on equal and identical terms, and not only so but also upon a footing and into relationships which are altogether new.

These things being of the very essence of the matter we first point out how they are stated in this Scripture.

(1). **Both Jew and Gentile are made one**, "the middle wall of partition" and "enmity" being abolished "in His flesh" i.e. by the death of Christ. (verses 9 and 15). **Both** are reconciled "in **one body**" (verse 16). **Both** have access to the Father by **one Spirit** (verse 18). This warrants us in saying that both come in on equal and identical terms.

(2). They do not, however, come in upon the old footing as propounded in the law given to Israel. It is not that Gentiles are now to be admitted to the share in Israel's standing before God. The blood of Christ has made them nigh **in Christ Jesus** (verse 13). His death is indeed the efficacious ground of it, but by it He has made "in **Himself** of twain one **new man**" (verse 15). Both are brought to God in one body, but it is as **reconciled by the cross** (verse 16); both have access to the Father but it is by **one Spirit** (verse 18) and not by ordinances as of old. It is evident then that both are brought in on a new footing. The old fleshly Adam standing in which both shared is set aside, the national standing as the people of Jehovah which belonged exclusively to the Jew is also set aside, and the election from both comes in "reconciled by the cross," "one new man," "in Christ Jesus."

(3). The relationships into which they come are far beyond any in

which Adam stood even in innocence, and equally beyond Israel's national relationship with Jehovah. They are not one nation but one **body** (verse 16), **approaching the Father**, (verse 18) rather than Jehovah. Further, such are "of the household of God"; built into that which is destined to be "an holy temple in the Lord" and "buildded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" as a present thing (verses 19-22).

This then is the secret of the present dispensation stated in few words. Ephesians iii. 6, gives us the same in fewer words; and Colossians i. 27, presents the same great theme in even fewer still, but from a different standpoint, when it says that "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles," is "Christ in [or among] you [i.e. Gentiles] the hope of glory." The prophets had predicted that the Messiah should be amongst His people on the basis of redemption, and that earthly glory should be established in connection with it; but that Christ should be in, or amongst, an election from the Gentile world was an unheard of and amazing thing, awakening the liveliest expectation of His ultimately shining forth in a glory of yet wider dimensions.

Other Scriptures there are, which though not exactly or directly referring to the mystery yet throw additional light upon it. The whole of 2 Corinthians iii., for example casts light on Colossians i. 27.

These other passages we must however pass by, our present object being to reach the practical bearing of all this truth upon the lives of the saints who compose the church.

The whole of Ephesians iii. save verse 1 is in the nature of a digression. About to write instructions as to their behaviour the apostle evidently felt it needful to enforce them by a statement of his peculiar authority in regard to such as themselves. He had not merely **knowledge** of the mystery by direct first-hand revelation from the Lord, but **authority**, since the dispensation or "house-arrangements" in respect to all mentioned in the latter part of chapter ii. was, as far as Gentiles are concerned, given to him (verse 2). Of it he was made a ministering servant (verse 7), his work as such being to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all see what the fellowship (or administration—J.N.D.'s translation) of the mystery is. He not merely enunciated the newly revealed truth in its terms but saw to it that in practical fellowship or administration the truth was exemplified amongst and carried out by the saints, so that whether nationally Jews or Gentiles they were together altogether above and apart from the racial and religious animosities which characterized them by nature, in the happy recognition and consciousness of the new footing established in Christ, and the new relationship with the Father, with Christ, and with one another, in the power of the Spirit of God. There was then a practical expression upon earth, of that which is the real secret, the great characteristic thought of the present dispensation, and thereby to heavenly powers, the manifold wisdom of God was displayed. The unity thus established in the church between Jew and Gentile still abides before the eyes of the heavenly powers and still shows forth God's wisdom, for there has been no splitting of the church into a Jewish section or a Gentile section. Cleavages there have been, alas!—almost without number—setting forth all too clearly before heavenly eyes the folly of man, but none of them have been along the lines of that original great

fissure removed so wonderfully by the wisdom of God. We are speaking, remember, of the fellowship of the mystery and not of the vital oneness of the body.

Then, is recorded, verses 14 to end, that wonderful prayer of the Apostle, in which he asks for a mighty work of the Spirit in the inner man of these Gentile saints that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that with all saints they might enter into the fulness of these wonderful things. A mighty work **within** was indeed needful if these erstwhile worshippers of Diana were to be lifted in their own soul's knowledge and enjoyment to the level of these serene and holy things while still they lived in Ephesus and trod its streets. No less a work is needed within ourselves.

Chapter iv. 1 picks up the thread from chapter iii. 1 and the apostle commences his practical instructions in the tenderest tone, yet with all the weight and authority of chapter iii. behind him. The great business of these Ephesian saints and of ourselves is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. A superhuman task indeed ! which is only possible as the apostle's prayer is fulfilled in us.

The central point of endeavour is to be the **keeping** of "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The "unity of the Spirit" was and is an actual subsisting fact. We did not make it, nor can we break it, but in the actual wear and tear of daily life and walk, we may **keep** it or we may let it go. The exhortation is that we keep it in the uniting bond of peace. Verse 3 is then the main exhortation of the passage, verses 4 to 6 enforce the exhortation by reminding us how **unity** is the outstanding feature of Christian life and profession in all its departments. Verse 2 gives us the all important moral features in the strength of which alone can the main exhortation be carried out in practice.

A brief consideration of how all this must have appealed to the Ephesian saints may help us. The assembly in that great city was predominantly Gentile (ii. 2 ; iv. 17), though with a Jewish strain in it (Acts xix. 1-7 ; xx. 21), hence there was ample scope for friction and trouble. Yet **peace** between them had been established in Christ (ii. 9-15) and the uniting effect of that bond was to be felt in their endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit—so called because the one Spirit is the vital and animating principle of the one body into which they had been called.

The keeping of the unity calls into exercise four great moral characteristics :—

1. **Lowliness.** That mind which is the exact opposite of the mind of Adam. He would exalt himself ; the lowly mind goes down as Philippians ii. shows. This is most essential, and particularly important for the Gentile in his dealings with the Jewish saint. The remembrance to which the apostle called them in chapter ii. 11, 12, was calculated to produce it.

2. **Meekness.** The opposite of the pushful self-assertive spirit. Again very important for the Gentile since there was the divine order even in connection with the gospel of "to the Jew **first** and **also** to the Gentile."

3. **Longsuffering.** The patient and long-continued acceptance of personal discomforts or even wrongs, a thing only possible to one of a lowly and meek spirit.

4. Forbearing in love. Intimately connected with the third, and its complement—the love that bears with that which might offend in others, instead of seeking redress by violent methods.

All these things would be much called for on the part of the Gentile in his dealings with the Jew. By legal training and the hereditary instinct of centuries the latter carried within himself the tendency to take the narrow, self-centred, legal view of things; the matters mentioned in Acts xv. and in Romans xiv. show this. Nothing but long-suffering coupled with the love that beareth all things would enable them to abide together in peace.

That the Jew would equally need these things in his relations with his Gentile brethren goes without saying. Indeed, experience shows that the disposition to push things to extremes and let go the unity of the Spirit is more deeply ingrained in the narrow Jewish type of mind than in the large Gentile type. These four excellent features were indispensable on both sides.

They are not less indispensable for us to-day but more so if it were possible. At the present moment difficulties and points of cleavage as between Jew and Gentile do not exist, yet with the lapse of centuries the very fact that the church is a unity established by God is largely lost sight of, whilst the essential character of that unity as set forth in chapter ii. 9–18 is recognized in even less degree. Never did we need in deeper measure the apostolic affirmation that “there is one body and one Spirit” and the exhortation “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Some of our readers who have for long been “gathered on the ground of the one body” may regard such remarks as superfluous as far as they are concerned, but we are persuaded that they are not so. The tendency to overlook the fact of one body and one Spirit reaches our minds in many subtle forms.

Take a case in point:—Certain Believers and therefore members of Christ’s body, become awakened by the Spirit of God through the Scriptures to those parts of the circle of truth that concerns the church, its position, privileges, and destiny, together with its responsibilities, as the witness on earth for Christ during the period of His rejection and absence; and in order to **practise** what they have learned they withdraw from many religious organizations of purely human origin, and revert to the simplicity of that divinely instituted through the apostles. All this is done in simple fidelity to the Word of God without thinking of themselves at all, but as the years pass and the energy of faith somewhat declines, self-occupation re-appears, and the question of what position they themselves now hold as a result of so acting is raised in many minds. Nothing now will be easier than to assume that by their forsaking a man-made position and occupying the ground of the church according to the Scriptures they have thereby acquired a **renewed corporate status**, which is all their own and in which other Christians do not share.

The subtlety of this idea may be seen in the fact that it is very possible to entertain it whilst strongly insisting on the truth of “one body.” This latter may be proclaimed and contended for, and yet people may so idealize it in their minds as to see nothing inconsistent with it in the idea of another “body”—especially when this other “body” lies

within the true "one body" which the Spirit originally formed.

Thus very easily we may take for granted in our minds what has no existence in God's mind as revealed to us in His Word. After all there is **one** body and one only. It therefore should go without saying that we should have nothing **corporate** outside the one **corpus**, and even the fact that certain members of the one **corpus** revert to the truth of that one **corpus**, after centuries of diversion from it, does not **reincorporate** them as a small inner **corpus** within the one **corpus**. ONE body God has made, and never more than **one** will He entertain, whatever we may do.

We pursue this no further, but merely remark two things : First ; we have not been combating a mere notion, an abstract idea of no practical consequence. This thought, if entertained, leads to consequences in conduct, and especially what we may call assembly conduct, of great gravity. Second ; we emphasise the fact that we have been speaking of that which is **corporate** and not that which is **collective**. God does indeed entertain the idea of a collective life and testimony and that in days of failure and ruin, and He clearly sets it before us in such a Scripture as 2 Tim. ii. 22. The gist of the forgoing remarks is that when those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, are most ardently following righteousness, faith, love, and peace, they acquire no special corporate status by doing so. They have a corporate status truly, but it is that of members of the "one body" originally instituted by God.

Having thus briefly considered our present day need of the apostle's affirmation "there is one body and one Spirit" it only remains to point out the exhortation which the Apostle founded upon it. In religious circles unity is all the rage, yet the "unity of the Spirit" is unthought of, and to come closer home—how shall we keep the unity of the Spirit if we have in our minds this second lesser unity of which we have spoken ? To say the least there will be **some** occasion when the claims of the two unities will clash, with the almost certain result that we yield to the claims of the smaller, yet more tangible, "body" of our own creating, as against the claims of the larger and less realizable "body" of God's creating.

And then the spirit and manner in which the unity is to be kept ! Here is the mind of Christ, and it is to be exhibited in the members of His body. These are not things to be passed on in a hurry so as to meet some disuniting crisis, but things to be wrought into the fibre of our souls by the Holy Ghost. We need them always. They are as necessary in carrying out a solemn Scripturally ordained act of excommunication, or of departure from the iniquity of a Hymenæus or Philetus, as in confirming Christian love to a once sinning but now repentant saint.

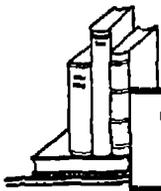
LOWLINESS, MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING, FORBEARANCE IN LOVE. Surely a marvellous quartet of Christ-like graces ! Almost, we might say, a condensed summary of Cor. xiii. Possible for us only as LOVE, the divine nature, is produced in our hearts. We stand convicted. Here has been the failure. Here must be the recovery. May God work it in us by His Spirit.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

The Upper Room Discourse

A summary concordance with notes

Ch. Word	13	14	15	16	17	total
Pater the Father	2	23	10	12	6	53
kosmos world	2	6	6	8	19	41
agapao agape phileo philia philos love friend	7	10	13	2	6	38
didomi give	5	4	1	1	17	28
meno abide remain continue dwell (mansion)	—	5	12	—	—	17
pisteuo believe	1	7	—	4	3	15
apostello pempo send	3	2	2	2	7	16
poreuomai hupago go go away depart	4	7	1	7	—	19
aiteo erotao ask pray	1	3	2	16	4	26



THE REFUGE, THE RIVER AND THE REST ——— J. STODDART

Reflections on Psalm 46

IT could scarcely be doubted that the trilogy of Psalm 46 has a remarkable relevance to the troublesome times in which we live. Nor need we be daunted in believing this because saints of many bygone ages have drawn their comfort and encouragement from the same words. The intention of the Word is ever the same, whatever the period of time, and the well-known verses of Romans 15 : 4 and 1 Corinthians 10 : 11 encourage us to look for the application and emphases underlined by the circumstances of the moment.

Little need be said as to the present upheaval in almost every aspect of life in these late years of the 20th century. What were once, in living memory, regarded as trusted institutions and inviolable standards have been discredited and swept aside as out of date. The resultant turmoil in human relationships, families, homes and nations is too evident to need comment. The cataclysmic scenes of vv. 1/3 of our Psalm are terrifying to envisage, for the entire disruption of Creation would seem to be pictured. Perhaps the actual future fulfilment of such scenes can be gathered from Hebrews 1 : 10/12, 2 Peter 3 : 10 and Revelation 20 : 11 and 21 : 1. And while this is still to take place, surely it would be right to see in this Psalm, not only physical catastrophe but the parallel disaster in the moral, political and economic areas of life, consequent upon the "raging of the nations", cited in verse 6.

It is then in the context of such convulsions that our Psalm boldly proclaims that, "God is our REFUGE and strength, a very present help in trouble." Who would not seek an adequate refuge in such a time of distress? And doubtless many troubled souls to-day are all too aware of this need; but no human resource can provide it. Nor is there a safe place in the whole universe that offers secure shelter to the fugitive sons of men apart from the eternal God now fully revealed in His Son. The wise have "fled for refuge" to Him Whose gracious call to all is still, "Come unto Me," and none have ever been denied or disappointed. Whether we consider the need to "flee from the wrath to come" or to escape from the present soul-destroying gloom caused by the calamity of the nations, there is refuge alone to be found in Him Who by the word of His power caused the raging of the wind and waves to cease. In that wonderful act of the Lord Jesus He demonstrated the assured victory that would result from His confrontation with the evil powers of darkness at the cross of Calvary. From that moment there would be peace

for all who would "put their hand into the hand of the Man Who calmed the sea." "I will say of the Lord, He is **my** refuge."

An interesting note may be made as to the title of Psalm 46, which is there stated to be a "song of Alamothe." The probable meaning of this is "A song for the maiden sopranos". The sweet voices of faithful women could no doubt express the threefold harmony of such themes more beautifully than others. The full choir of "young men and maidens ; old men, and children", are referred to in Psalm 148 : 12/13, where they praise the Name of Jehovah.

The punctuating "Selah" at the end of verse 3 demands our careful reflection on the fact that "God is our REFUGE," and that he who knows this will not fear, even in times of the most violent upheaval. The next stanza of our Psalm comprises vv. 4/7 and strikes another harmonious note in this tuneful trio. "There is a RIVER, the streams whereof make glad the city of God." We read of a river which went out of Eden, to water the garden, and doubtless its pristine sweetness and sparkling flow gladdened all around. But how soon were these waters to be polluted by the influx of man's sin and the poison of the Serpent. How soon indeed was man to experience the insatiable thirst of a wilderness world, no longer the Paradise of God. And so, down through the ages of human history every conceivable attempt has been made by man to slake his thirst in a multitude of ways. In Jeremiah 2 : 13 God complained that His people had committed two evils : "they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Who of us has not done just this ? With the result so often sung in the lines of the hymn :—

" I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But, ah, the waters failed ;
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
And mocked me as I wailed."

But while this is true, our "Song upon Alamothe" soars to a new and encouraging note, affirming that, "there is a River, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," not arising from any earthly source, but brought within reach of the thirsty soul. A glance at Psalm 36 : 8/9 will verify this, for there we read, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the Fountain of life ; and in Thy light shall we see light." How quickly our minds travel from this to the words of Jesus Himself, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his inward being shall flow rivers of living water." The fact thus comes to light that the RIVER of Psalm 46 has come within the reach of the believer in Jesus and he who drinks becomes himself a channel for the dispersal of the living streams to others. The city of God comes into view, a concept treasured by every believer from Abraham onwards (cf. Hebrews 11 : 10) because **there** is the source of that River, eloquently described in Revelation 22 : 1 as "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." There Abraham's faith is fulfilled, in "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," and there is the Home of every soul who

has already tasted the heavenly streams in the desert of this world. Surely **this** is the antidote to the poisonous pollution of political propoganda that flows in a steady stream from our news media making it almost impossible to discern truth from falsehood. We cannot isolate ourselves from the raging tumult of national and international crises all around us, and indeed we have a great responsibility to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life" (Philippians 2 : 15/16). Involvement with the needs and concerns of those around us is thus inescapable as those who know the gladness and satisfaction of having tasted of heavenly springs, for how else could there "flow rivers of living water" to thirsty souls on all sides ?

The contrast between a bright flowing river and a stagnant, sterile pool is easily appreciated but just such is the contrast, not so readily recognised, between the crystal clear, gladdening flow of the River of God, and the sin-contaminated reservoirs of man's resources. The latter is found to contain such futile expedients as "trancendental meditation" or quickly alternates to alcohol, drugs, stimulants, opiates and tranquilisers and worse. But the former is the pure, heavenly, peace-imparting flow from the very throne of God where, as G. Gilpin's lovely lines express it ;

" There only is the Fountain,
Whence Living waters flow,
Which like a glorious River,
Still gladden as they go."

"The Rest" is not an expression used in the last stanza of our trilogy, but the thought is germane to verses 8/11 where God Himself calls a halt to the world-wide holocaust of war and desolation to make His voice heard, so long unheeded by men and nations, "Be still, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." One of the most difficult exercises in life is to be still, to voluntarily relax from the driving wheel along the road of life and allow someone else to take over. The storm of fear and panic within the breasts of the disciples almost matched the storm of wind and waves on the sea, when "the Master of ocean, and earth, and skies" rose with majestic command saying, "Peace, be still". "And there was a great calm," within and without. Little wonder that Mary A. Baker in the last line of her fine hymn, "Peace ! be still", seeing the connection between the internal and external storms thus pacified, wrote thus : "Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored, And heaven's within my breast."

In these days of national and international strife, and economic and industrial dissidence, we listen in vain for the voice of a leader who will either himself, or on the part of others, look to God and cry to Him for the answer to the present calamitous state of unrest. Are we as Christians as prayerfully concerned as we should be for men in authority (1 Timothy 1 : 1/2) and leaders who carry the heavy burdens of government ? Our deep desire for them should be that they should hear the voice that still says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Until that voice is heeded unrest can only increase. In grace His voice can be heard to-day, but the day will come when men will be **compelled** to listen,

and to hand over their unhappy, restless world to Him Who alone will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." Meanwhile, with heart and conscience set at rest through redemption's work, the believer in Jesus knows that his ultimate rest lies beyond this scene. "There **remaineth** therefore a rest to the people of God." (Hebrews 4 : 9) All our present labour and service is in view of "that day of cloudless ray, that prospect bright, unfailling, where God shall shine in light divine, in glory never fading." Then it will be said, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy ; **He will rest in His love**, He will joy over thee with singing." (Zephaniah 3 : 17)

The third "Selah" of our jubilant "Song of Alamothe (the maidens' song)" calls upon us to pause and consider the whole trilogy of Psalm 46, raising our spirits above and beyond the encircling gloom of this present day, to rejoice in the fact that "God is our **refuge**", that the **river** of God still flows in joyous abundance, and that **rest**, in the fullest sense of the word, will fill this scene when He makes His voice heard saying, "Be still, and know that I am God." Then, "He'll bid the whole creation smile, and hush its groan." "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." (Hebrews 4 : 11)

MY SHEPHERD

JOHN BARNES

Psalm 23

"**T**HE Lord is my Shepherd." It is asserted that the name Jehovah, here translated Lord, is based on the three main tense forms of the verb "to be," past, present and future. Applied to the Lord Jesus we may think of it in the words of the epistle to the Hebrews, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and for ever." 13 : 8. The book of the Revelation also tells us of "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." 1 : 4. Jehovah is the "Self-existing One ;" He relies on no one, is self-sufficient, self-reliant in an absolute way. No circumstances can take Him unawares, no event can find Him unprepared. He knows the future as well as He knows the past for all is present to Him who inhabits eternity. This is the One, the LORD, who is my Shepherd.

He is my **Shepherd**. A shepherd is devoted to his sheep. He lives with them, sleeps with them and, so often, watches over them unsleeping. Jehovah neither slumbers nor sleeps. In Genesis 31 : 40 Jacob very touchingly describes the devotion of a shepherd. "Thus it was with me : in the day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep fled from mine eyes." The whole passage is worth reading in this connection. In the Lord's own description of the Good Shepherd He tells us of the extent to which His devotedness goes. "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." The Lord is my **Shepherd**.

He is **my** Shepherd. The flock is large, composed of men and women of every tribe and nation. The interests of the Lord are immense and universal. He not only cares for the families of His own but governs and controls the affairs of the nations and, indeed, upholds all things

by the word of His power, yet each believer can say, "The Lord is **my** Shepherd." He cares for me, he is interested in my case, and he loves me. The apostle Paul could say, "The Son of God. . . loved me and gave Himself for me."

In all that the Lord is in Himself he is devoted to His sheep. If I can claim Him as my Shepherd, I can claim all the value of what that supreme name means: all that it stands for in power, intelligence, affection, protection and grace. Moreover, He is unchanging. What He was He is and ever will be. David knew what shepherd care was all about. He was a shepherd and his sheep could depend on him, could count on his courage and devotedness to protect them from the lion and the bear, for he had proved himself in such affrays. So, we too can rely on our Lord, our Shepherd, who has encountered mighty foes on our behalf and has annulled them. And He is the same yesterday and today and for ever.

"I shall not want." As one of His sheep I can depend on Him. A sheep does not think for itself; the shepherd does the thinking. So the sheep can say, "I shall not want." One places oneself, experimentally, in the efficient hands of the Great Shepherd and thus one is enabled to expect Shepherd care. Not only do we need sustenance, we also need guidance and protection. All these blessings are provided, as the Psalm shews. There is no want for one of Jehovah's sheep. Those who, protectionless and helpless, throw themselves on His strong arm, find that they lack no good thing.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." **Green** pastures. Sweet, succulent grass is what sheep need and when they lie down in it they do so because they have eaten their fill and enjoy a sense of security. So they ruminate and extract the maximum benefit from their industrious grazing. A farmer once said to me; "Grazing is not feeding. I never consider my animals to be feeding unless they are chewing the cud; it is then that they are putting on the flesh." Tender grass is suitable food even for the lambs of the flock.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Waters of quietness, as they may be called. He **leads** me there; the Shepherd precedes the sheep. Refreshment is needed and life-sustaining water, acutely so in a dry and thirsty land, and the Shepherd knows where to find it. He trod the way Himself: "He shall drink of the brook by the way." What He found for Himself He makes available for the flock. His resources, as Man in humility, were in His God, and He opens up this rich source on behalf of His own. Waters of quietness indeed! There **must** be rest and refreshment where He found it and it is the Son of God who says, "My peace give I unto you."

"He restoreth my soul." This takes care of the slips and falls to which we are peculiarly exposed. The Shepherd is not bent on destruction; it is in care and restoration that He takes pleasure. Luke 15 portrays the tenderness of the Shepherd who sought His straying sheep **till He found it**, and having found it He brought it home supported on His shoulders. He whose devotedness took Him even unto death will certainly keep till the day of glory. "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory." The Great Shepherd who guides us through the trackless wilderness will complete His work as

the Chief Shepherd and receive us to glory with Himself.

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” Again He goes before ; He trod this path Himself. “I have not hid Thy righteousness within My heart. . .” (Psalm 40) The path of righteousness entailed untold suffering for Him and it will bring trials to us as we follow it, but it is for His name’s sake. Suffering for Him and with Him surely brings His consolations to the tried believer. (2 Corinthians 1)

“For His name’s sake.” It is in keeping with His character. His object in all He calls us to pass through is the formation in us of those excellencies which marked Him in His walk. He desires them to be developed in the saints now. Thus where He trod we are led, that “We should walk as He walked.”

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” Whatever the conditions we need fear no evil. This world is a place of death, a dark valley grim with the sights and sounds of woe and misery. We need feel no fear in these surroundings. As David descended into the valley of Elah prior to meeting and defeating his great antagonist, Goliath, so our Shepherd has been into the valley, and the assurance of this removes the terror of the valley from our souls. Where He has been His sheep need not fear to go. He would not allow them to go where He had not, already, been before them. But not only has He been there before us (and this fact alone would encourage us) but He also assures us each one in the wonderful promise, “**I am with thee.**” The Mighty One who smashed the power of the enemy is with us as we journey through an alien land. We travel with the Conqueror and so need fear no evil.

“Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” They are both for comfort—the verb is applied to both nouns. Chastisement, proper in its place, does not seem to be the thought of this Psalm. Chastisement is considered in relation to sons, not sheep ; “He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” So the rod may be thought of as an instrument used punitively against the enemies of the flock, serpents, wolves and so on ; while the staff may be thought of as used protectively for the guidance and recovery of the sheep in difficulty and in need of support. All this is available for the very feeblest of the Lord’s people.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” In the very territory of our foes a feast is spread ; a **feast**, not a hurried snack snatched in desperation in concealment, but a feast, spread upon a table. This suggests confidence to enjoy to the full the bounty provided as well as fulness of supply. We can sit at His table and benefit from the fellowship provided there.

“Thou anointest my head with oil.” The blessed comfort and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit of God is the inalienable heritage of every believer. “He shall abide with you for ever.” Another Patron, His presence with us is the abiding proof of the unfailing faithfulness of our exalted Lord.

“My cup runneth over.” To have some joy in life is blessing indeed, for so many have very little in this troubled world. To have full joy is more than most would dare to hope for. To have the cup of life overflowing is bounty not less than divine. So the rich overflow can go up in worship to the Father and can flow out in service and testimony to men,

thus fulfilling the dual priesthood so beautifully referred to by the Apostle Peter ; the holy priesthood, with its service Godward and the royal priesthood with its service manward. (1 Peter 2)

Our cup could not be expected to **contain** the fulness because, "The Lord is the portion. . . of my cup." (Psalm 16) This is infinitude, and as we remember the finite capacity of our own tiny vessels we must be sure that such vessels would overflow. I am aware that it is the Spirit of Christ Himself speaking in this Psalm, but His experience can be ours except that He had the capacity to contain all the fulness and we have not. (Colossians 1 : 19)

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." **Surely!** Jehovah's great name opens the Psalm therefore the writer ends on this note of supreme confidence. The writer is not yet occupied with the future blessing in the house but is still thinking of "all the days of my life." But life shall assuredly be marked by goodness and mercy when Jehovah Himself guides. His mercies are new every morning of every day and His goodness fails not no matter how difficult the day.

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The whole of life's journey is cared for ; refreshment, restoration, rest ; provision, protection, peace ; everything we may need. Nothing is omitted, no good is withheld, no voice can condemn, no foe can separate, no reservation can be discovered. And when life's pilgrimage is at last over, I shall dwell in the house of **Jehovah** for ever, no more to go out, never to wander, to err or to fall into sin again. To be there, fitted to be there, happy to be there, and Himself happy to have me there—this is bliss indeed. It is true of everyone who can truly say, **the Lord is my Shepherd.**

A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE ——— COLIN CURRY

(Resumed into the New Testament)

1. ASPECTS OF THE SECOND COMING

IN passing to the New Testament we could well turn directly to our Lord's own words on prophetic matters, particularly in chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew's gospel. On balance, however, it seems wiser to deal first with a new aspect of the second coming which comes to the fore in the New Testament. In the first gospel, continuity with the Old Testament is prominent, and our Lord looks on to the end in a way which keeps the Jewish hopes central. His words link closely with themes we have touched on in recent papers. In the fourth gospel, however, we find Him looking ahead in a different sense. He foresees the Christian era, He speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit, of the day of His absence, of the period when faith in **Him** will be the key to the full Christian knowledge of God. What characterises the present day is the revelation of God as Father, seen in the Son, known and responded to by the Holy

Spirit. This knowledge lies at the heart of the Christian life and experience. It is an experience entered into while our Lord is absent, but to be consummated at His coming again. He Himself will return to translate and welcome all His people into the eternal home (John 14 : 1-3). It is important to see that our Lord's own words about the Christian hope distinguish it clearly from the Jewish hope. The Christian hope must be thought of as more immediate, and in some senses distinct from those prospects which are the main concern of prophetic teaching.

According to the New Testament the theme of the church of God was hidden in earlier times, but is clearly manifested now (Colossians 1 : 24-26). There can be no surprise therefore that the hope of the church is not an Old Testament theme. In the New Testament there are **many** references to it. This again is to be expected since most of the New Testament is directed towards present-day believers, whose hope it is. Some of the allusions to it are brief, such as Philippians 3 : 20, 21 ; Romans 13 : 11 ; Ephesians 1 : 14 etc. Others give more detail ; 1 Corinthians 15 : 51ff and 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13-18, for example. The reader is invited to make a comparison between **these** passages and others which speak of the effects of Christ's second advent in the world at large. As samples of these in the New Testament, one might begin with Luke 21 : 24-27 ; 2 Thessalonians 1 : 6-10 ; 2 Peter 3 : 3-7 ; Revelation 1 : 7 ; 6 : 15-17 ; and chapters 19 and 20. Such a comparison reinforces the reality of this distinction. We shall certainly be confused if we do not make it.

The two letters to the Thessalonians, taken together, provide our main scriptural guidance on this distinction. We make some broad statements covering both letters first, and later outline a crucial passage from each letter.

General Points Emerging from the Letters

(1) The letters came into being in the following way. The visit by Paul and Silas to Thessalonica, the preaching of the gospel and the beginnings of the Christian company there, are related in Acts 17. Paul's stay in Thessalonica was short, yet the work accomplished for God was real, and there was strong opposition to it. Though Paul had to leave them quickly, the Christian assembly thrived and increased, and their faith was spoken about throughout the whole vicinity. Early in their experience as Christians, however, these Thessalonians faced severe problems to which they did not have the answer. As these distressing situations arose, Paul's letters provided the teaching which would help them in their difficulties. Incomplete understanding of some features of the second coming lay at the root of their bewilderment. They rightly clung to the expectation of Christ's return as an important and practical feature of their faith ; yet they were confused about some of the details, and this affected their outlook and conduct. Paul himself had special enlightenment from the Lord, and special authority to pass it on, in order to meet the difficulty which prompted the first letter (see 4 : 15). Here is heartening teaching about the vital moment which is ahead for all Christians (whether dead or living when it comes), occasioned by the very uncertainty and sadness of those who first needed it. On the other

hand the second letter **reminds** them of teaching already received (see 2 : 5). "The day of the Lord" will not arrive until certain happenings (which are the signal of its arrival) are clearly taking place.

Taken together then, the two letters have the effect of distinguishing things that differ in this important area of teaching. Since the present paper also has this aim it must reflect the content of the letters as faithfully as possible.

(2) The letters certainly do not seek to comfort Christians by belittling the troubles ahead for the world. On the contrary, they present as dark a picture of the coming day of the Lord as can be found anywhere in Scripture. Paul confirms all that the Old Testament had said about the day when God's judgments would be felt amongst the disobedient and unbelieving on earth. The letters take "the wrath to come" to be a reality ; yet they also say that Christians look for God's Son from heaven as their deliverer from it (1 Thessalonians 1 : 10). They say that the day of the Lord **will** come as a thief in the night, with no escape for those who are oblivious to its proximity. But they also say that that day will **not** overtake Christians. "God hath not appointed us (Christians) to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5 : 1-9). They speak of a time when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven", unsparing in His judgment upon all disobedient and rebellious elements (2 Thessalonians 1 : 6-10). Yet they also speak of rest and respite for those who believe, at the very time when these judgements are in progress, and of glory and admiration for their Lord at the very sight of them in that day. They speak of dark events ahead, alongside which the present distresses of the Thessalonians would seem small, but they show that these prospects held no menace for **them**. Christians are aware of grim trends already current today, but will not be involved when the climax of these movements is reached. According to Revelation 3 : 10 they will be kept from "the hour of tribulation" which is coming. Instead, a bright hope and a bright future await them, the completion of God's gracious work within them, already begun. A feature of these letters is their insistence on the theme that, while severe trouble is coming for the world, salvation from it (in the fullest sense) is the hope of the Christian.

(3) It is a repeated assumption in these letters that, in the day of His public manifestation, believers of the present day will appear **with** Christ. Colossians 3 : 4 says this directly, but again and again in the Thessalonian letters there is support for this. "The Lord. . . stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **with** all his saints" ; "Them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring **with** him" ; "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, in that day" (1 Thessalonians 3 : 13 ; 4 : 14 ; 2 Thessalonians 1 : 10).

(4) Often in Scripture "the coming" of Christ indicates a well-defined point in time. The passages mentioned above (under (3)) are not the only examples in these letters. It will be a tremendous turning-point in the affairs of earth. It is hard to visualise in advance the breathtaking nature of the glory and power then to be seen. The severity of the blow that will fall on all resistance to God is also difficult to imagine. Our Lord will put down the ultimate rebellion with "the brightness of

his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2 : 8). 2 Thessalonians 1 : 7, 8 seems equally sharp and decisive. "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24 : 27). Daniel 2 : 34, 35 is a good sample of an Old Testament passage which pin-points this same moment.

(5) It would, however, be too simple to think of the second advent as entirely confined to a precise moment of time. There are preparatory stages which are part of the whole event and cannot be divorced from it. These seem to be of two main kinds. First, His appearing will be the final stage of a period of progressive judgments from God, in the hands of our Lord, though from behind the scenes. 2 Thessalonians 2 suggests a period (not necessarily a long one), during which many will be deceived, and a great rebellion against God mounted before complete and utter judgment falls. The book of Revelation covers this in more detail.

Secondly, as already stated, Christ's coming will bring out into the open the effects of His own gracious work within those that believe. In this sense also it will crown processes which have matured over a period (a long period in this instance ; over the whole "day of grace" in fact). The final stages of the salvation which believers enjoy today, the very redemption of their bodies, are a necessary preliminary to their appearing with their Lord in glory. The Lord's coming for His own, to change them into His likeness, and to welcome them into His immediate presence, is something distinct from His later and more public appearance. The distinction which these letters draw between these two events could hardly be sharper.

(6) In places in these letters Paul is giving the Thessalonians new instruction, while elsewhere he relies on knowledge they already possessed. Particularly, note the contrast between 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13 and 1 Thessalonians 5 : 1, 2. A subject which he assumes they know nothing about, and another on which he knows they are already well-informed, cannot (one would think) be the same subject. The new instruction is not connected with Old Testament prophecy (it comes directly from the Lord). It relates to the hope of Christians of the present era. Their knowledge about prophetic matters was sufficient ; he had no need to say more about it. In Paul's mind the Lord's coming for His people was quite distinct from His coming "as a thief in the night" in judgment on a complacent and unbelieving world.

In concluding this section let us note how all this teaching falls into place when we think of the hope of the Church as the most immediate prospect of all. At one and the same instant this will terminate the Church period, fulfilling beyond expectation the hope of every believer today, removing them one and all from the arena where judgments are about to fall. At the same time the stage will be set for the resumption of prophetic fulfilments, the last prophetic "week" of Daniel's vision, the time of great tribulation, and finally our Lord's manifestation in glory.

Christ's Coming for His People

1 Thessalonians 4 : 13-18 is the crucial passage on this subject. The future of "the dead in Christ" is the central issue here. To the Thessalon-

ian Christians the prospect of the coming of Christ was so real, and so immediate, that death was an unforeseen eventuality. They were greatly confused and disheartened when some amongst them actually died. It seemed to them that these would miss the joy and the blessing that Christ's return would bring. Paul's words are directed towards removing their depression and uncertainty, and replacing it by comfort and hope even in the face of death amongst their number. The essence of the teaching is as follows.

When our Lord openly appears, to receive and establish the kingdom of which He is the Heir, He will not appear alone. Amongst those who will appear with Him will be those who at present "sleep in Jesus". The very first action taken by our Lord, when the time for action comes, will concern His people. **First** the dead in Christ, **then** the living Christians will be affected. **Resurrection** of the dead in the image of Christ will take place, followed by **changing** of the living (also into that likeness). Then all will be caught away together, to meet Him and ever to be with Him. Thus, patently, in making clear what will become of those already passed from this life, the future of every believer is explained. It is a matter as much to be believed as the basic tenets of our faith, the death and resurrection of our Lord (see verse 14). Though there may be delay, the time will surely come when our Lord intervenes for His people, destroying the very grip of death itself. With no exceptions every single believer will be changed into His likeness and translated into His presence. We await the commanding shout from Himself which will effect it. It is a hope which softens sorrows, and gives the Christian nerve to continue in the path of faith which he needs to tread.

The directness and simplicity of the statements made in this passage are evident. The main question is whether they are accepted with equal simplicity. Even in natural things a hopeful prospect is a great spur to brightness of spirit, and imparts a sense that life is worthwhile. How much more is this so in the Christian life, with such an unsurpassable prospect perhaps just around the corner now?

Signs of "the Day of the Lord"

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 has a different and more sombre theme. Paul is concerned here to remove confusion amongst his readers by discounting the false idea that the day of the Lord had already arrived. He does this by showing that when it comes, the day of the Lord will be **clearly** signposted. Certain things must occur first, according to this passage. This is in strong contrast to 1 Thessalonians 4, where the moment described in verse 16 has every appearance of being entirely unheralded. Here Paul's main object is to quieten and settle his readers; plainly these marks of the onset of God's judgments on earth were not then in evidence. This is still the position today. As the end of this chapter shows, Paul, in speaking of these coming horrors does not in any sense refer to them as part of the future experience of Christian readers.

In short, this passage gives more detail about events in the post-Christian period. It takes us back into the main field of prophetic teaching. It will be sufficient to mention only the prominent points. Paul states

here (verses 3 and 4) that a great apostasy (an open revolt against God), reaching its climax in a person (the Antichrist), will point out the proximity of the day of the Lord. His end will be sudden and sure (verse 8), but the period of his activities will be a dark one indeed. There are stark and solemn words here about the fate of those who have persisted in unbelief and rejection of the truth. The possibility of repentance will have gone. God Himself will then confirm in full measure the delusion which men themselves have preferred. We live in a day when there are still restraints on the mounting tide of evil, though clearly these are loosening. What cause we have for thankfulness to God for the sovereign grace which will soon lift us into His presence ! Only then will evil be allowed to show its full character, and receive its just judgment.

BOOK REVIEW

DISPENSATIONALISM TODAY

by Charles Caldwell Ryrie

The Moody Press, Chicago. 1965. Eighth Printing, 1973.

MY attention has only recently been recalled to this book, which does not appear to be very readily available in Britain. The Foreword by Frank E. Gaebelin states that "Dr. Ryrie's book is the first book-length contemporary apologetic for dispensationalism to be written by a recognized scholar". My reason for reviewing it now is that for most of our readers the recognition of the dispensations as the obvious way of viewing the development of the Bible revelation is as natural as the air they breath. Consequently they will not be aware how widely what Dr Ryrie calls dispensationalism is rejected by evengelical Christians in general.

It is regrettable that we have to think and speak always in terms of Isms and Ists. This characteristic of our times subtly suggests that there is no such thing as the truth of God on any subject which we can be assured of and hold fast through thick and thin. Every point of view regarding Scripture is just another Ism, and we can take our choice. That there are matters about which there cannot be such certainty because they are not plainly revealed in Scripture there is, of course, no doubt ; but it is not less a fact that doctrines which should be held most dearly as indisputable Bible truths are degraded either intentionally or otherwise by the terms used. Among the latter the present writer most certainly holds the millennial reign of Christ. Paul is most solemnly asserting that his heart is in such a manner involved in the doctrine of the millennial reign of Christ by describing himself among them that love His appearing. (2 Timothy 4 : 8)

"Dispensationalism Today" sets out dispensationalism over against covenant theology. This review will not pay much attention to covenant theology because it is not very important today, at any rate in Britain. However, that there are beliefs which stand over against dispensationalism ought to be recognised by every informed student of Scripture, and

the consequences of such beliefs carefully noted.

The most important confrontation, (at least in Britain), is not between dispensationalism and covenant theology, but between dispensationalism and a-millennialism, that is, the denial that there is to be a yet future earthly reign of Christ when Israel will be restored nationally.

Before dealing with the ramifications of this statement, we will take note of Ryrie's remarks about the essentials of a developed dispensational belief. "What marks off a man as a dispensationalist?" (p.43) The two principal parts of the answer are, first, given in a statement of an enemy of dispensationalism: "the basic premise of dispensationalism is two purposes of God expressed in the formation of two peoples (that is, Israel and the Church) who maintain their distinction throughout eternity." Ryrie concludes: "This is probably the most basically theological test of whether or not a man is a dispensationalist. . . . A man who fails to distinguish Israel and the Church will inevitably not hold to dispensational distinctions".

Secondly, "a consistently literal or plain interpretation of Scripture is indicative of a dispensational approach". (The central consequence implied here is that what the Old Testament affirms regarding Israel, Judah and Jerusalem must not be spiritualised so as to be applied to, and fulfilled in, the Church.)

In the almighty providence of God, the Reformers were the instruments for the recovery of most important truths, and perhaps Wesley in the 18th century occupied a similar position. In like manner under God, J. N. Darby was the instrument for the recovery from centuries of darkness of the essential New Testament emphasis on the distinction between the calling and destiny of Israel and the Church, and consequently, as no-one really doubts, Darby was also the teacher who, under God, gave its own true fulness to the recognition of dispensations in Scripture. In pp. 71 to 74 Ryrie purports to deal with "the period before Darby", but by his own test, the distinction between Israel and the Church, the contribution of the writers quoted is but shadowy. Ryrie himself makes this abundantly clear on p. 132: "Bass is quite accurate, however, in stating that 'whatever evaluation history may make of this movement, it will attest that dispensationalism is rooted in Darby's concept of the church—a concept which sharply divides the church from Israel.'"

Most readers of "Scripture Truth" will, I repeat, have no question about the truth of the church as an essential of Christianity, and hence will hold dispensational differences in Scripture as most surely to be believed. Many of them will not realise how widespread among evangelical Christians, including the most eminent and respected names and platforms, is the rejection of belief in the Millennium, that is, the yet future earthly reign of Christ with His saints, and with the restoration of Israel. Along with these denials there is almost always the assertion of the essential one-ness of the people of God in all ages. These beliefs entered the post-Reformation Christian world by one man—John Calvin. The English and Scottish clergy who fled from the "Monstrous Regiment of Women" sat at his feet in Geneva, and his teachings have never lost their hold on evangelical clergy and ministers. I believe that it is with direct reference to these matters and to these

shortcomings in Reformed doctrine and practice that we have from the Lord Himself in Revelation 3 : 2 "I have not found thy works perfect before God."

Many will be disposed, out of respect for eminent names, to respond to these remarks with the question, Does it matter? We must most emphatically reply that it **does** matter. In these truths consists a large part of the difference between confessing and practising a New Testament Christianity or not. The two doctrinal essentials of a really New Testament Christianity are as follows.

(1) The Revelation of the Father's Name. This is a most profound matter, which cannot be dismissed with a word, and is connected with Dr. Ryrie's themes. One element alone can here be mentioned, the use of the O.T. Book of Psalms in what aims to be Christian worship. This, of course, was always true of the pre-Reformation Churches, but was taken over by the reformers, notably Calvin, who thereby rivetted O.T. religion on what should have been the church of the New Testament. This use of the Psalms removes at a stroke the worship of such Churches from being the worship of the Father, the **new** worship, which the Son of God announced for the 'hour' that was coming in complete contrast with both the Jewish and Samaritan worship. The worship of the Psalms is addressed to the Elohim named Jehovah, and not to the Father.

(2) The mystery of the Church and its place in the counsel of God and the love of Christ, hidden in all previous ages but now made known to form the completion of revelation.

This brings us to a very interesting point, very prominent in Ryrie, that the insistence on a dispensational view, giving full place to the essentials of Christianity just detailed, is a minority position in the Christian profession. This appears in "Dispensationalism Today" in connection with Darby's teaching on apostasy in the church. (pp. 152-154) Dr. Ryrie concludes that "the Bible does definitely and clearly teach that there was, is, and will be apostasy in the professing church. The doctrine is not a figment in the dispensationalist imagination." On the further question, What should be the Christian's attitude towards it? Ryrie gives a range of possibilities, but it seems fair to quote, "To be an ecclesiastical isolationist is wrong". It would be very interesting to know how and where he draws the line between isolation and separation. The position taken by Darby in obedience to 2 Timothy was that separation within the great house of professing Christendom is the only way for the faithful.

In practical matters, of course, and still remaining in clear connection with the dispensational field, the points explicitly dealt with are not the only grounds for the need for separation. The whole system of a church ministry based on a separate class of the ordained, a one man ministry, rests on absolutely nothing else than a carry-over from Judaism of its separate class of priests. It is a facet of the confusion which follows from the failure to distinguish between Israel and the Church. A church practice which even tries to obey Scripture regarding the variety and necessity of **all** the gifts cannot much better mix with any system of ordained ministry than oil with water.

Although the reviewer is ignorant of Dr. Ryrie's position on other points, this book deserves the most careful study. [Ed.]

CORRESPONDENCE

The following letter has been received from Mr. David Campion of Kings Norton, Birmingham, by way of comment on the paper "Don't Worry" which appeared on pp. 273/5 in November 1973.

Worry : Wrong and Right.

The anxious care which is wrong and bad :—

1). **Worry about the affairs of life.**

Matthew 6 : 25. "Do not be careful (full of care) about your life, what ye shall eat, drink and be clothed with".

It is wrong to worry about the affairs of this life because :—

a) it supposes our Heavenly Father does not care, whereas creation teaches us that the one who nourishes the birds and clothes the herbage of the field does care, and will provide for those He considers "more excellent than they".

b) it supposes that God does not know, (v. 32) when the foregoing verses indicate that He is acquainted with the needs of all.

c) it supposes that God is unable or unwilling to supply our needs, when creation displays both His ability and willingness to meet the needs of His creatures.

d) it denies our relationship with our heavenly Father. The heathen (v. 32) are anxious about these things.

To observe with attention the birds and flowers is the cure for this kind of anxiety.

2) **Anxious care about the future**

Matthew 6 : 34. "Be not careful therefore about the future".

Anxiety about the future is wrong because :—

a) it denies the fact that God is in control of every situation, and knows the end from the beginning.

b) it will prevent us from coping with the evils of today, which evils are limited to our capacity to endure them.

c) when the evils of tomorrow become today's evils we will be less able to cope with them.

3) **The care of this world (age)**

Matthew 13 : 22. "The anxious care of this world (age). . . chokes the word".

The anxiety which comes from over-occupation with the affairs of this world is wrong because it chokes the word and we become unfruitful.

The antidote for this anxiety is occupation with eternal things, things related to the world to come.

4) **Anxious care about many things.**

Luke 10 : 41. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things ; but one thing is needful".

Martha was distracted with much serving and a critical spirit :
 “Dost Thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone”.

The remedy for this form of anxiety in service is sitting down at the feet of Jesus and listening to His word.

The anxious care which is right and good :—

1) The anxious care of all the assemblies.

2 Corinthians 11 : 28. “that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

Perhaps it was given to Paul alone to experience this crowd of care pressing on him daily. The way in which he experiences this anxiety is two-fold : “ Who is weak and I am not weak ? ” and “ Who is stumbled and I burn not ? ” This anxiety is not the result of lack of faith, but a deep concern and deep compassion for all the assemblies.

2) Anxious care for a particular assembly.

Philippians 2 : 20. “ For I have no man likeminded who will care with genuine feeling how you get on.”

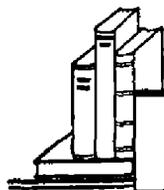
If we cannot feel such anxiety at the weakness and stumbling of all the assemblies, perhaps we can for a particular assembly. This anxious care for the Philippians on the part of Timothy was the result of abandoning his own things for the things of Jesus, (v. 21) in the true spirit of the Lord Jesus as shown in 2 : 5/8. Surely one cannot seek one’s own interests and comfort, and care with genuine feeling how the saints get on.

3) Anxious care for one another.

1 Corinthians 12 : 25. “the members (of the body) should have the same care one for another”.

Perhaps our solicitude does not extend to one assembly, let alone all the assemblies, yet we ought to have care for each other. This displays the fact that we are Christ’s body and members in particular in a very practical way. Where this concern one for another is manifested there will be no schism in the body.

(The letter added a note to the effect that while a study of a particular original word yielded the very interesting results given in detail, very similar studies would obviously urge us to a greater concern for the Lord’s things. He might also in these circumstances have added concern for the gospel and for the unsaved. 2 Thessalonians 3 : 1 and Romans 10 : 1. Ed.)



A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE ——— COLIN CURRY

2. OUR LORD'S OWN WORDS ABOUT THE FUTURE

(Matthew 24 and 25)

The Question Answered

OUR Lord's prophetic discourse must be seen in its context. The closing verses of the previous chapter describe His grief over Jerusalem and His reluctant acceptance of His rejection there. In the final verse He foresees a distant day when He will yet be welcomed. Out of harrowing experiences a change of heart towards Him will take place, though the details are not given here. The opening of chapter 24 shows the disciples drawing attention to the impressive temple buildings ; He answers this by speaking of their total destruction soon to come. All that a Jew found so splendid was soon to be rased to the ground. It was inevitable in view of their attitude to Him. This prompts the disciples to ask "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" It is important to see that **this** is the question answered in these chapters, and it is with the question asked **in this context** that He deals. Most of what follows relates to those with Jewish hopes, in the end-times towards which prophetic passages look.

The People Addressed

Our Lord speaks to the disciples as they were at the time. He treats them as having (rightly at this stage) Jewish hopes and Jewish horizons only in their minds. He understands their disappointment that all these prospects might seem to be dashed. There are repeated references to matters of prime concern to godly Jews ; He refers to Jerusalem, to the temple, to the holy place, to Judea (23 : 37 ; 24 : 2, 15, 16 etc.). He regards the disciples as the few who were faithful amongst an unbelieving generation. The label "this generation" appears in this gospel again and again as a designation for the unbelieving mass of the Jewish nation. This mass attitude to Him was to persist for a long time, according to His view of the future. That unfaithful majority would still figure prominently in those end-days about which the disciples had asked. How the faithful were to act (in later times, as well as at the time of speaking), in the presence of general unbelief amongst their countrymen, is the burden of His message to them. Some of these words would no doubt give guidance at the time when, a few decades later, Jerusalem would be sacked by the Romans. In many of the details, however, His

words reach forward to a still later time. He is answering a question about "the end of the age". There is wisdom here particularly for the successors of His disciples in a future day when Jerusalem and Judea, and their Roman overlords will come prominently into the picture again. Needless to say there is also general guidance for **any** who would be faithful in intervening times, though this is not the main purpose.

The Kind of Advice Given

Our Lord guides His hearers in two ways in these chapters. First, He warns and encourages them in a direct, authoritative manner. Secondly, He draws lessons from "likenesses" to the real situation which will then obtain. Running constantly through His words are a few main themes. It seems best to pick these out first, before looking at the background of events in which His directions are to be followed.

To the faithful minority amongst the unfaithful masses the various strands of advice, pressed repeatedly, are as follows :

(a) Long patience and endurance will be needed. Delay must not surprise them. They are to expect opposition and pressure of various kinds. They must "hang on" patiently through it, and at all costs (see 24 : 6, 8, 48 ; 25 : 5, 19). Hope and salvation lie at the end.

(b) They must continually be on guard against deception and falsehood. The distinction between false and true (persons, and suggestions) will not be obvious. Unless strengthened by faith, and the wisdom which His word provides, they may easily be misled (see 24 : 4, 5, 11, 24).

(c) Warnings are given against loss of hope, unreadiness, torpor, unfaithfulness, and moral inconsistency with the expectation of Christ's coming (see 24 : 12, 42, 44, 50 ; 25 : 5, 10, 13, 26). It would at all times be serious to fail to be alert ; and particularly so at one or two crucial stages. He defines these closely (see below).

The Situation Requiring it

None of these lines of advice is irrelevant to godly people in any day, so that we too may gain from the passage. We can sense, however, the immense value of these firm, reliable, words for those who will find themselves in the exact situation He describes, the circumstances of those end-days are described by our Lord from the standpoint of those who will be facing them.

There seem to be two parts to the total span of time covered by verses 4 to 44. There is a period of mounting testing for the faithful which is nevertheless described as "the beginning of sorrows" ; and there is a second stage described as one of "great tribulation" the like of which there never has been, nor will be. The first phase is one during which the faithful must continue steadfastly to the end. The watchword for them is "endure". This will be needed in the face of deception and all kinds of disquieting rumours, conflicts and troubles. There will be much to dishearten, many will lose heart and grow cold, others will act in treachery. Our Lord's calm and quietening word to them, in view of all this, is "see that ye be not troubled". The godly are to carry on unmoved, patiently waiting for the end however long it may seem. Meanwhile, a message of hope and a call for repentance will be proclaimed

on the widest front. The expectation of the King will be witnessed to in all quarters, "and **then** shall the end come" (verse 14). Regarding the earlier period our Lord's comment was "the end is not yet". From verse 15 "the end" has arrived, i.e. the second stage of the whole period.

The turning point is very decisive. When they see it they must **act**. Immediate flight to the hill-country of Judea is urgent. Safety will be outside Jerusalem. At this critical point our Lord connects what He says with Daniel's prophecy. Probably Daniel 12 : 11 is the verse alluded to, but there is a clear link with 9 : 27. Midway through the "last" week the severest trouble would start, according to Daniel (chapter 12 spells out the half-week in days). Here in Matthew too, the unequalled tribulation commences as the second stage of a longer period of trouble. The event which signals the start of this second stage will be very clear to those who witness it. To the faithful it will seem shocking, but it will be highly persuasive to the extent of deluding the many.

A blasphemous action in setting up an anti-God substitute for the true temple worship, and treachery by the Romans in allowing (and perhaps encouraging) this, seems to be indicated. "The wise" will understand at the time, and act upon our Lord's instruction promptly. The same event, in 2 Thessalonians 2 : 4, marked the commencement of "the day of the Lord." Here, as well as there, the intensity of the tribulation which will follow, and the pressures and the persuasions towards infidelity, are described in a few grave words. Though for a time evil may be rampant, God's firm hand sets the limit. In considering Daniel we noticed that the whole period was determined, and God's ultimate intervention sure. Here we read of mercy curtailing these days of unparalleled trouble (verse 22). Certainly our Lord speaks of decisive action from heaven closing it all. None will be able to evade the might of Christ when He uses it. Nor will the faithful be at all uncertain about the event which brings their vigil to a close. The time of great tribulation has crucial events to mark it out, both at the start and at the finish. Action will be urgent at its opening ; **how** people are acting at its close (when the Son of man comes) is also critical. The later sections stress this in various ways.

The Distinctions which His Coming Confirms

The coming of Christ will effect **judgment** amongst those to whom He comes. We use the word not primarily in its punitive sense, but in the sense of **discerning** realities, **separating** and **dealing appropriately** with men as they are found to be in that day. From 24 : 42 the remainder of the passage is entirely about this. His coming will in a sense determine what men are, differentiating between the faithful and the unfaithful, the watchful and the careless, the wise and the foolish, the ready and the unready, the profitable and the unprofitable, the blessed and the cursed. Areas in which this will happen are indicated, with some directness, in 24 : 30-34 etc. and again in 25 : 31 ff. The intervening verses (24 : 45 to 25 : 30) have a broader application and a direct voice for today. The contrast between two classes in **Israel** in those last days is drawn in the early section. The winnowing processes of judgment will, on the one hand, affect the consciences of many, leading to repentance

and bringing to light a great body of "the elect" from far and near (see also Revelation 7). Yet those same influences will leave a great number unchanged: there will be widespread indifference and unpreparedness for the crucial moment of Christ's appearing. A whole mass of people will be swept away, like chaff with the wind, when the decisive judgment comes. There will be close discrimination between individuals, taking place amongst those living and acting side by side.

The end section of the two chapters foresees judgment enacted on the widest earthly scale, following the coming of the Son of man. **Nations**, existent and active at the time, will be arraigned before Him and a great separation made. It is a clear principle in the Old Testament that God sees nations as accountable for their actions, especially in relation to His people. Here attitudes already taken towards the faithful in Israel, kindnesses shown (or denied) to them in their period of duress, will indicate loyalty (or its opposite) to God's King. For approval and blessing the criterion will be a faith which has shown itself in practice. Little things, which the doer of them counts as small, are tests of appreciation of **Him**. Actions impelled by love, springing from some small but real awareness of Christ, count highly with the true Judge of all. The objects of these kind actions, whom the King calls His brethren, may probably be those devoted witnesses to Him in the dark time terminated by His coming.

The discourse has continuity if the section between 24:45 and 25:30 is considered as an aside. This intervening section seems to have more to do with today's situation. In this gospel the responsibilities of those who are (or seem to be) subjects of the Kingdom are prominent. It would seem strange if the implications of Christ's coming for **present-day** persons of that kind were not included. This section, with its three parts (24:45-51; 25:1-13; 25:14-30), is as relevant to Christians as to anyone else; and its central part is perhaps exclusively so. It will be noted that each part has the thought of long delay in it (24:48; 25:5, 19); and in each instance this constitutes a test for sustained and active expectation of Christ. An evil servant, charged with his lord's affairs and with ministering to his household, drops that responsibility and lapses into petty self-interest and self-indulgence. The servant with the single talent, unlike his fellows, has no persistence with it; he spends the long time before the reckoning day in sloth and inactivity. Amongst the ten virgins, wise and foolish alike slumber and sleep until awakened to their proper attitude as it should have been all along. At that stage only it becomes clear that some had never been what they seemed. A pretence at the Christian calling, of readiness for the Bridegroom, of bearing a light for Him until He comes, may have no reality to back it up; like a lamp without oil. The coming of the Bridegroom seals permanently the distinction between these and their fellows. When our Lord comes as the Church expects Him, those who are ready will go in with Him, into the scene of joy which is the true Christian prospect. Those whose profession has been an empty shell, will be shut out. Though it will differentiate between true and false in a particular region (that of Christian profession) the fulfilment of our hope will seal real differences quite as certainly as His appearing in glory will do in Israel and amongst the nations.

The Points He Underlines

The importance, the reliability, and the urgency of this guidance are stressed in a deliberate way by our Lord. To see this may help us to avoid any tendency to neglect a passage of this type. Urgent situations require all the wisdom that can be extracted from the strengthening words of Him Who foresees all. "Behold, I have told you before", He says ; and again, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". The spirit that says "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble etc." (Psalm 46) is a possible one in trial, however great ; and it is surely fostered by His calm assurances. It will no doubt be given in liberal measure to those in the end-times whom we have considered (the Psalm quoted above seems apposite to such times). But if such a spirit will be right and possible **then**, why not **now** ? There is consolation and strength in our Lord's words at all times.

But there is urgency in His words too. "Watch therefore", He says, "Ye know not the day nor the hour." If we believe Him, it is absolutely certain that these things **will** come about ; but we do **not** know when. He says it again and again. Let us also heed Him in this ; let us be in constant anticipation of our joyous meeting with the Bridegroom ; let us in all our ways be like men that wait for their Lord.

(Note : For clarification it may be pointed out that Matthew 24 and 25 concerns itself with those **alive** at the second coming of Christ. The future of the dead is clear in other places ; there are three principal passages. First, 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks about "the dead in Christ". Secondly, Revelation 20 : 4-6 shows that the faithful martyrs who will die in the tribulation period will be raised and will share the blessings of "the first resurrection". The last group, spoken of as "the rest of the dead", will be raised and judged much later. The time is stated very clearly in verses 5 and 7 of Revelation 20, and the stark scene is described in verses 11 to 15. Both Revelation 20 and Matthew 25 : 31 ff are quite explicit, and are plainly not concerned with the same event. There is no reference to resurrection in Matthew 25. To ignore the details, and to say that Matthew 25 : 31 ff describes "the general day of judgment", is to misread what these passages say.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATION TO THE ASSEMBLY T. TYSON

1 Corinthians 12 : 14

Acts 4 : 31

THE Church of God is unique, being a spiritual unity, kept in a hostile world by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from the ascended Christ at the right hand of God.

The effect of the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church is an important subject. While there is a close relationship between His presence in the company and His indwelling of the individual believer there is also that which goes beyond individual experience.

I would like to consider this subject under four headings—**Authority ; Unity ; Testimony ; Worship.**

Authority. In the political scene around, authority is being disregarded, flouted or deliberately overthrown. Where it is established it is by force, vested in man, not for his intrinsic worth but because of his position. In the religious scene, authority is in the hands of men backed by organisation and tradition.

In contrast to this the Church of God is formed exclusively of those who acknowledge the supreme authority of Jesus, 1 Corinthians 12 : 3. He is owned as Lord because of who He is, 1 Corinthians 11 : 3, and because of what He has done, 1 Corinthians 11 : 26. Christ's authority is recognised in the assembly through the Spirit, and the Spirit's presence underlies the authority of the assembly in at least three areas—**Doctrine ; Ministry ; Discipline.**

The assembly's doctrine is the Word of God : given through the agency of the Spirit, 2 Peter 1 : 21, 2 Timothy 3 : 16 ; understood by the anointing of the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2 : 11–13, 1 John 2 : 24, 27 ; communicated by the enabling of the Spirit, Acts 2 : 4. So amidst all the confused voices of the modern world the Church of God has an authoritative message which can be spoken with authority. Like Peter and the eleven at Pentecost we can say, "Ye men of—and all you that dwell at—hearken to my words", Acts 2 : 14.

The assembly's prophetic ministry is a direct result of the Spirit's presence. The gifts are given by the sovereign will of the Spirit, under the Lord's administration, to fulfil the working of God ; so that His mind may be made known. Authority for ministry comes from the Spirit, not from the minds and schools of men. Only in this way can the church be profitted and built up. Not only must the ability be from the Spirit in the first place, but it must also be used in the Spirit, under His guidance and control. Relevance and Godly order will mark all ministry in the Spirit.

Authority for assembly discipline is in the Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the company demands that what is not in accord with Him should be dealt with. Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Ghost. While the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5 dealing with the putting away of that wicked person, the thought of His presence is very near the surface, as is evident in Chap. 6—"your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."

The **Unity** of the Church of God is founded on the work of Christ and our place and relationship in Him. Every member of the Church is indwelt by the Holy Spirit—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His", Romans 8 : 9.

We are exhorted to keep the Unity of the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12, we see two ways in which the Spirit develops this unity. Firstly through the exercise of the priestly functions of all believers. In Matthew 18, Jesus had promised His presence to the company. He is made known in the company in a fuller way than can be experienced individually. Each one comes with a different impression or experience or knowledge of Christ. The Spirit blends all together, so that a more complete expression

of the features of Christ is produced. The whole company is needed and none is superfluous. In Corinth as they came together there was a need to suppress their exuberance—"When ye come together **each one** has a hymn, etc." 1 Corinthians 14:26. This is not often the case with us nevertheless how right it is that we should bring to the gathering what we have enjoyed in secret.

Secondly, the unity is developed by mutual care for one another. Nothing destroys the local unity so quickly as the introduction of a selfish and self-centred spirit. Humbler members must be encouraged and shown their usefulness. More notable members must ever be on their guard lest they despise, or seem to despise others. All should exercise such tender care for one another, sharing each others joys and sorrows and acknowledging in a practical way their dependence on each other. In this materialistic age it is vital that we allow the Holy Spirit to develop these features in us.

The **Testimony** of the Church is dependent on the Holy Spirit. The Lord stated that—"when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment". The very presence of the Church in this world is the Holy Spirit's Testimony. The Lord's promise is fulfilled, at least in part through the Church. It is composed entirely of those who have—acknowledged sin in themselves and fled to Christ—who have given Christ His rightful place as Lord—who have owned that God's just judgment has been merited by them, but they have been saved from wrath through Christ and now bear witness to God's judgment to come. Each Lord's Day morning we show the Lord's death till He comes.

In Acts 4 so quickly after Pentecost we find that the testimony in power involves suffering and reproach. Peter and John are in prison (Acts 5) but rejoicing to suffer shame for His name. To those who believed, the name Jesus of Nazareth was salvation and power—to those who rejected, that same name was a cause of hatred and scorn and reproach. A true testimony will involve suffering. It will also call for united prayer, Acts 4:24. When they had prayed the place was shaken and they received renewed boldness to continue the witness. They lifted up their voice with one accord. How seldom this happens today, for the simple reason that **all** are not present at the prayer meeting. Who can know the resources of spiritual power that remain untapped because we fail in united earnest prayer to God? Through the Spirit the testimony will be maintained despite the enemy. Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, Israel had all gathered against God's anointed Jesus. Their threatenings still thundered against His anointed Church, but the true source of power was not with the world but in the Church.

The place where they were assembled was shaken—there was power **with** them; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost—there was power **in** them; they spake the word of God with boldness—there was power **through** them.

Lastly, a brief word on the **Worship** of the Church. The Lord's words in John 4:23, 24, indicate that now worship is not connected with an earthly system or geographical location but is in spirit and in truth. It is not concerned with external ceremonial but with essential reality; not with earth but with a spiritual system. Hence the irrelevance of so much that goes under the name of worship, yet is still connected with earth and natural emotions.

Again, worship is now connected with a new relationship. It is still the worship of God, but now known in the intimacy of the Father worshipped in spirit and in truth.

If we turn to Hebrews 2 the top stone of the truth seems to be reached when the Lord, because of the work He has done, is surrounded by those He can call His brethren, leading their praises to the Father. While the term Father is not used in Hebrews 2 we remember it is the Son of chap. 1 who is here with His brethren, and the children that God has given Him. So here worship is based on an understanding of the work of the Son, bringing us into relationship with the Father. Chap. 2 is filled with the work of the Lord—salvation, subjection, suffering, sanctification, victory, deliverance, glorification, reconciliation, etc.

When we read Galatians 4 : 6 we see that it is because we are sons that God has given us the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and His cry is "Abba Father"; in Romans 8 : 15, the Spirit of adoption enables us ourselves to cry "Abba Father".

It is by the Holy Spirit indwelling each believer and filling the company that the Lord, in the midst of the Church, sings praises unto God the Father. The Spirit leads out the praise of the redeemed company to God, making us deeply conscious of our one-ness with Christ, and of our relationship to the Father.

THE BODY IN THE SERVICE OF GOD _____ J. STODDART

THE title of this paper may be regarded by some as rather unusual, and that may be one good reason for pursuing the subject as Scripture speaks of it. Happily a good deal more is said there about our bodies than is generally conceded. As the Christian's first priority, occupation with Christ is truly that which ensures the correct perspective and proportion of every component in our complex lives. Thus we shall see that even our bodies are given their rightful consideration in the scheme of Christian life and service for God.

Firstly, we may learn that **God claims our bodies** for Himself, as is the plain teaching of 1 Corinthians 6 : 19/20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." This striking allusion to "your body" indicates at once that a power superior to nature is essential to control and direct our actions so that God is glorified in both body and spirit; for to this end He has paid the price (and what a price!) to secure our **whole being** for Himself. And to this end He has given us the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower our bodies to do His will. No power of nature is capable of this, but our bodies are seen to be necessary as instruments for God's service and glory.

Next we may consider the **discipline of the body** and the need for this if our service for the Lord is to be effective. Every athlete clearly

appreciates that his chance of winning any contest would be very slim unless a course of hard training had been undertaken to ensure maximum fitness. In 1 Corinthians 9 : 24/27 the apostle Paul shows his awareness of this as related to his own personal service in preaching. His reference to the Games in these verses would be well understood since the Isthmian Games were a Corinthian festival similar to our modern Olympics. He then says, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly : so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I buffet my body (J.N.D. New Tr.) and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (unapproved or rejected—Amp.N.T.)" Be it noted that salvation is not in question here, but fitness for service and its due reward. It has been rightly said that the body is a good servant but a bad master and the apostle disciplined his body to ensure that it was kept in its subject place lest his preaching should become ineffective and himself the loser of a victor's crown. The rigours to which his body was subjected are readily understood from such passages as 2 Corinthians 11 : 23/28 and 12 : 7/10.

Bodily exercise is referred to in 1 Timothy 4 : 8 as "profitable for a little," while, of course, "godliness (spiritual exercise) is profitable for everything." Here we may well glean the secret of the apostle's own robustness in the face of both physical and spiritual hardships, so frequently experienced. Doubtless we have wondered how the human frame could survive such testings and contrasted our own poor endeavours with his immense vigour and dogged pursuit of God's service whatever the cost. The secret is surely in verse 10 where he says, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, Who is the Saviour (preserver) of all men, specially of those that believe." Only such a God could and did provide the physical and spiritual force to serve and suffer and survive. Always cognisant of his personal physical limitations, he relied upon Him Who said, "My grace is sufficient for thee : for **My strength** is made perfect in weakness."

Some members of our bodies are notoriously unruly and require the most careful attention to keep them under control, which justifies the apparently harsh remarks of James in his epistle ch. 3 : 2/13 regarding the tongue, as an example. Little in its proportion to the body, it "boasteth great things". . . "is a world of iniquity". . . "it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell." "The tongue can no man tame : it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father ; and therewith curse we men made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Strong language indeed from one insisting that the tongue be used aright ! But who would dispute the solemn indictment of James, writing by the Spirit ? Have we not ourselves experienced the degrading effect of bitter words flowing like a torrent from a tongue out of control ? A recent political campaign may come to mind in which the devastating power of the tongue played its full and sinister role, ranging from unjust allegations, untruths and diabolical half-truths, to false promises incapable of fulfilment. This little member of our bodies must be wisely and powerfully governed by "the wisdom from above." In verse 2, the inspired writer says that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a

perfect (mature) man, and able to bridle (control) the whole body, too." But how can such maturity be reached when we are all so often offenders? Only by invoking "the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." What truly delightful, Christ-like people we would be if such heavenly wisdom were to dominate our words and our ways!

Modern hygiene has emphasised the need for cleansing of the body in the interest of good health. Long before this, however, the Old Testament abounds with teaching which insisted upon God's people being clean in person and habit. While this was partly a ceremonial requirement it could not be said to be altogether so. As early as Genesis 35 : 2 we find Jacob insisting that his household be clean and change their garments before building an altar at Bethel. Also in Exodus 19 : 10 and 14 we read, "The Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes. And be ready against the third day. . . And Moses went down from the mount unto the people and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes." True, these and other instances were in view of approach to God, and what better motive for cleanness of person could be found? While not a quotation from Scripture, there is more than a grain of truth in the saying that, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isaiah 52 : 11) could not exclusively relate to ceremonial cleansing; and in John 13, the gracious washing of the disciples' feet, while bearing a deeply spiritual significance, was based upon the commonest practice of those days (cf. Luke 7 : 44). We are encouraged in Hebrews 10 : 22 "to draw near (to God) with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . having our **bodies washed** with pure water." Even if we understand this to be the pure water of the Word, as in Ephesians 5 : 26, and surely that is primary, could this be consistent with physical uncleanness? "Cleanness of teeth" among God's people, referred to in Amos 4 : 6, is not without relevance to our subject in hand.

Perhaps the most significant reference to our bodies in the New Testament is that of Romans 12 : 1, where we are enjoined to "**present your bodies** a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This is the first basic exhortation following the teaching chapters of this great epistle, and its requirement is the surrender of our **bodies**, consequent upon having learned the compassion of God. Thus it is described as "your intelligent service," that is, not an automatic result but a conscious act of consecration to God's will the precise details of which are contained in the remaining chapters of this epistle. Superficially we might think that obedience to God's will relates to our soul and spirit only, but readily we see that such obedience necessitates the body to express it. Even with our Lord Jesus this was true, as can be clearly seen from Hebrews 10 : 5/10. The offering of His body was the culminating act of perfect obedience to the will of God. What a glorious example to us who are exhorted to "follow His steps : Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. . . Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by Whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2 : 21/24) How very necessary it is then that our bodies be

yielded to God for His service. The writer heard about a Christian man who before his death wrote what he wanted as an epitaph on his gravestone. It read, "Here lies that part of J.R.L. that hindered him from doing well." We wonder how he could have done anything at all without "that part"—his earthly tabernacle! It would be quite wrong to blame our bodies for our failures when they are the only means of achieving success, that is, as yielded to God's will.

Lastly, let us consider the **wholeness** of God's purpose for our earthly pathway. As we may gather from 1 Thessalonians 5 : 23, this takes account of **spirit** and **soul** and **body** ; in other words, the whole man (or woman). "And the very God of peace sanctify you **wholly** ; and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such is the prayer of the apostle for his Thessalonian friends who were very dear to his heart. The imminent return of the Lord Jesus is seen here as the terminus of the responsible Christian pathway (other than death itself) and our whole being is to be preserved blameless until that wonderful event. So far as our present body of flesh and blood is concerned it will be required no longer ; having served its purpose for time, it will then be changed and "fashioned like unto His body of glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." (Philippians 3 : 21) Then, already conformed to His likeness, we shall "all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done **in his body**, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5 : 10) So here, at this seat of reward, there will be a backward look at our bodily activities in this world, and none will disagree with or regret the assessment of Him Who sits there, whether it entails loss or gain. For when all the counsels of the heart are at last brought to light, far beyond the mists and misunderstandings of this life, we read, "Then shall every man (each one his own) have his praise from God" (1 Corinthians 4 : 5). But wonder of wonders, every faithful deed done in the body, every faithful word spoken in this life will contribute to the praise and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ Whose redemptive love alone has made it possible for any of us to share such scenes of eternal happiness and bliss.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

2. THE MYSTERY

J. T. MAWSON

SURELY no one could read the opening verses of the Ephesians and be indifferent to what follows. Could anyone say I am eternally enfolded in those wonderful statements ; I am one of those who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ; chosen in Him before the foundation of the world ; made holy and without blame before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in love ; predestinated to the adoption of children ; made accepted in the beloved One ; redeemed and forgiven according to the riches of God's grace, and yet I am not interested in God's purpose and thoughts ?

The exceeding riches of God's grace thus made known to us must command our earnest attention and awaken reverent enquiry. Especially as He treats us now, not as servants, but friends, and proposes to let us into His eternal secret, that which lies nearer than all to His heart, what He is going to do for His own Son.

It is as though He said to us, "I have forgiven you and set you free from all anxiety about your sins, and redeemed you from the power of the great enemy, and now I want you to enter into My thoughts; I want to unfold to you My purpose for the glory and joy of My own Son, and according to this purpose I have also given to you a part; you are necessary to the carrying out of it. So I have taken you up according to the riches of My grace, setting you free to contemplate the mystery of My will; having abounded towards you in all "wisdom and prudence," giving you the capacity for understanding and enjoying it all by the power of the Holy Ghost."

This is so exceeding abundantly above all that we could have asked or thought, that if we do but see with the eyes of our hearts the glory of it, all indifference as to it will perish for ever; and in self-forgetting and adoring service, we shall seek to comprehend **with all saints** the blessedness of it, and to labour in prayer and word and doctrine that the truth of it may not remain a dead letter to us, or to any of the saints.

His Church

Before the lips of our Lord first uttered those two words, "My church," words which impress us with the preciousness of the church to Him as being His own peculiar possession, He asked His disciples, "Whom do ye say that I am?" Peter answered at once "**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.**" The truth as to His Person must come out, for there could be no church apart from that, for it is formed upon and will be filled with what He is. But in this connection it is important that we should rightly grasp the significance of this episode in the revelation of the truth. Peter had not arrived at the truth by the exercise of his natural wits, or through any education he had received in the schools of men; nor can any other man; the scribes and Pharisees were far more intellectual and educated than he, and they neither discerned nor confessed the truth as to the Son of God. Nor had he gathered it from his study of the Old Testament prophets, though they all spoke of Christ; nor from the preaching of John the Baptist, though he was a faithful messenger, going before the face of the Lord's Anointed. He had received it from the **Father**—name of perfect grace, unknown to saints and sages of dispensations past, however exalted their privileges; hidden even now from the wise and prudent of the earth, but revealed unto babes. And it was from **Heaven** that the Father had revealed it. It was a heavenly revelation, the fruit of unmeasured grace which the name Father implies. This great revelation upon which so much hangs, was not made because of any merit in those who were chosen to receive it; and it connects itself, not with prophecies regarding the kingdom which are earthly in character, but with heaven and the counsel of God's will, by which all who were to receive it were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

We cannot pass over this passage of Scripture lightly ; it arrests us by its blessedness, and certainly we must learn what lies under the simple statements here given if we are to have any true understanding of the truth of the church. **We begin with the Person of Christ**, this is fundamental, there could be no church apart from Him ; but what we would at this point emphasize is, that it is His **Father in heaven** who reveals what He is that the church might be. It is not what He will be as **Son of David**, that is set forth in the Old Testament ; or even as **Son of man**, His glory in this position is also spoken of in those indispensable prophecies ; but, Who is this Son of Man ? **He is the Christ, the Son of the living God**. It is upon this revelation of Him that the church is brought into being, built up and completed ; and every other glory which is His will manifest itself fully in relation to what He, the Christ, is personally with the Father. It is the Father's work to make this known, indeed we might, speaking with reverence, call it His own special and chief activity ; but does not this shew what a world of ineffable love is here opened up to us, that had never been opened before, where the counsels of the Father for the glory of the Son are unfolded, and into which none can intrude. Only those chosen for it by surpassing grace may enter here.

Our deep conviction is, that we shall make no progress in the knowledge of the truth of the church if we fail to understand this, so that we make no apology for seeming repetition. It was not as **Elohim**—the strong One (Genesis i. 1.) that God made this revelation to Peter, or as **Jehovah**—the self-existent One, (Genesis ii. 7.) or as **El-Shaddai** (Genesis xvii. 1) the Almighty, all-sufficient One, but as the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ,—“**My Father**,” as He said. All that had come out in former days He is and will ever be ; but it is not here a question of His attributes, His power, faithfulness or sufficiency, but what He is in His very nature. This could not be known to us by any work of His hand in creation, but only by the revelation of Himself by the only begotten Son that dwelt eternally in His bosom. So that we have first—the Father revealed in and by the only begotten Son, Jesus our Lord ; and then the truth as to this glorious Person revealed to our faith by the Father ; one can easily see that this must eventuate in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ for all who respond to this revelation. Thus all truth hangs together.

Again we insist that it is the **Father in Heaven** who reveals it. It is made to us upon earth, but it is from heaven, it is heavenly in character, and lifts us above the earth, and carries us into a range of things about which the prophecies that have to do with earth have nothing to say. The great majority of even pious Christians have not grasped the force of this, but the importance of it will be seen as the truth is developed. Then further, the way in which Christ is revealed is as victorious over death—He is “the Son of the living God.” This revelation from the Father in heaven looked onward and carried the thought of resurrection with it. Immediately the Lord speaks of His suffering and death and resurrection ; the truth is placed upon that platform, outside man in the flesh, with his ambitions, hopes and activities, which all lie shattered and dissolved at the touch of death.

So that we have at the first mention of the church in Scripture, the Father's activity—fulness of grace; the revelation He makes is a heavenly one, and it is of Christ, who would establish His church outside all the schemes and failures of man in the flesh against which all Satan's power and subtlety is directed in vain. It is invincible.

The Glorious Head

The mystery which is unfolded in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians is Christ and the church, not the church without Christ, nor yet Christ without the church. Christ is the Head and the church His body. Consequently, though the church is in this blessed unity which is formed according to the purpose of God and by the might of His Spirit, its place is the subordinate one, as every body is subordinate to its head, and its blessedness and importance lie in the fact that it is the body of Christ, united to Him, the living Head in heaven.

We begin with Christ, whatever place of favour or testimony the church has now, or of glory it will have hereafter, it has by virtue of the fact that it is united to Christ, hence the necessity of beginning with Him. In doing so, the affections of the heart are brought into activity. One might say, "I am not particularly interested in the truth of the church," but none who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ will say, "I am not interested in Him," and in occupation with Him we are led naturally to be interested in that which He loves and nourishes and cherishes.

The purpose of the mystery is to fill the universe with Christ, and this will be done by the church.

1. **Christ**—the full revelation of God in manhood, **the display.**
2. **The Church**—**the vessel for the display.**
3. **The Created Universe**—**the sphere of the display.**

Yes, God intends that Christ, who fills His own heart, shall fill the universe, and this will be **Glory**, and one part of the mystery now is that 'Christ is in His members the hope of **Glory**' (Colossians i. 27.)—God intends that the One who in the narrow compass of 33 years, in lowliness of life and obscurity, beset with every conceivable hostility of evil, fully declared His name, and revealed His nature in such a way that the world cannot contain the books, shall Himself be revealed in the fulness of His incomparable worth to every intelligence in the vast universe; and His body is the chosen vessel through which He will do it; and this not only in the dispensation of the fulness of times, but, unto the ages of the ages God will have **Glory** in the church by Christ Jesus. (Ephesians iii. 21.)

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

The Upper Room Discourse (continued from p. 16)

The Father. The name of the Father is without doubt the central theme of this discourse and prayer. The name 'Father', applied to God, occurs in the New Testament 265 times, and of these 122 are in John's Gospel. In these chapters it occurs 53 times, and if we add to the 6 occurrences in ch. 17 the pronouns Thou, Thee and Thy applied to the Father, the 53 becomes 105, emphasizing the conclusion that here in the upper room we have uniquely the central passage occupying us with the Father.

In reflecting with the attitude of worship on this name, we note the difference between the name 'the Father', characteristic of John's Gospel and Epistles, and 'your Father', so frequent in the Synoptic Gospels. 'Your Father' enshrines a fact of immense meaning for every child of God, but its reference is to a relationship which began in time, that is, when each individual became a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. How immeasurably deeper is the meaning of the name 'the Father', expressing a relationship which belongs to eternity, the name of the first Person of the Godhead.

The name 'the Father' is nothing less than the final completion of the progressive self-revelation of God. The first name enshrining a revelation of God to man was El Shaddai made known to the patriarchs—the name of the God who sustained them when they persisted in refusing the support of the earthly powers from which God's call had separated them. The second was Jehovah, made known to Moses, and henceforward the name of the God of Israel. Alongside the manifestation of this name was the unmistakable truth that it was still not final, "My face shall not be seen".

The final revelation of God, beyond which there is nothing, awaited no less an event than the coming of the Son, and the completion of the work the Father gave Him to do. And that final, that is, true, name of God is, greatest of all wonders, a relationship of love. Thus it is clear that in reflecting with worship on the name of the Father, we are at the heart of Christianity. The central essential Christianity is the revelation of the Father by the Only-begotten Son, in the power of one Holy Spirit. To gather up with utmost reverence all that this discourse and prayer tell us about the Father, is an occupation which must ultimately be found to satisfy heart, mind and will at the deepest level. Therefore, let the words of the Lord Jesus in these chapters ever be abiding in us. (15 : 7)

The World. It is a shock to find that the next most frequently mentioned theme in these chapters is the world, and nearly half the occurrences are in the prayer. Naturally, the world is here seen in its most fundamental aspects. It is a mere episode in eternity. Before it, the Father and the Son shared in the timeless glory and love of the Godhead. After it, the saints shall be indwelt by that divine love and behold the glory. Those whom the Father gave to the Son were taken out of the world, and the world hated both the Father and the Son. It is afterwards seen to be the enemy in special opposition to the Father, so that "if any man love the

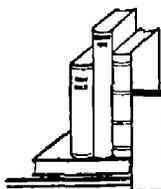
world, the love of the Father is not in him". Meditation on the Son's words in this discourse will be the most potent means of our liberation from the world.

Love. The distinction between the three Greek words for love represented by the nouns *agape*, *philia*, and *eros*, has often been treated, remembering that *eros*, the general Greek word for love does not occur in the New Testament, and that *agape* is not found outside the Bible. A useful note on John 21 : 15 appears in the Stow Hill editions of Darby's New Translation which deals with this distinction in part. It purports to be taken from other writings of J.N.D. Trench's "Synonyms etc." (pp 41 to 44) seems to me to be much less helpful than it usually is and largely misses the point. I have found most helpful Westcott's "Epistles of John" pp 130 to 134 on *agapao* : "agapao, agape are an expression of character, determined. . . by will, and not of spontaneous, natural emotion. In this sense, love is the willing communication to others of that which we have and are ; and the exact opposite of that passion which is the desire for personal appropriation (*erao*, *eros*)". The note attributed to Darby reads, *phileo* "signifies the love of friendship, and is more intimate and intense. . . Agapao, more often used in the New Testament, is more general, and signifies love as the settled disposition of a person rather than an emotion". Westcott states "The noun *agape* belongs to the Bible (i.e. LXX and N.T.) exclusively". The important conclusion is usually drawn, that when God's ultimate revelation of Himself appeared in the New Testament, existing words were not found adequate or suitable for the attribute concerning which in the end it was to be said, "God is love". A new noun, *agape*, was created.

The Upper Room Discourse is founded on and builds up from the love of Jesus for His own, (13 : 1) both collectively and individually (v. 23), and the new commandment is that they love one another. Love will be the badge of true discipleship. Ch. 14 builds up the theme of the inwardly knit circle formed by the Father, the Son, and His friends, the disciples. Love is the power which knits them together. In the disciples, love to the Father and the Son will issue in obedience, and obedience in the present dwelling of the Father and the Son with them. Again, in ch. 15, obedience is the way to dwell in His love, and later, love in this circle of Divine love is contrasted with hatred in the world.

It is in ch. 17 that we reach the heart of the matter, and indeed is it not the heart of Christianity ? Among the unique splendours of this chapter, is that here (v.24) we reach the source and home of that stream of divine love which has flowed by Calvary, so that it gathers to itself all those for whom the Lord prays here. "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. . . I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them". Let us make very much of these words addressed by the Son to the Father, lying, as they do, behind every manifestation of Divine love in this chapter and in every part of Scripture.

The *phileo* group of words occur in 15 : 13, 14 and 15, and v. 19, "the world would love its own". *Phileo* also is found in 16 : 27. It appears to me to represent the emotion drawn out by attractive features, for example, relationship or friendship, in the object.



ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

Genesis 18 : 17-33.

The two papers printed under this heading were received almost simultaneously from opposite ends of the country, and it is felt to be very fitting to print them together as complementary to each other.

1). REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY OUTLOOK

J. STODDART.

THE trend of world events in our day inevitably gives deep concern to the Christian whose desire is to seek a right course in line with the will of God. Some may feel pressed to participate in collective endeavours to stem the flood tide of evil, while others would choose to avoid any such involvement and remain passive to the deteriorating state of things around them. Neither of these attitudes seems compatible with the teaching of Scripture for the man of faith.

Let us consider the example of Abraham's concern for the city of Sodom, the scene of the grossest wickedness recorded in history and an epithet for such practices even in this day. He was not a citizen of that place, although his nephew Lot elected to live there and to become a magistrate of the city. But Abraham had an ear open to God and His assessment of that situation. Faith chooses to rely upon that rather than the reports of men as to current happenings. A paragraph from C.H.M. might be well worth quoting at this point :

“ The way to know the divine purposes about this present evil world, is not to be mixed up with its schemes and speculations, but to be entirely separated from it. The more closely we walk with God and the more subject we are to His Word, the more we shall know of His mind about everything. I do not need to study the newspaper in order to know what is going to happen in the world. God's Word reveals all I want to know. In its pure and sanctifying pages I learn all about the character, the course and the destiny of the world ; whereas if I go to the men of the world for news. I may expect the devil will use them to cast dust in my eyes. Had Abraham visited Sodom in order to obtain information about its facts, had he applied to some of its leading intelligent men to know what they thought of Sodom's present condition and future prospects, how would he have been answered ? Doubtless they would have called his attention to their agricultural and architectural schemes, the vast resources of the country ; they would have placed before his eyes one vast, mingled scene

of buying and selling, building and planting, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Doubtless, too, they would never dream of judgment, and if anyone had made mention thereof, their mouths would have been filled with infidel laughter. Hence then it is plain that Sodom was not the place in which to learn about Sodom's end." (Notes on Genesis p. 178)

But Abraham neither embarked on a campaign against Sodom nor did he remain indifferent and aloof from its desperate condition. How could he, when the Lord had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Divine intelligence was imparted to him about God's intentions and that mattered more than all else to the man who is called "the friend of God." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." (Psalm 25 : 14) If in this our day we were to rely on the news media for the true state of the world we could be gravely misled and misinformed. Details of events, good and bad, are reported at length, but as to the true nature and significance of these, human judgment and speculation is quite incompetent and often quite erroneous. But what is the effect of knowing without question, as faith surely does, what God's plans are regarding the desperate plight of "this present evil world"? For Abraham, it meant a call for immediate, importunate intercession. This was not simply a natural reaction but the result of knowing that he was in the confidence of "the Most High Who ruleth in the kingdoms of men." There was urgency and boldness, accompanied by due humility, in his approach to God. Doubtless having his nephew Lot and his kith and kin in mind, he asks, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" But knowing Lot's history would we think of him as righteous? Until we read in 2 Peter 7/8, that the Lord "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that **righteous** man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his **righteous** soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)" The tragedy of a righteous man in the most unrighteous place on earth! His campaign to "clean up" Sodom had ignominiously failed.

Abraham's petition was first that the judgement of Sodom might be stayed if peradventure there were fifty righteous within the city. And evidently reproving himself for his first question, he reinforces his request by uttering the most unassailable truth (albeit in question form), "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" But, what if there were less than fifty, having regard to the dissidence of Lot's family? He implores God's mercy for five less and then ten less, and then twenty less, then thirty less, then with great humility for even forty less. At each and every reduction, the Lord graciously acceded to Abraham's intercession, even to the possibility of ten righteous persons being in the doomed city. Alas, Abraham's faith limited God at this point and he could not ask His mercy for less than ten. Doubtless God would have gone even further in His compassion and in response to the intercession of His friend. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3 : 20)

Following Abraham's example, may we now think of ourselves as intercessors in a similar situation. In 1 Timothy 1 we have the most accurate and detailed description of a world familiar to us all, false profession and erroneous teaching, as well as the moral depravity of men

generally. But possessed of divine intelligence that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", and knowing himself to be "the chief" of such, the apostle "exhorts therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, **intercessions**, and giving of thanks, be made for **all men** ; for kings (which in his day would include Nero), and for **all that are in authority** ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, Who will have **all men** to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2 : 1-4 In the full light of grace there can be no reservation in our intercession for we know that God sent His Son into the world, "that **the world** through Him might be saved." (John 3 : 17) Alas, many reject and more despise such salvation, but our privilege and responsibility remains to pray and intercede for all men, and the nearer we are in communion with God, as a Saviour God, the more we shall see this to be the only way to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." We may well think of precarious thrones and "uneasy heads that wear a crown" in these days ; we know little of the onerous tasks undertaken by governments and "the powers that be, ordained of God" ; perhaps much in our thinking is the greatly disturbed character of life in Northern Ireland and the daily toll of life and bloodshed, without any viable solution apparent for such problems. Inevitably we ponder and lament the interminable aggression between Israel and her Arab neighbours, despite the tireless efforts of some to heal that situation. Apart from merciful intervention in some places, the earth is once again "filled with violence and corruption", as it was before the judgement of the Flood (Gen. 6) and just as the Saviour said it would be in Matthew 24 : 37/39.

Subjects for intercession, of the most urgent and importunate kind, abound beyond our power to mention and should deeply concern us, both in collective and individual prayer. Nor should we ever forget that intercession is "personal and confiding intercourse with God, on the part of one able to approach Him." (cf. note in J.N.D's translation on 1 Timothy 2 : 1), therefore "giving of thanks", as well as requests, are to "be made for all men." Thus the Christian intercessor has the high honour to present thanksgivings on behalf of those who do not or cannot thank Him themselves for all they owe to Him. In our asking we need never stop short, as Abraham did, "as if afraid of having presented too large a draft at the treasury of infinite grace, or forgetting that faith's cheque was never yet dishonoured at God's bank." (cf. C.H.M. Notes on Genesis p. 180.)

Other aspects of intercession, such as the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 7 : 25) and that of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8 : 26/27), although not unrelated, are not the subject of this paper and may be referred to at another time. May we know better the privilege and dignity of being intercessors on behalf of a desperately needy world, soon to be visited by unsparing judgement, but at present under boundless grace from a Saviour God Whose desire is that all men should be saved.

2). THE LESSONS IN DETAIL

JOHN BARNES.

THE record of Abraham's intercessory prayer is one of the most fascinating of Bible stories and has taught generations of believers valuable lessons. The following seven aspects of this episode are suggested for our meditation.

1. **Sensitivity.** Abraham was sitting at his tent door in the heat of the day when the Lord appeared to him. (v. 1) The next verse informs us that he lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing by him. One is struck, however, by the thought that he was instantly aware of the Lord's presence. The arrangement of thought in the verses seems to imply that he had an acute sense of the Lord's nearness ; it is the first thought of the chapter. Possibly this is confirmed by his address to the three men which he makes, in the first instance, in the singular number, speaking to them through the One Whom he addresses as Lord. Lower down the chapter (v. 17) the Lord **said** to Abram, " Shall I hide from Abram that thing which I do ? " One has the feeling that the aged saint was so in touch with the Lord so responsive to His presence, that he had an immediate consciousness of His nearness ; he was so sensitive to divine communications that the Lord considered it not only safe but fitting to take this man into His confidence and reveal His mind to him. This is an extraordinary situation. God standing there beside a nomad encampment ; the Lord in the form of a Man, and Abraham standing with Him. They are speaking face to face as two friends might discuss a matter of tremendous importance to each ; and the Lord is telling this man what He is about to do. One would covet such a sensitivity for oneself and for the Lord's people. What little awareness of the presence of the Lord there is in most of our lives ! Paul reminds the Philippians (4 : 5) " The Lord is at hand ; " that is, " He is near." How desirable, too, in addition to a sense of His closeness to have an ear for His voice. " He that hath an ear," He says to the assemblies, in the Revelation, " Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

2. **Sympathy.** As the Lord unfolded His mind to the patriarch, His purpose concerning the wicked cities of the plain, Abraham immediately thought of his nephew Lot and his family there in Sodom. The Lord did not actually state that He would destroy the cities. Abraham appears to have deduced this solemn fact for himself. His understanding of the character of the Lord coupled with his knowledge of the utterly depraved behaviour of the Sodomites would suffice to convince him that a divine scrutiny of the situation would be bound to result in judgment. " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? " is able to bear this interpretation as well as the one usually (and rightly) put on it.

There is no selfishness in this great man's heart. The wonderful promises he had just received for himself and his posterity did not diminish his concern for his friends ; his heart went out to the people of God in Sodom. We well remember how Abraham and Lot had separated. (Chap. 13) Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, well watered, lush with vegetation, so different from the dry, rocky uplands, and he chose it for himself. So the two men who had journeyed so long and so far together, separated. There appears to be a hint here that

Sodom and Gomorrah did not form part of Abraham's inheritance as the Lord saw it. Genesis 13 : 12 informs us ; "Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain." It suggests, perhaps, that they were two quite distinct territories. Hebrew names cannot always be translated with absolute certainty but some give the names of these two cities as meaning "Burning," and Submersion" ; as though prophetic of their eventual fate, and assert that a seismic convulsion submerged the site of the cities beneath the waters of the Salt Sea—a distinct possibility. This would remove that strip of ground from Canaan proper and place it in the bed of the Dead Sea. Archeologists seem to differ in their views on this matter and claims are made that the sites of these ancient cities are known ; but whatever happened, the cities **as they existed** were obliterated.

Abraham's sympathies extended to Lot and his dear ones caught up in the evil of the cities and in their possible destruction, so he besought the Lord for mercy, his compassionate heart taking in a sense of the peril his kinsmen were exposed to. They had gone there deliberately ; had already been involved in dangers which had not been warning enough to bring them out of the evil, yet Abraham does not write them off as lost to the testimony but thinks with feeling of righteous men who may live in the midst of wickedness.

3. **Separation.** Abraham was able to pray for the place from a position of power. He was totally separate from Sodom and its way of life. For him the highlands of the land, the tent, the well of refreshment, the altar of communion with His God were his joys, and nothing would have induced him to exchange these fresh, living blessings for the fetid and corrupt atmosphere of Sodom, not even the promise of a place in the gate. He could pray as one entirely free from the pursuits of that doomed society. He had accepted nothing from Sodom. After the sack of the cities in the battle of the kings, Abraham rescued the captives and recovered the booty, but who could forget his noble speech after the king of Sodom's offer, "Give me the persons and take the goods thyself." (14 : 21) "I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most High God," he replied, "That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, that I will not take anything that is thine. . ." His Protector in the battle had been his God ; his Provider in life would be no other. How richly the Lord responded to that sublime faith in the words which immediately follow in the next chapter. "Fear not Abram, I am thy shield (Protector) and thy exceeding great reward (Provider)". So in absolute separation from all its evil and from any profit whatever from association with its corrupt way of life he could intercede from a position of great strength. Believers who abstain from political matters and other pursuits of that nature are frequently accused of opting out of their civic responsibilities. Abraham did not shirk responsibilities. He rescued Lot and the other captives and in our chapter he is seen earnestly praying for the cities. Those who were included in Sodom's politics could do neither. Abraham was **involved** in these affairs and could help, but Lot was **included** in the system and so his repeated efforts to raise its moral level were unfruitful. On the very brink of the awesome precipice that would plunge the cities' population into eternity he could not speak convincingly enough to his own sons-in-law to assure them that he was not joking. Probably the best help

believers can render to a lost and guilty world is from a position analogous to that of Abraham; separate but concerned; not intermingled with the world but interceding for it.

4. **Self-judgement.** This wonderful man of God did not adopt any Pharasaical attitude as he spoke to the Lord about the impending disaster. There is not the least trace of a "Holier than thou" stand which is so nauseating. As he prays we hear no hypocritical words fall from his lips, such as, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men—even as this Lot." He was separate but not coldly or proudly so; apart from evil but in real humility. As he walked with God apart from Sodom's wickedness he did so as having judged in himself the evil heart which could have led him to follow such a course of life and which merited the judgement of the Lord as certainly as the men of Sodom. We may almost hear the echo of a Christian sentiment expressed so many centuries later; "But for the grace of God there goes Abram." Consequently we hear him confess, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes". The evil cities were shortly to be reduced to ashes and in self-judgment Abraham took the same place before the Holy Lord. What efficacy this would give to intercession. We can see this feature in many great men of prayer. Nehemiah confessed the sins of the nation as his own; Isaiah confessed himself to be a man of unclean lips along with guilty Israel. They said, in effect, "What is worthy of judgement in the nation is what marks me, too." How do we think of ourselves as we pray for brethren enmeshed in the world, in the Roman Catholic church or in other sections of corrupt christendom? Do we think of ourselves as holier than they, more faithful, more responsive? Do we stand aloof in proud seclusion? Or do we view ourselves as objects of an immeasurable grace which has reached us in spite of our own vileness and has set us among princes? The place of power in prayer is certainly not the place of pride.

5. **Stimulation.** Abraham had unique opportunities of understanding the purpose of the Lord. On the mountain top, in a day future to our chapter in his history, he was to see a marvellous vision of the future. Perhaps he understood the principle of substitution on that occasion; perhaps it was there that he clearly saw Christ's day and maybe even caught a glimpse of the glory of the city of God. The Lord Jesus said on one occasion, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day." We read in Genesis 22:14, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." His unswerving devotedness to the Lord in not withholding from Him his only son gained for him wonderful unfoldings of the future. But he was certainly already in the good of some of this. He had the promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, and Paul is careful to tell us in Galatians 3 that the word seed is in the singular and refers to Christ. Abraham must long have enjoyed great light from the Lord and in the stimulation of such light he was able to intercede with understanding. He knew that righteousness would be maintained and we can see how concerned he was that it should be so; that righteousness should be continued in his own household; that righteous men should not perish with the wicked; that God should uphold His own standards of righteousness in judgement. He was able to look down the long vista of the centuries that lay ahead to the light of Christ's day and this light had gleamed for his faith for many a year, no doubt increasing as day

succeeded day. "The path of the just is as a shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." If, as we pray, we have the day of our Lord's public glory in mind, we shall be helped to pray intelligently, and compassionately, about conditions around us.

6. **Steadfastness.** Importunity in prayer is a quality the Lord Jesus commends and urges upon His people. Paul emphasised the importance of it; "Pray without ceasing." Paul himself prayed three times about his thorn for the flesh, until he received the Lord's answer. In the garden, the Lord Jesus prayed three times concerning the cup he was to drink. We do not need to be unduly concerned about saying the same things to God again and again. In Mark 14 : 39 we have these amazing words recorded; "And He went away, and prayed, and spake the **same words.**" Abraham, not content with merely mentioning the matter to the Lord, spoke to Him about it six times (vv. 23-33) Six is a number which is believed to be suggestive of the limit to which a man can go; if so, Abraham went to that limit, all the way. His prayers bear all the marks of true humility and of deep reverence, but he returned again and again with petitions and suggestions, and the Lord heard him patiently till "He had left communing with him."

7. **Subjection.** Abraham was Spirit-controlled as he prayed. When Elijah, on Mount Carmel, was praying for rain he put **his head between his knees.** His thinking was controlled as before the Lord in prayer. The way Abraham prayed, gradually reducing the number of possible righteous men in Sodom from fifty to ten is a matter of profound interest and has captured the imagination of believers for centuries. Why did he stop at ten? Why did he not go on to five or even less? Should he have gone on? I wish to suggest that not only was this great saint sensitive to divine unfoldings but that he was subject to divine guidance in prayer. In Romans 8 there is a reference to the intercessory labours of the Holy Spirit of God and of how He aids us in prayer. One expression is of vital importance; He prays "according to God." (8 : 27 N.Tr.) Thus He would control prayer and keep it within the boundaries of the will of God. It was right that Abraham should be concerned and that he should intercede, but he seems to have been restrained from exceeding the point reached in v. 32 where he says, "I will speak yet but this once." There he stopped. The fact is, as subsequent events shew, there were not ten righteous men in the cities; there was evidently only one, Lot himself. His sons-in-law were not. His wife was not for she perished in the judgment. His two daughters were not, for, brought up in the corruption of Sodom and so habituated to its gross immorality, they were prepared to continue with its evil in their own lives and involve their father, albeit unconsciously, in their sin. Lot's personal righteousness had evidently had no effect on Sodom or even on his own family. He had spoken about unrighteousness repeatedly, but to no avail. The number ten is normally thought to be the Bible number of responsibility and we may consider that the Sodomite society had totally failed in every aspect of life. There was no alternative to judgment; it must fall.

But God remembered Abraham and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow. His prayer was answered in this way, that the righteous man was not destroyed with the wicked. 18 : 23. The man whose prayer was according to God was heard, and Lot, the one righteous man in

Sodom, though in wrong associations, was saved.

One would desire for oneself and for the saints something of the breadth of this great saint's interests, something of his conception of the Lord, something of the clearness of his vision, something of the energy of his intercession and something of the tenacity of his importunity. May the Lord help us in these things.

“SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD”

(Colossians 3 : 1)

THESSE words framed as a text, and hanging on a wall of my bedroom, were invested with a fresh import and joy (albeit a challenge also) during a recent illness. Each word seemed to carry a new sense of blessing, and a strong appeal to one's affections. Reaching for my Bible I read with deepened interest the preceding words—"If ye then be risen with Christ." We understand the word "if" in this verse to be an "if" of consequence, not of uncertainty; and the blessed assurance of this was confirmed as one read verse 12 of the previous chapter—"Ye **are** risen with Him"; or as another translation puts it—"Ye **have** been also raised with Him through faith of the working of God". How blessed to contemplate the sovereign movements of God in mercy and the gift of faith that gives one a personal interest in the context of this verse.

A brief consideration of the text may yield some spiritual profit.

"Seek." This active verb should provoke interest and desire; it suggests that there is something well worthwhile discovering. In the gift of the Holy Spirit of God we have ability to search out discerningly the precious matters which this seeking has in view, and He, if unhindered, would promote the necessary spiritual impulse in our affections to that end. David in Psalm 27 says "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple". At home in the presence of God, delighting in His beauty (His graciousness), would create in the affections still further desires for the knowledge of His mind and glory—desires met as one inquired "**of Him** in His temple" (New Trans.) Embedded in this word seek is the thought of "worship" and the atmosphere of the Psalm would most surely confirm this! How great the reward for those who truly **seek**—nearness to God; an increasing sense of His glory and His thoughts of love, resulting in a spirit of intelligent, affectionate worship.

"Those things which are above". Christianity is not mere theory and dogma, it embraces that which is permanent, substantial and indeed eternal. Things of earth are transient, corruptible, subject to decay and disintegration; "things which are above" are abiding, pure, full of glory. Precious outlet for our affections and practical salvation for our ways as we allow the "things which are above" to control our thoughts. Turning from this scene of violence and strife we find our joy in a realm where the **"God of Peace"** moves in the tranquility of His own thoughts of

blessing ; and scenes of corruption and guile give place in our minds to one of equity and righteousness, for "Jesus Christ the Righteous" is there. Above all else, beloved, **our home is there !** Do we not treasure the words of our beloved Lord—"I go to prepare a place for you, . . . that where I am, there ye may be also".

" We have a home above,
From all defilement free ;
A mansion which eternal love,
Prepared our rest to be".

Blessed, too, to realize that if this world, of which Satan is god, is marked by rebellion and refusal of God's testimony, the will of God has place amid the "things which are above", and His word is "for ever. . . . settled in heaven". Happy indeed the portion of those whose desires are towards this scene of moral elevation and glory.

" **Where Christ sitteth**". Here we reach the One in whom everything is centred and established. "Jewish ordinances were but shadows, **Christ is the substance**" (J.N.D.) Every thought of the blessed God, the eventual display of all that is involved in His eternal purpose ; the full revelation of His heart of love, are all centred in Christ. In Him the fulness of the Godhead dwells ; as God's Anointed He displaces all that attached to the first man. All things have been entrusted to Him ; He is the Head of all things ; "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist". In Him is the pre-eminence, the firstborn from the dead. God has decreed that He will "head up all things in the Christ. . . . in Him, in whom we also have obtained an inheritance" (Ephesians 1 : 10-11. New Trans.). Presently He is our Head, the Head of His church ; our Great High Priest ; our Advocate ; our Surety ; in Him the Beloved we are accepted before God ; He is our soon coming Lord ! As we await His return we are encouraged in the pathway of faith as we hear His word to the assemblies—"Even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation 3 : 21).

" **On the right hand of God**"

This position at the right hand of God is unique to Christ—all power is entrusted alone to Him ! In Hebrews chapter 1 verse 3 He sits there **gloriously and triumphantly**, taking the seat Himself in the majesty of His person. In verse 13 He is there **expectantly**—waiting for the complete subjugation of every opposing element. In chapter 8 He is seen **in priestly character**, minister of the true tabernacle, possessor of "a more excellent ministry", and Mediator of a better covenant" ; in chapter 10 He is there **"in perpetuity"**—nothing can interrupt or disturb the position ; in chapter 12 He is the **Man of joy**, the work of the cross completed, the Leader and Completer of faith, worthy to attract and hold the steadfast gaze of all His own. In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 22 we see Him there in **pre-eminence**—"angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him". How much more is involved in the present position of Christ at God's right hand !

May the consideration of this precious verse of God's Word stimulate our affections, giving us a deeper appreciation of "things above" and of Him who is at the centre of them.

A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE ——— COLIN CURRY**3. LO, A THRONE WAS SET IN HEAVEN**

THE final book of the bible takes its name from the first word of its text, the Revelation, or the Apocalypse. The word means simply "the unveiling". Primarily, it is an unveiling of Christ, given to its readers now, though soon also to take place on the stage of history. As **He** is unveiled, everything else is put in its proper place; so that as it proceeds the book uncovers much else besides, exposing it as God sees it, and as **He** will deal with it. The book takes us behind the scenes into the world of eternal values and judgments; it shows us those eternal principles of wisdom and righteousness which always prevail, and are in complete control at all times. But it also takes us forward, giving a preview of times when these principles will be openly insisted upon, when the final showdown with evil will take place, and God will assert His mastery, His supremacy and His glory. It stresses the identity of the throne of God and the throne of the Lamb. The Lamb prevails and reigns; His love and His victory are celebrated, right on into the eternal day. But also His wrath is to be feared, and to be felt too, where (as a last resort) it is needed. So the triumph of God is envisaged and assured. The aim of the book is to support and strengthen all who await the day of Christ's undisputed supremacy, especially in times when testing is severe and patience is hard-pressed.

A major fraction of the book reveals our Lord as judge. It describes Him as the One Who discerns all movements and motives in the human scene. It shows Him executing righteousness in every area. With complete fairness He sees and weighs all that goes on amongst the nations, and in the realm of church history too. The underlying significance of every development is known perfectly to Him. He sees the downward trends, the opposition to God, the corruption and the boastfulness. He takes full notice of every participant, from the principal actors to those who are carried along in the currents. He understands well the problems of those who seek the path of faithfulness to God amidst so many contrary influences. He has special encouragement and protection for these. Though fearful in His aspect (as John saw Him in **chapter 1**) with all the insignia of His power to judge, yet still **He** is the gracious One Who is totally on the side of those who are true to Him, as John discovered. This too is a theme which persists throughout the book.

A detailed treatment will not be possible, and indeed many of the details are not entirely clear. But the **pattern** of the book can be outlined, and the way in which it consummates the earlier prophetic teaching indicated. The brevity of this outline will leave much to further study if fuller profit is to be gained.

To the Churches

From chapter 4 onwards John is shown "the things that must be hereafter". **Chapters 2 and 3**, however, relate to earlier times. **He** was told (in 1 : 19) to write first about present things. Messages to the seven

churches, conveying our Lord's searching assessment of them, are found here. These churches existed at the time. The tragic developments described in these messages are, however, too accurately like church history (as it has happened) for this meaning of these chapters to be avoidable. Here are words from our Lord which have a sharp edge and sharp warnings for Christendom today, and indeed they search the conscience of every Christian who reads them aright. He shows too, His approval wherever it is warranted. There is everything to encourage those who will heed and act upon our Lord's voice to them. Five of the messages (the second and the sixth excluded) show a sequence of moral deterioration amongst those supposedly acting as light-bearers for Him. First, there is **declension** from simple warmth of love for Christ. Secondly **compromise**, blurring the distinction between the world and the church. Then **corruption**, in a set-up totally unlike the New Testament pattern for the church. Next **lifelessness**, despite clearance from some of the earlier abuses. Finally **lukewarmness**, associated with self-satisfaction and complacency. Is it possible to fail to see the story of the church here? Which of us, with a conscience, does not recognise his own propensities in this sad progression? What a mercy that there are also bright messages within these chapters, encouragements to go against the tide, promises to overcomers. When support from other quarters is nil, **He** recognises faithfulness, and encourages it to the utmost limit (2 : 10). Loyalty to **Him**, holding fast His word and not denying His name, continues to be given its opportunity and finds strength in His approval, however it may be regarded by others (3 : 8).

Events On Earth, With Glimpses Behind the Scenes

Chapters 4 to 11 are concerned with a sequence of events on earth which are seen by John to be allowed, and indeed **directed**, from heaven. What is going on on earth is only to be understood from the vantage point in heaven to which John is taken at the outset of this section. The **significance** of these events is an important feature, as is the **direction** in which they inevitably lead. Behind them is the throne of God and of the Lamb (chapters 4 and 5). At their conclusion, He is not only in control, but He is **manifestly** supreme (see chapter 11 : 15-19). The very character and authority of God insists that events should go this way. The all-wise Creator for Whose pleasure all things are, and were created, will in no wise relinquish His rights, nor His control over all. Yet the **way** in which He acts is most moving. In the midst of the throne stands a Lamb, as it had been slain, and He alone can undertake the great task of asserting God's rights on earth. He laid the foundation for it long ago. All heaven is at one on this, and it is a continuing and sufficient theme for eternity. "Thou art worthy. . . for thou wast slain". The redeemed say it with special warmth and indebtedness to Him. The processes of setting the earth right begin with a view of heaven's unanimity in zealous recognition of the worth of the One Who alone can do it.

At the close of chapter 11, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ". At that point all the objectives are achieved, and the period

of judgments upon the earth has passed. In the intervening chapters (beginning with chapter 6) many events are described, introduced in turn by the breaking of the seals and the sounding of seven trumpets. The sequence seems to be in time order, covering the whole period of these judgments from heaven. There are however two interludes, one (chapter 7) between the sixth and seventh seals, and another (chapters 10 to 11 : 14) between the sixth and seventh trumpets. These interludes seem designed to re-affirm the theme that heaven knows what is going on, and has its hand on everything. The first gives a preview of the faithful from Israel and the nations, a vast outcome for God from all the acute trouble on earth. Their security is assured in advance ; the relief and blessing of their place after the storm has passed is envisaged beforehand. In the second interlude God's claim to the earth is asserted again ; then John takes notice that **worshippers** are part of the product of these dark times ; also, God has His special **witnesses** rebuking the general unbelief. These face hatred and martyrdom, but are later entirely vindicated by God.

The events associated with the seals seem of a kind all too familiar in our world ; wars, bloodshed, famine, and fear in men's hearts. Doubtless these happenings will be intensified in this period, but we seem here to be concerned with **providential** judgments rather than open judgments. These are the kinds of distresses described by our Lord as "the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24 : 8). But the events associated with the trumpets have a different appearance ; these judgments are outstandingly severe and sinister. Supernatural occurrences seem to be portrayed, and demonic activity is indicated. In the interlude **before** the trumpets, the "great tribulation" and its survivors were plainly foreseen. It therefore seems probable that the trumpets cover the period of great tribulation. The contents of the second interlude also seem to confirm this, connected as they are with the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, and the peak of the persecution of God's witnesses. (Note the period of 42 months, or 1,260 days, mentioned in 11 : 2, 3). In taking this overall view of the seals and trumpets there is reassurance in its consistency with what we have found in Daniel and in Matthew 24.

The Final Showdown ; the Major Participants

John was told in chapter 10 (verse 11) that he must prophesy **again**. From **chapters 12 to 21 : 8** we are taken a second time through the same period, though the standpoint is different. The focus is more on personages than on events now. A view is given of the last heads of infidelity, of false religion, of opposition to God, and the common Satanic source which inspires them. We see their self-assertion, their pride, their subtlety, and wickedness, and their collusion in rebellion in the last days. It is well for us to have evil principles crystallised so clearly, so that we can be aware of them even in our day. But, most important of all, we have a further view of One Who can cope with every adversary, whether in the human scene or in the unseen arena. The previous set of chapters ended (at the seventh trumpet) with Christ reigning supreme. This section, too, ends with Gentile rule terminated, complete devastation of every enemy of God, and Christ's millennial rule established. (Indeed it goes beyond this, as we shall see later). Though fearsome powers may rise up, like the

beasts in Daniel's prophecy, yet the ultimate power is in the safest of hands. According to Philippians 3 : 21 Christ "is able to subdue all things unto himself". And so it proves in this prophecy. Not only are the adversaries defeated, but the whole earth is filled with His glory.

The real issues are uncovered first in **chapter 12**. "War in heaven", between God and His great adversary, is now reaching a climax. The serpent and the seed of the woman figure again. Beneath the whole human story there lies **this** conflict. In vision, John sees God's purpose and Satan's implacable opposition to it. He sees the Man-child destined to rule; and the nation (Israel) to which the glory and the promises pertain (Romans 9 : 4, 5). Unable to touch Christ, and at this stage cast out from heaven, the devil directs his attention to Israel, and in particular to "the remnant of her seed". Before turning the page to see the fearful actors he uses in this battle against God, it is well to see that Satan scores no victories. He is losing the battle and knows it (see 12 : 12). The heat of the earthly tribulation is a sign of his desperation. **Chapter 13** introduces his principal men and his methods at this fateful time. A Gentile political head, bent against God, with earthly might of an almost invincible kind, is first described. There are clear indications that the last stages of Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Daniel 2) are now being realised. It is clear too that this is a **revival** of an earlier empire (and chapter 17 : 9 identifies it again as Rome). The second beast in this chapter (later called the false prophet) reminds us more of 2 Thessalonians 2 (especially verses 7-10). Deception is his main characteristic, misleading people into false worship, with impressive wonders to delude and attract them, and the threat of dire hardship for those who will not comply. Piety will be a costly thing indeed in these times.

In **chapters 14, 15 and 16** we are taken behind the scenes again. Twice in these chapters we have forward-looking glimpses of scenes of triumph and singing. We hear of overcomers, "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb", and of those that had "gotten the victory over the beast". Angels appear, with messages for earth, making it evident that God is active in all developments. There are hints of things to be expanded later. A time of reaping is about to occur, the winepress is to be trodden, the full wrath of God to fall upon the unrepentant earth. Seven angels then pour out their vials, but there is nothing curative about these judgments. Repeatedly it is said "yet they repented not". The effect is that, led by Satan, a united and massive last throw against God is mounted (16 : 13-21). How this is dealt with is deferred until mid-chapter 19.

On to the Very End

In **chapters 17-19 : 1-4**, John is taken apart and given a view of "Babylon the Great" (mentioned in passing in chapters 14 and 16). He also witnesses her downfall. Though important, this breaks the main sequence, and we therefore leave it aside for the moment. At the end of chapter 16 the last great muster of the anti-God forces was described. In 19 : 19 the same theme is picked up again. They are crushed, decisively and absolutely, by the incoming of Christ with a great retinue from heaven. Righteously and unerringly He deals with them. The leaders are

cast into the lake of fire, and their followers slain. As has been remarked before, the critical moments in the story are sharp and unequivocal. This passage, describing the appearing of Christ from heaven, is impressive in this sense ; and it gives all the glory to Him as it describes it.

But in this particular sequence of chapters the coming of Christ is by no means the terminal point. Events are related which go on far beyond His appearing. The fact that this is a time-order of events is drawn to our attention here and there. First, before His appearing, "the marriage of the Lamb" takes place in heaven and great rejoicing is heard there. Then He appears, and destroys all the concerted opposition on earth. Next (**chapter 20**), Satan is bound so that earth is no longer shadowed by his deceptions. Then the martyrs of the tribulation live again, and reign with Christ. A period of 1,000 years elapses, the millennial reign of Christ. The passage says rather little about it apart from its duration (though there is more elsewhere). At the expiry of the millennium, Satan is loosed and deceives the nations again on a wide scale. He heads a last revolt which is summarily extinguished by fire from heaven. Like the beast and the false prophet before him, he goes to the place of eternal doom. Nor is this the end ; the last enemy, death itself, has yet to be destroyed. All that are in the graves must come forth. Here "the rest of the dead", small and great stand before God. Eternal loss awaits all whose names are not found in the Lamb's book of life. Death and hades, robbed of their prey, are themselves destroyed. This, it will be agreed, is a plain reading of chapter 20.

Chapter 21 : 1-8 follows up with a glimpse of what is beyond time, a new heaven and a new earth where righteousness dwells, where God dwells with men. Here every vestige of distress, associated with the reign of sin, has gone. God shall wipe away all tears ; God Himself will be all in all. This description of the eternal scene, moving in its brevity, and comforting in its style, forms a serene and fitting conclusion to the whole prophetic story.

[Our outline of prophecy could well conclude here. In following the main line in the book of Revelation, however, we have left aside two lengthy passages. In the first (chapters 17-19 : 4), John is shown Babylon, the false bride, and her end. In the second (chapters 21 : 9 to 22 : 5) he is shown the holy city, the true Bride of Christ. There is a parallelism between these passages ; they are introduced in a similar way ; both are asides, returning to amplify something mentioned rather briefly earlier. These passages have a special voice for today. The second one gives us a fuller view of the glory and light of the millennial day. All the clearance on earth is to make way for a wonderful era which God will introduce. If we were to miss this side of the teaching we should have an unbalanced view of the Revelation. It would seem right to return to these passages briefly.]

There are also the closing words of the book still to consider. Concluding words to a study of prophecy ought surely to draw close to the biblical conclusion to this theme.

The final paper will therefore aim to complete our outline of prophecy in both these senses.]

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

The Upper Room Discourse

(Notes on the Concordance, (p. 16), continued from p. 48)

Give. The principal character of Divine love is to give, and this fact receives its greatest confirmation from the frequent occurrence of the word 'give' in these chapters. It is in this activity, giving, that Divine love stands most clearly in contrast with eros, (not found in the New Testament), of which the character is to desire for itself. Divine love is seen elsewhere in Scripture acting thus, especially in the well-known passages, John 3 : 16, Ephesians 5 : 25, and Galatians 2 : 20, and this heart-moving fact finds central expression in these chapters. Divine Persons, the Son who speaks and the Father who is the source of all are first presented. After this, the words denoting action, (verbs), most frequently occurring are loving and giving. The actions of this inwardly knit circle, the Father, the Son and His friends, are loving and giving. We shall see that here indeed is the "love that gives not as the world, but shares all it possesses with its loved co-heirs".

Since we are venturing to attempt to identify the light cast by a **concordance**, it will be right further to classify the giving so frequent here. If we wish to drink in the spirit of this upper room discourse, we shall very frequently meditate on this giving, and make it our spirit's food. First come no less than seven repetitions, all in the prayer of ch. 17, of one or other form of the expression, "the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world". It must be greatly significant that this truth finds no expression directly to the disciples, but is confined to the prayer addressed by the Son to the Father. Its peculiar beauty is that it involves these men, poor and feeble in themselves, in the intimate mutual exchanges between the Father and the Son which in essence belong to eternity and the Father's house. Are these men precious in the sight of the Son? What more could ever be said in reply than that they were the Father's love gift to the Son. Are these men to enjoy everlasting value in the Father's heart, and nearness to Him? Indeed they must be so because He gave them to the Son.

Their origin is the world—"the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world", but their earthly life is henceforth the subject of intense desire by the Son; He gives them eternal life, (v. 2); they will be kept in the Father's Name, (v. 11); kept from the evil, (v. 15); sanctified through the truth, (v. 17) They, now including those who would afterwards believe down the age, will in the end be eternally at home where He is, to behold His glory.

Is there a prayer in the Holy Word which, in the tranquil peace and serenity which belongs to the Father's house the Father and the Son commune together of their own things? Is there in that prayer a description which takes notice of men of flesh and blood? Here is that prayer, and here are those men. By this name they are settled for ever in

the love that never faileth, in the mutuality of such exchanges between the Father and the Son. They are "the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world".

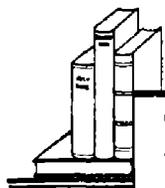
The other giving, this supreme activity of the Divine Love, can be listed as follows. The Father gives the Son "all things into His hand", (v. 13 : 3) ; power over all flesh, (17 : 2) ; a work to finish, (v. 4) ; word to give to His own, (v. 8) ; and after and above all, glory, (v. 24). Perhaps we shall never understand how the Son, all-glorious in His essential deity, should also receive glory as a gift from the Father.

The Son gives to the disciples an example of Divine Love in action, (13 : 15) ; the new commandment of love, (v. 34) ; and His peace, (14 : 27). He gives them eternal life, (17 : 2) ; the words received from the Father, (v. 8) ; the Father's word, (singular, v. 14), and after and above all, glory, (v. 22).

So true is the introduction of the friends of Jesus into the mutuality between the Father and the Son, that the Father Himself gives them gifts, distinctly personal from the Father to His Son's friends : the Comforter, (14 : 16) ; and "whatsoever they ask", (15 : 16, 16 : 23).

The superlatives of our thought and language are unequal to deal with such treasures, but we shall find that if and when we muse, the fire will burn.

Ask and Pray. The difference in meaning between the two words, erotao and aiteo, in these chapters roughly distinguished by the translations 'ask' and 'pray', is important, and several helps exist. The Stow Hill New translation gives a note on John 14 : 16, but this note omits the fact, important in this discourse, that the classical meaning of erotao is to ask questions ; and the word still clearly bears this meaning in the New Testament, e.g. John 8 : 7, 16 : 19, 20, and many other passages. As a distinctly later development it means 'to request (as an equal)', and thus becomes, in John 17, a notable witness to the deity of the Son. Certainly in Trench's "Synonyms", these points are very illuminatingly dealt with. The New Translation distinguishes erotao by the translation 'demand', which most readers find rather harsh, but was clearly intended to emphasize the distinct way the Son addresses the Father. Trench is especially helpful in John 16 : 23 : "the obliteration at John 16 : 23 of the distinction between aiteo and erotao might easily suggest. . . that its two clauses were. . . in antitheseis,—being indeed in none. In AV. we read : "In that day **ye shall ask** Me nothing (erotao). Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever **ye shall ask** (aiteo) the Father in my name, He will give it you.". . . "ye shall ask" of the first half of the verse has nothing to do with "ye shall ask" of the second. . . in the first Christ is referring back to the "they were desirous to ask (erotao) Him" of v. 19 ; to the questions which the disciples would fain have asked of Him. . . hereafter they shall be so taught by the Spirit as to have nothing further to **enquire** ; the second half of the verse begins a new blessing, that whatever they shall **seek** from the Father in the Son's name, He will give it them".



THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY OF DIVINE LOVE J. S. BLACKBURN

1 Corinthians 13

THE wider setting of this chapter is the carnality evident in the Corinthian assembly. The immediate context is that of speaking in assembly, where their carnality was manifested in their predilection for the showy gifts.

The word "love" in this chapter leads me to make some introductory remarks, and the substance of what I have to say is in these general remarks as much as in the details about the verses themselves. The use of the word "charity" in the A.V. Translation is intended to emphasize that the subject of this chapter, therefore, is most specifically **Divine Love**, and in our times we need more than ever to be quite sure what we mean by Divine Love. The love that Holy Scripture speaks of by this word shows its characters here most plainly. We are contemplating it now so that we may have our hearts set on fire by its warmth, and thereby respond to God more worthily. First, then, on the nature of Divine love, a few words on its **source** and its **outflow** and its **existence in us**. These uniquely determine the nature of the Divine Love which is our theme.

The Source of Divine Love

Where do we find the source of Divine Love? Out of all the Scriptures that crowd in upon my mind and heart, I give you one verse—John 17 : 24. The blessed and only Son of God is addressing His Father at that hour of all hours : "Father, thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". The world occurs in that sentence. Do you realise that in that sentence the world which has evoked and absorbed the energies of an Alexander, an Augustus, and a Napoleon—the world into which men probe so deeply that they have to measure its minute things in sub-microns and "the sweet influences of Pleiades" and the "Bands of Orion" in light years—the world that spreads its allurements to us all, old and young,—that world is only an episode in eternity? In John 17 we have the Son addressing the Father. The two great things which dwelt in that home of eternal joy and delight are **glory**,—"the glory which I had with thee before the world was"—and **love**. There is the source of Divine Love.

One of the lovely features of the best human love is that it consists very largely of satisfaction in a person. How moving to the heart to turn back to Proverbs chapter 8 and hear Wisdom, the Word, the only begot-

ten Son of the Father, saying "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. . . I was his nursling ; and **I was daily his delight**, rejoicing always before him". Here then is the source of Divine Love.

The Outflow of Divine Love

A salient feature of the outflow of Divine Love is to give. This is the point at which the original word springs to light as the only word that would serve the purpose of God's Spirit. The characteristic of "eros" is to demand satisfaction for itself. Regarding Divine Love which we have in John 17, and repeatedly in John's epistle, "God is love", the characteristic activity is to **give**. "God so loved the world that he **gave**". "The Son of God who loved me and **gave** himself for me". "Christ also loved the church and **gave** himself for it". In John 17, which is above all chapters the one that presents the Father and the Son in their own world of pure delight, 17 times in its 26 verses occurs the word "give". Who can measure the **giving** of God, right through to the moment when we shall be given glory alongside His beloved Son ?

Divine Love in the Saints a Response

Finally, on this subject of the **nature** of Divine Love, how does it ever come to exist in us ? It does exist in us in this chapter ! The one reason I read this chapter is that here it does exist in us. The answer is that it can exist in the saints, that is, in us, only and uniquely as a response ; and as proof I give you 1 John 4 : 19 "We love, because he first loved us". Here I quote a hymn which has been a most fruitful influence on me over many years—

Let me love Thee, come revealing
 All Thy love has done for me,
 Help my heart so unbelieving
 By the sight of Calvary.
 Let me see Thy love despising
 All the shame my sin had wrought,
 By Thy torment realising
 What a price my pardon bought.

This is the way, and the only way, in which this Divine Love will be awakened, causing us to live so that we walk in its burning power.

The unique contribution of 1 Corinthians 13 on the subject of Divine Love, is what I would like to explain before I come to deal briefly with the verses in detail. It is quite plain that although this is Divine Love, it would be not so much untrue, as inappropriate to say of God in the essential attribute of His Deity, for example, that He is not puffed up. Yet this chapter says "love is not puffed up". What I am indicating clearly is that this chapter considers specifically **Divine** Love, but Divine Love in man. It has always been noted that while you could not appropriately put 'God' as the subject in verses 4 to 7 you could so sweetly and appropriately think of the Lord Jesus in this way. He suffered long ; He was kind ; He sought not His own ; He endured all things, and never

failed. Nevertheless I do not think that this is primarily the subject of this chapter. It is Divine Love **in the saints**. That is the great theme of this chapter, presented as the answer to all the carnality, and the consequent difficulties in that assembly and in all assemblies. Here is the point with which 1 Corinthians 13 is uniquely concerned.

The Subjective Effect of Divine Love

What we have in 1 Corinthians 13 is also the subjective effect of love. Exactly what do I mean by that? I have often heard it said "Love must have an object". This is right, but there is not one word in this chapter about the object of love. Why? Because the whole subject is love's transforming power on the character of the person who loves. The person who loves becomes like this. The person who loves ceases to be the man that he was, envious, braggart, puffed-up, ill-mannered, self-centred, censorious—that is the man we are by nature, but, (taking prior account of the blood of Christ and the Spirit of God), we see here described so vividly the subjective effect of Divine Love, that is, its effect on the person who loves with Divine Love. That **this** is Divine Love and not **anything** called love, is most important, you will agree.

The Indispensibility of Divine Love

Now I have to start on the chapter, but I promise you that the greater part of what I have to say is already said and I will now try to be as brief as possible. Every one who has studied this chapter has seen it divided into three paragraphs. The first three verses present to us the **indispensibility**. From verse 4 to verse 8 we have the **characters**— and from the second phrase of verse 8 to the end we have the **permanence** of love.

When I think about these first three verses, I am bound to say that I find them absolutely gigantic. They contain the very things that Christian men have been disposed to make much of—dare we say, have been disposed to make too much of. Have we been disposed to make too much of the understanding of mysteries? Nothing else matters, some people might think, as long as we understand mysteries. It is very important to understand mysteries, but the gigantic statement of the Spirit of God in verse 3 is "though I give my body to be burned", (think of the crackling flames at the stake and our very flesh roasting), "my body to be burned, and have not love. . .". It does not mean, I am wrong, or small; it does not say I have a lot to learn; I am **nothing**. If I have the gifts that Christian men have found comforting, strengthening and instructing, and have not love. I am nothing. That is an absolutely gigantic statement which can slip past us unnoticed, and it is all to teach us that there is a way set before us in Holy Scripture by which we can encourage and feed the growth and the burning and the power of love in our hearts. Then we shall say like John Wesley, "Give me the book that tells me how I can do this"; "show me the more excellent way of Divine Love".

The Characters of Divine Love

In the middle section of the chapter are the **characters** of love. After

nine negatives there are seven positives. There is a clean contrast between the way love does behave, and the way love does not behave. There is a clean contrast between what I am by nature and what Divine Love will make me in character. It will produce its own characters. Love is not jealous. If I am jealous, it is not love that makes me jealous.

I note particularly the expression in verse 4, "it is not puffed up". Now I have not counted, but it would easily be made out that the recurrent theme concerning the carnalities of the Corinthian church which robbed them of everything, was that they were puffed up. The very time they should have been down in the dust before God, they were puffed up. This Divine alchemy would have altered it all, because Divine Love is not puffed up.

A little earlier (verse 4) we read "Love suffereth long and is kind". In Ephesians 4 : 2 (one of the great classics about Christian unity) long-suffering is needed to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Longsuffering is one of the characters of Divine Love in a man. Then we read about it, that it is **kind**— "The charm of a man is his kindness". I feel, and I think that you would feel the same, that we can forgive a person a very great deal, if we are aware of his kindnesses. If we investigated the case of a brother, externally misjudged, we would have to acknowledge the presence of Divine Love in him if we were made aware of his kindnesses.

In the seventh verse and the beginning of the eighth verse (and I love to think of it) we have a mounting crescendo of triumph. Let no man think that Divine love is an idle, supine, tranquil virtue. Just read them again : "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things—love never fails". If we are overcome in our own discipleship, then we need God to speak to us about the more excellent way of Divine Love. What are these "all things" ? They are all things that are the enemies of spiritual progress, all things that are the enemies of our being self-denying, devoted disciples of Christ, representing Him in a world that knows Him not. All things are overcome by Divine love.

The Permanence of Divine Love

In the last section of the chapter, the **permanence** of love, which we begin in verse 9 by reading "Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part", there is an air of undefinable sadness in my mind that those things that have helped us will pass away. In the assembly of God we have been helped by prophecy. We have been helped by knowledge in the things of God, and much that is wrong in Christendom today is through ignorance, the absence of knowledge, in the things of God. We have been helped by these things and perhaps there is a certain sadness as we read they shall pass away, until we realise that in their place there is something far, far better, when that which is perfect is come.

The thread upon which these verses are strung is to throw into contrast what is "in part" with what is "perfect". "For we know **in part** . . . but when that which is **perfect** is come" (verses 9, 10). Later, in verse 12, "I know in part", and that which is **in part** is contrasted with that which is **perfect**. This contrast is first illustrated by the particular case of the child and the man (verse 11). The maturity of manhood causes to

cease the qualities of childhood. There is, nevertheless, a continuity between the child and the man. There is a parallel illustration in 2 Corinthians 3 : 10. We lose sight of the stars in the daytime "by reason of the glory that excelleth". When the sun appears in its majesty, the stars cannot be seen, but this particular causing to cease is also because what is partial is to be swallowed up in what is perfect.

There is a very important lesson here, it seems to me. I have heard older brethren discourage younger brethren from gaining knowledge. A very ill-service is done to young people by discouraging them to gain the knowledge of Divine things, so long as it is never forgotten that knowledge without love puffs up. Alongside true knowledge there is always distrust of self, that humility which belongs to the true Christian character, and above all, (and here we return to 1 Corinthians 13 : 12) a recognition that what we have by way of knowledge is only **in part**.

Ephesians is very illuminating on this point. It says in 4 : 4, "there is one faith". If there is one faith, why do Christians disagree so much? I read the answer in the New Translation (verse 13); the gifts are given "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith, at a perfect man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ". The reason for a large number of our disagreements is that we fail to recognize that our knowledge is partial, and we "see through a glass darkly". I am importing into this Scripture the idea that it is Christ whom we see. How sad it is that "we see through a glass darkly", that our glimpses of the Saviour are broken glimpses! But let us encourage each other to look to Him more and more even if they are broken glimpses, because in the end, when all the treasury of Divine Love is poured out upon us in the Father's house, we will have the same knowledge of the same Person, but perfected. We shall have the same sight, but no longer through a glass darkly. (The ancient glass must have been pretty poor stuff!) They saw through a glass darkly—distorted—they were broken glimpses. **Then**, we shall see Him face to face, and to see Him face to face is the end of the road along which the "more excellent way" of Divine Love will take us.

I am not wise enough to explain the mystery of this question of faith and hope ceasing. All one can say is that amongst all these things that are changing, the things that are lasting are faith, hope and love. "The greatest of these is love". And the conclusion is "Follow after love" (14 : 1).

"Follow after Love"

What does Scripture give us about the means whereby we can follow after love? Here is the word which we would like to have written on our hearts, "Make Divine love your quest". "Follow after love". Divine Love is the one thing that will put all the wrong things right by the power of the Spirit of God. Now the last thing I would leave with you is **how** we can follow, seek, make quest after Divine Love. In Galatians 5 : 22, the first element of the "fruit of the Spirit" is Divine Love. Simply "Walk in the Spirit" and the fruit of the Spirit will be seen, and this is **Love**. What is "walking in the Spirit"? I feel that every student of Holy Scripture for his own heart and life has his own clear impression of what it means to walk in the Spirit. The Spirit of God is available and His power works in one direction only—He is glorifying Christ and making

good the things of Christ in my heart and yours ; and in the faintest, feeblest step that you take Christward, and to glorify Him in thought, word and deed, you have the Spirit of God with you. Walk in the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in you ; and in the measure in which you walk in the Spirit the ugly works of the flesh will wither and the lovely fruit of the Spirit of God will be seen, as they are in fact seen in 1 Corinthians 13 as the characters of Divine Love.

My second suggestion to you about **how** this Divine love can be awakened and we can live more and more in its power brings before us the Lord's Supper. We can be thankful to God every day of our lives that we are in a community where 1 Corinthians 11 is full of meaning, also the Scripture that says the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread. It is according to the loving wisdom of our Saviour that we are brought together week by week to think of the body given and the blood shed in sacrifice as the outcome of that mighty love for us. There, we realise His Presence and hear His voice saying "This do for a remembrance of me". We have in our scriptural practice of the Lord's Supper, more than any other conceivable thing, the means whereby we shall be brought to love, because He first loved us.

In this connection I quote you one more verse of the same hymn, and I want you to see, how in the unique sense of 1 Corinthians 13, Divine love can control the thoughts and the words, even the deeds.

Let me love Thee, love is mighty,
Swaying realms of deed and thought ;
By it I shall walk uprightly,
I shall serve Thee as I ought.
Love will soften every sorrow,
Love will lighten every care,
Love unquestioning will follow,
Love will triumph, love will dare.

It has been my lot in life to visit factories, enormous factories, across the world, and once or twice I have had an awe-inspiring experience. I am thinking of one such experience. One walks through the buildings and finds all the vessels of intricate design and sophisticated instrumentation ready to do their special work. One walks nearer to the heart of the matter and sees the great gleaming turbo-generators, large enough to supply the whole of the London Underground ; further still one sees the boiler plant all in order and everything ready : but there is the stillness of death on everything. Usually there is the hum of machinery, the hiss of escaping steam, the roar of the air-intake, but now all is still as death ! What is wrong ? There is no fire ! Divine Love alone is the fuel feeding the flame of increased devotion to Christ.

I have not had time to deal with the outward reach to the world around, but I do know that Divine Love will produce Gospel increase. As we look abroad and see tremendous activity in evangelical circles, we see the number who are interested in Divine things swelling into thousands, and yet we know very well that a large part of it is ill-founded and in fact, clean contrary to Bible pattern. I suggest to you that if in the power of this "more excellent way" of Divine Love, we were more

“holding the Head”, there would not only be nourishment ministered, we would not only be knit together in love, but there would be (how sad, if we are satisfied with less) Gospel increase, with the increase of God.

“O Lord, Who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth. . . pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues. . . Grant this for Thine only Son, Jesus Christ’s sake, Amen.”

A LIGHT THAT SHINES IN A DARK PLACE ——— COLIN CURRY

4. THE DAY IS AT HAND

THE passages in the book of Revelation which describe the harlot (the idolatrous city) and the true bride (the holy city) are in complete contrast. There is nothing attractive in the first passage, so shameful and sordid are the things uncovered there. The heavenly Jerusalem, however, is a theme which is highly appealing in its purity and glory. In the fall of Babylon the Great it is clearly demonstrated that God’s judgments are true and righteous, and the memory of it lingers into eternity. But in the heavenly city the pure glory of God is enshrined, bringing benefits to the whole earth ; and the values displayed in that city are eternal.

The Other Character of Rome

In chapter 17 the first beast of chapter 13 is again described. This great head of the western world will rise to prominence in an astonishing way, carrying all before him. Nothing so impressive (nor so sinister) will have been seen before. It will be a revival of the imperial power once associated with Rome, and it will be Satanic in its origin. The western kingdoms will fall into line with this great dominating power, ultimately forming a great federation in outright enmity against God. But **before** this picture is developed, a woman is seen sitting upon the beast, and she has subtle links (of intrigue and commerce) with the kings of the earth. In throwing off her control the secular powers rid themselves of something which has become irksome to them, though it was welcomed in the early stages. Their desire to free themselves from her influence is one factor in uniting them. Behind the scenes, God puts it into their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree in hating her. Thus God uses these powers to bring into effect His judgment upon the woman ; though later (when free of her domination) they pursue their joint revolt against God. They too meet with His devastating judgment, in due course. This then is the general pattern of the story ; but we must now concentrate upon the woman.

It is clear that the woman represents spiritual adultery. A system with great power and influence which is **unfaithful** to God (rather than directly antagonistic to Him) is depicted. Here is false religion, corrupted and degraded by self-aggrandisement, luxury, and worldliness. Here is denial of the faith of Christ in life and in character, if not in word. Here is the sacrifice of principle and spiritual testimony for material gain and

earthly prestige. Here is the glorification of self-interest, the personification of the ruthless commercial spirit. Here is the appearance of respectability, with refinements and delicate things, and great pride in culture and tradition. But basically it is empty, tawdry, and detestable in the sight of God. Idolatrous abominations are commonplace within this system, blatant and unrestrained in some places, more decorously disguised in others. Tolerance of evil goes on under the superficial form of sanctity. Persecution of those who rebuke the system by a humble life of purity and faith in God has been the norm in such a set-up; though all is hollow and none are pure in the end-stages here described. Such a great organisation may have influence in the world, but not of the kind that can command any lasting respect. It is perhaps not surprising that her underlings ultimately turn against her in revulsion and hatred. In one hour her magnificence is brought to nothing. It is a just end to her career. The reader can see for himself that Scripture has sharp and forthright statements about the evil nature of this system; and that the facts about this great power have not been overstated here.

The realism of this picture as a possibility in the twentieth century is also clear. General attitudes, as well as organised institutions, which are after the pattern drawn in these chapters, are easily detectable today. Nevertheless, the question may be asked: What does the passage really foresee? Let us notice first that 17:18 confirms the link between this great system and Rome. Bearing in mind the scriptural indications, then, the following questions arise. What power holds great influence in many countries, has a close link with Rome, and could be thought of as assimilating other elements and so taking on the shocking final character illustrated here? What edifice could rise to such a grandiose yet disgusting image as this; and yet could be overthrown and replaced by an iron Rome, more like the pagan Rome of days long gone, with all its imperial power and mighty thrust against God? What power can be envisaged which, if removed, could rock the economic foundations of society and undermine the stability of civilisation (particularly western civilisation)? There seems no doubt that ecclesiastical Rome fits this picture to some extent, and has tendencies to move further towards it. Moves to embrace disparate and schismatic groups, absorbing them into one great structure (caring more for unity than truth) are often spoken about today. The aim to set up a world-church is a serious one already. The prophecy relates to a period when the true church has been called from earth, and restraints on evil are lifted for a time. It seems clear that the residuum of Christendom could soon develop into this unsavoury form, and trends in this direction are already plain. We may recall, too, that both our Lord Himself and His apostle Paul spoke in grim terms of the end-stages of empty Christian profession (Matthew 13; 2 Timothy 3).

The lesson for Christians today is a clear one. It is pressed upon us by a voice from heaven (18:4). "Come ye out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins. . ." Seduction is the hall-mark of man-made religion; its appeal can be great and its disguise is often clever. Self-satisfaction and self-respect can be felt within its pale. But it is a false and damaging environment for the people of God. Physical detachment from such practices is not enough, however. Worldliness can find scope within our lives however outwardly separate they may seem to be.

Its basic features are appetites for pleasant things, acquisitiveness, and pride in what we are (1 John 2 : 16). These are internal tendencies, and are not avoided merely by narrowing our circle. "Keep yourselves from idols" is a necessary word, and is applicable within our assemblies and within our individual lives. Only a close and living link with our Lord Himself can absorb our affections, and so grip and direct us that our own comforts and importance pass from mind, so that He alone may become the Lord and Light of our lives.

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

From the glitter and falsity of Babylon, and the animosity and blasphemy of the forces which overthrew her, we turn with relief to the display of the glory of God in the millennial day. Following the removal of everything offensive to God "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11 : 9). The magnificence of the day which is coming puts a strain upon human description, though the symbolic language of Scripture gives a wonderful impression of it.

John again is taken aside (21 : 9), this time to be shown "the bride, the Lamb's wife". When he looks he sees a city, "descending out of heaven from God". The double image (bride and wife and city) is needed to cover all that is involved, as in the case of the false bride and city. The company formed and won by our Lord's death, attached to Him in affection and expectation during His rejection, and lifted in due course into those private heavenly scenes (where His marriage to her has at this stage been celebrated) is now seen coming forth. She is the vessel and channel for the demonstration of the glory of God on the widest scale. This city neither has, nor seeks, glory of her own. There is nothing here that misrepresents or sullies the glory of God, nothing of ill-influence in the world, none of the subversive and undercover activities of the false city. On the contrary, everything is pure and clear. Even the materials are described in these terms : jasper, clear as crystal ; pure gold ; clear glass. In every detail the substance of the city is from God and of God. Here is a clear demonstration, openly asserting and establishing the glory and lovingkindness of God. It will impress and rule the whole earth. It will command tribute from far and near. Kings will bring their glory and honour to it. The nations shall walk in the light of it. We can see why the figure of a city is appropriate : government and rule over the earth find their seat and central power there.

The foundations, gates and walls of the city are drawn to our attention. A firm base underlies all the glory that is enshrined there. There is liberty and freedom of access for all whose names are in the Lamb's book of life ; but all defiling influences are debarred from entry. There is a wholeness about the picture of the city, with all the details in harmony. Precious stones garnish it. No precious stone has beauty apart from the light which shines on it and through it. But the glory of God lightens this city, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. From this great metropolis the knowledge of God is transmitted to the world. The manifold excellences of that Light, revealed and embodied in the Lamb, are displayed and dispersed by the individuals who compose it. The effects of His grace within them are all treasured up for this great day of display.

It is a reflection of Himself which finds its outlet here.

There is life as well as light within this city. Its inhabitants are at home and active there. God satisfies His love by bringing His people near to Himself. The ineffable Presence is realised in an immediate way. Holiness and truth pervade the whole precinct where He is known : every activity is in accord with this. His servants serve Him. They see His face, and His name is in their foreheads. Open-faced communion with God is enjoyed and shared by all participators. The knowledge of His glory is channelled through those who enjoy and experience it themselves in a first-hand and intimate way.

A pure river of water of life flows there, life-giving and life-sustaining. Here is refreshment, and the satisfaction of every desire, always available in its fullness. It proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. No counter-authority could ever stem such a fountain from the heart of God ; nor can the rightness of that supply ever be questioned. The Lamb once slain underwrites its integrity and its plenitude.

The shortcomings of this outline are apparent. Let the reader return to the passage itself in the spirit of wonder and gratitude. Let us marvel at the surpassing triumph of God, soon to be worked out in a world such as ours. " These words are faithful and true", the passage continues. What thanks we owe to God for prospects such as these, and for the certainty of their fulfilment.

The Bright and Morning Star

The light of prophecy shines in a dark place today. But it has enlightened many a future scene for us. In particular, it has helped us to envisage a day when the light will shine undimmed, and the supremacy of God and the Lamb will be unquestionable. The bible follows up its vision of that day with a few last verses (22 : 6-21) which are outstanding in their appeal and directness. These are heartening words indeed, though they also have an urgent tone.

Throughout this concluding section there runs an insistent reference to the speedy passage of time so that these considerations need our urgent attention. The fulfilment of the whole vista of prophecy is rapidly drawing nearer. "The time is at hand". These things "must shortly be done". "Behold, I come quickly". "Surely I come quickly". Three times within the verses our Lord Himself reinforces what His messengers had earlier said to John. His own last words on the pages of Scripture confirm the whole consensus of the New Testament on this important matter ; He is certainly coming, and soon. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. The bright Morning Star will soon be in view. Faith sees it already. The Church looks for Him with warmth and zeal, as does every individual believer whose heart responds to His love. It is a **welcome** thought indeed that He is coming for His people first. The spirit of the believer, if at all true to His Lord, joins with the Spirit of God in saying Amen to this. "Even so come, Lord Jesus". Let us not waver in warmth of expectancy and readiness for that wonderful moment. May our Lord keep us in the good of His love, so that we may be constant in our hope of seeing Him face to face.

The proximity of His coming is a **salutary** consideration as well as a welcome one, however. These concluding words show that this kind of

lesson should also be drawn. Opportunities are here which will be gone tomorrow. Hearing, keeping, responding aright to the message of prophecy is today's concern. A real blessing can come to us this way ; a blessing which is gained today if at all. By these means we can progress in understanding our Lord's mind ; with His help we can learn to assess things on the true scale of values. We can be brought into line with His thoughts about every trend and every attitude taken today. We can be drawn into ways which He approves. It can be done by attending assiduously to His instruction in these areas. We need to value it because he provides it, and our approach should be that of humble learners who wish to know Him better. Let us give these prophetic passages the weight He places upon them. May His word cleanse our ways and thoughts in this manner increasingly, until He comes. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3 : 3).

THE TEN GATES

JOHN BARNES.

Nehemiah 3

JERUSALEM was lying in ruins, its walls a desolate heap of rubble. The once fair city, strong and well defended, had been judged by the Lord and delivered over to its enemies for chastisement. But grace had worked in the hearts of a remnant of the Lord's people, and under the intelligent leadership of Nehemiah, a man who was prepared to forego the comforts and security of a high and privileged position for the Lord's service, the work of rebuilding the wall of the city was begun.

There are many things in the chapter which are of great interest : the wall itself, the gates, the names of the builders, the women who helped in the work, and the nobles who withheld their support. No doubt all these features have their significance and have lessons to teach us.

We may wonder why there are only ten gates and not twelve. That there were more than ten seems certain since at least two more, not mentioned here, are referred to in chapter 12. A city is a centre of administration and government, and the administrative number 12 comports well with this idea. The great, holy city of Revelation 21 will have twelve gates and will, no doubt, be the administrative centre of a day to come. I suggest that though the labours of these Jews were valuable and though they worked with devotion, restored Jerusalem of the Nehemiah recovery was not yet ready for global administration. The number 10 is Biblically suggestive of responsibility but not of government and would in this way be more in keeping with the remnant character of the recovery described in this book.

Restoration ! This is a moving thought but it is also deeply disturbing. Recovery is not only **to** a state or condition but **from** a state or condition. The sorrowful fact of departure, of national apostacy, had to be squarely faced. (cf ch 1 : 6) If we are to make any application of this chapter's teaching to our own period, we too shall have to face the same unhappy confession of departure. The present, broken condition of the once powerful citadel of truth could not be denied by the most optimistic

observer. The outward state of the church is a disaster. The many oecumenical movements afoot are proof that few are satisfied with the shattered defences of the church today. Times of recovery are also times of facing the truth.

In this chapter we begin with the outstandingly important truth conveyed in the name of the high priest, the first of the builders to be named; "Eliashib." The lexicons give the meaning of the name as, "Whom God restored." We should note that; "Whom **God** restored." Any work of recovery which is to be effective and of permanent value must begin there. Unfortunately many oecumenical proposals are based on ideas which savour more of expediency. One hears suggestions like this; "It is costly and wasteful for christians to remain separate. One church (or meeting room) costs less to maintain than two or three; six lights will serve fifty people as well as twenty. We should have much more money to spare for other pressing aspects of christian work if less were spent on duplicate accommodation." All this is true but it seems to be rooted more in economics than in consideration for the glory of God. The fact is that any recovery of spiritual value and of enduring quality must be in response to God's initiative and not merely be the fruit of man's makeshift arrangements.

Eliashib was the high priest. Many suggestions as to re-unification of believers are specifically related to evangelism. Few christians would find themselves out of sympathy with this aspect of oecumenical exercise. "Christians would be more effective witnesses if they walked together," it is argued. There is solid truth in this view and, very likely the christian impact on the non-believing world would be increased if believers were walking more happily together, but the interesting fact is that in this context recovery begins in an atmosphere of worship. It has been asserted: "It is important to present Christ to the world; it is more important to present Christ to the saints; it is most important to present Christ to God." The moral order of these statements is undeniably correct. What God wants first of all from the saints is the love and response of their hearts. To a poor, outcast, sinful woman of Samaria the Lord Jesus spoke of the worship of God and the Father. He had been speaking, in the previously reported conversation with Nicodemus, of new birth, but to the woman He spoke of the wonderful and moving truth that the Father sought the affections of her heart. There could be no question of evading the necessity for new birth, because the Saviour had just said, "Ye **must** be born again," but to the woman the Lord Jesus said, "The Father seeketh worshippers." Any movement of restoration must be initiated by God Himself and must lead us back into paths pleasing to Him, giving Him His true place. In his great prayer on Carmel's decisive mount, Elijah said, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God and that **Thou hast turned their heart back again.**" When we talk about coming together, even if the re-union concerns only two or three small groups of His scattered sheep, is it expediency or is it concern for His glory and the worship of God Himself that lies at the foundation of the movement? If God leads us to come together again He will assuredly centre such a movement in Himself.

Eliashib built with his "brethren, the priests." There was a priestly

fellowship in the recovery which took character from the springs of the movement. There was a family feeling, a community of interest and community of occupation. Many an oecumenical barque must founder on the jagged reef of diversity. Where there exists a diversity of nature and interests, where companies are mixed, including believers and unbelievers, difficulties are certain to arise. A merger including such diversity would be the precursor of further and probably bolder apostasy. A genuine, christian coming together would demand a "fellowship of kindred minds."

They "rose up." Here we have a record of action following deep concern. So many exercises in relation to the shame and sorrow of dispersal begin in thought and end in conference, but little or no real action is taken. The devoted band led by Nehemiah were not content merely to express their shame and sorrow verbally; they were also ready to do backbreaking and menial work towards the restoration of that which had been broken down. Their repentance was channelled in a practical direction. This must be the aim of every christian today who has a concern for God and for His divided people. It may be asked, "How can this work be done today?" That it is moral and not material ruin *that we face makes the difficulties of recovery in our day very great, but one thing is certain; no re-building can be accomplished at the expense of truth.* The easy slide into an ever widening communion, which ignores unjudged departure from standards of truth, will not lead to re-building according to God, but to further erosion. We need energy, we need enthusiasm, we need purpose of heart, but these must be firmly rooted in divine truth or we shall find ourselves building wood, hay and stubble all over again.

The priests named here rebuilt the sheepgate, the first of the ten gates to be referred to. This gate has generally been associated with that aspect of the truth unfolded in John 10 in which the sheep are seen entering in by the Door and finding salvation and liberty. I believe this has a place here but I should like to suggest a more fundamental thought first. There is a reference in John 5 : 1 to the sheep-market. The margin gives as an alternative reading, "sheepgate." This is believed to be the more correct reading. It is asserted in Jerusalem today that the gate mentioned was the entrance through which sheep were led into the city to be sacrificed at the altar. The pool of Bethesda is understood to have been the source from which water was drawn to wash these animals prior to sacrifice. I would like, therefore, to suggest that we should bear primarily in mind the truth of Isaiah 53; "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The great, basic necessity to any work done for God is the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ, without which ail else is vain. Founded on that, the truth already referred to falls into place, for, "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." One of the two towers named as in proximity to this gate seems to support this view. The name "Meah" means "100". Thinking of this in connection with sheep would lead the mind of the reader to Luke 15 and to the first of the great parables of that chapter. But there are two towers named, very possibly situated one on either side of the gate, and the second is called "Hananiel," meaning "Graciously given of God." Any work of blessing

for a lost sheep that has been brought back to God is, most assuredly, the fruit of God's gracious work ; a blessing graciously given of God. No building, however pretentious, which fails to take into account the blessed fact of the death of the Lord Jesus and the infinite grace of God in applying the value of that work to the lost, will be of any value at all. The one sheep of the first parable was an object of grace and this fact is further illustrated in the restoration and blessing of the delinquent son of the third of the parables.

There was a salutary influence alongside the builders of this gate ; the men of Jericho were there. Jericho, we recall, fell to the invading armies of Israel without their striking a blow. The Lord Himself, in His mighty power, caused the walls of that stronghold to fall flat before the men of Israel so that each warrior was able to go straight before him into the city. Some of us have been privileged to see the excavated foundations of Jericho's ancient walls and we saw that more recent foundations were erected on earlier foundations which were, themselves, reared on still earlier footings. These tiers of foundations go back to pagan beginnings. In any work of restoration we must be careful not to rebuild on heathen foundations. Much of the tradition of the so-called christian churches has heathen ideas beneath its professedly christian superstructure. The men of Jericho would be acutely aware of the thoroughly unreliable nature of the old city's foundation. It is deeply solemn to remember that Hiel, in defiance of Joshua's curse, rebuilt Jericho, losing his two sons in the process. There is much talk in oecumenical circles about us keeping our young people, and we all want to do that, but let us beware that we do not, by compromise with evil, lose them altogether. "Rebellion," said Samuel to Saul, "is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as idolatry." The men of Jericho had left that place and come **up** to Jerusalem to help in the rebuilding of the wall, abandoning the principles of the city of destruction. Those who will have oecumenism at any cost should take care that they do not, like the man of Luke 10 go **down** from Jerusalem to Jericho. If they do, they will in all probability, like him, fall among thieves who will rob them of all that they value and leave them stripped of true riches.

Zaccar means "mindful." We need to be mindful of many things. We should remember what lead to the disastrous divisions which we so much deplore. While it is true that exhumations of the dead past are rarely profitable or to be recommended, the obvious lessons of church history cannot be ignored. We should also do well to recall our own contemporary contribution to the general unfaithfulness which has marred the public history of the church. (cf Nehemiah's confession 1 : 6) Nor should we forget the unfailing faithfulness of our God. It is to the unfaithful Corinthians, with their shameful divisions, that Paul writes in the opening sentences of his first letter to them, "God is faithful." Imri means, "The promise of the Lord." Our God is faithful if we are not ; He will be true to what He has promised. If He has said that He will do something we can depend on Him to bring it to pass. How this truth should stir our hearts to affectionate response.

The second of the entrances is the Fish Gate. While the Sheep Gate may have primary application to the sheep of the Jewish fold (though the Lord Jesus does give a wider bearing to it in John 10) the Fish Gate

would certainly lead us on to a more universal application of the truth of salvation. Fish come from the sea and this idea, in Scripture, appears to have reference to the nations. The harvest of Pentecost was entirely Jewish but very soon the great tide of Gentile blessing was at the flood. "Hasenaah" means "Lifted up." The Saviour's great name was lifted up in the Gentile world that had wallowed in centuries of the grossest darkness. "Urijah," the "Light of the Lord," may be a hint of the vast accession of light they were to enjoy. The Lord Jesus was given, as the aged Simeon has told us, "A light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of My people Israel." The great blessing was to overflow the narrow bounds of Israel's favoured sons and engulf the outside nations in its beneficent fulness. Fishing on a grand scale was soon under way and the gospel net was presently filled with great fishes. But the jealousy of the Jews was immediately apparent. "Koz," the "Troublesome enemy" was busy. Paul informed the Corinthians, "A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Not the least troublesome of these were members of his own nation who "persecuted him unto strange cities." The great, liberating message of the gospel was not to be proclaimed to the nations without trouble and danger, but we can thank God that it was preached with energy and faithfulness, reaping the rich harvest of the seas.

The next name, "Meshullam," meaning "Repaying," suggests a response to this blessed outshining of divine light. This has been true in history, at least in waves. The western churches, richly blessed and often deeply conscious of the divine favour they enjoy, have sent messengers to the ends of the earth with the truth of the gospel. The unremitting zeal of Paul and his fellow labourers should be a stimulus to every believer. The great light that shone on Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road was not for him alone, but for all the nations, and with labours more abundant he saw to it that this light was disseminated to earth's most distant corners. In those days of arduous travel, mainly on foot, on asses or in tiny sailing vessels, the adventurous ring of, "I must see Rome also," and "To come by you unto Spain," brings a thrill to the heart. The pillars of Hercules were the 'ne plus ultra' of the ancient world—its 'finisterra.' To reach such bounds was Paul's ambition and the name "Berechiah," "the blessed of the Lord," was the happy result. How richly was the apostle blessed in his selfless labours as great centres of christian activity were established in some of the most wicked cities on earth; Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and others. The next name, Meshazabeel, "Liberated, set free," would perhaps shew the real, new liberty into which the Gentiles were brought by the faith of the gospel; not a mere social or political freedom, but a genuine spiritual liberty from the bondage of idolatry, superstition and witchcraft. Even Athens, the centre of the world's philosophical thought of that time was bound in a prison barred with many superstitions. The liberating power of the gospel was a wonderful breath of vital air to the stuffy ancient world.

The next builder was Zadoc, meaning "to be just." Paul, writing to the Romans elaborates on this wonderful theme, the setting up of the believer in a positive righteousness before a God of infinite holiness. He was writing, probably, to a largely Gentile assembly. Again, the thought of response is evoked in the name Baana, "Response." Romans 12 tells

us of that, does it not? "I beseech you, therefore brethren. . . that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice. . ." What an answer to the great truth of chapters 1 to 8. The Gentiles of chapter 1, sunk in a morass of indescribable iniquity are seen in chapter 8 as beyond the reach of condemnation from any source whatever and are considered, in chapter 12 as forming suitable material for a holy offering to God.

The next name to be mentioned, the Tekoites, strikes a rather incongruous note in a setting of rebuilding of city walls. "Tent pitchers" seems to be more suggestive of nomadic, unsettled conditions rather than the more permanent atmosphere of cities and walls. Spiritually, however, the building of moral walls is quite compatible with pilgrim character. The gospel liberates men to move forward towards the city which has foundations, whose Architect and Artificer is God Himself. Tekoa was evidently on the edge of the desert. The Tekoites would be conscious of the prevailing aridity, and they were seeking the establishment of, might one say, eternal conditions and links with the Lord. While we seek to rebuild, let us be aware of the lifelessness of conditions in the world around us and build in separation from that which has no true link with God; let us build in view of settled and eternal conditions and remember that the divine system we have been brought to is characterized by life and resources divinely provided. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Our links are with a living system.

A sad note creeps in at this point. In all movements of recovery there are elements of apathy. The Tekoite nobles were not prepared to cooperate in the work of restoration. Possibly they were entrenched in positions of importance. In divine movements, such as revivals, positions of this kind may well be shaken and those in them may lose their precedence in a community of spiritual men. This is a sad feature; their necks were of more importance to them than the service of the Lord. Some believers, mentioned in the New Testament, "counted not their lives dear unto themselves." Some are stated to have "hazarded their lives," in the interests of our Lord. Priscilla and Aquila staked their neck (singular) for the Apostle Paul. These nobles were not committed to the work, possibly for reasons of self-interest. But the apathy which withholds labour on the wall is near akin to the antipathy which would break it down; both expose the citizens to attack. The thought of the neck suggests the idea of beasts of burden labouring in the yoke. Much of the labour in the service of Christ partakes of the nature of common work which some would call drudgery, perhaps, and these nobles may not have been ready for common work yoked with others. Yet the Lord of all says, "Take My yoke upon you; learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." There is great need for humility in the service of the Lord and the submersion of our own interests in the paramount interests of His kingdom. Paul says beautifully to the Romans, "Mind not high things but go along with the lowly."

(to be continued)

GOD IS LIGHT

J. L. SCALES

A study in the Contrasts of 1 JOHN

THE Apostle John in all his writings is taken up with the Son of God Who came forth from the Father, in Whom was Life, eternal Life, and this was manifested to John and to the other Apostles. He is so overwhelmed by the surpassing wonder of this revelation that he finds everything in the world around him, which is under the domination of Satan, to be thrown into stark contrast with the purity of the Light that has been revealed.

We find in Nature that the more brilliant the light of the sun, the blacker the shadows where the light does not directly penetrate. This principle is applied in John's first Epistle; he uses the shadows in his treatise to emphasize the purity of what is divine. In these few lines my purpose is to trace out the contrasts and so to see more clearly the positive truth the Epistle contains.

Light and Darkness

The source of Light is God Himself. He is Light. Darkness cannot exist in His presence. Anything or any person who is in association with darkness is contrary to God's mind and cannot at the same time be in association with God.

We are to walk in the light, as His Son Jesus Christ walked in the light and so we have admittance to His fellowship, the fellowship of the Father and the Son. Not only are we to walk in the light, but when we give expression to the divine attribute of Love we abide in the light (ch. 2 v. 10). By converse the one who hates his brother is in darkness, walks in darkness, and is blinded by the darkness. This moreover is the time when darkness is to be viewed as a feature of the past because the True Light is already shining.

Love and Hatred

The contrast between love and hatred is developed in chapter 3 in which the Father's love introduces the theme. Verse 10 tells us that he that fails to love his brother is not of God; Cain was the prototype of those that hate their brother; in his case hatred led to murder. In our case the activity of love is the indication that we have passed from death unto life, but failure to practise it shows that we abide in death (v. 14). As murder is the measure of hatred so the laying down of our lives for our

brothers is to be the measure of our love, as it was the measure of **His** love. Lack of compassion shows that God's love cannot be dwelling in our hearts. (v.17)

The challenge of love is so great that we need re-assurance. Our hearts are uncertain ; if they raise doubts how much more does God, Who is Light, search out our reality. If our hearts are at rest in the reflection of divine love we have wonderful boldness Godward that leads us into believing prayer. We are so able to present the needs of our brother, to whom we are ministering from our own meagre substance, at the Throne of God and be assured that we have those things that we request on his behalf.

The love theme is taken up again in Chapter 4 from verse 7, where the Apostle stresses the obligation of those who are begotten by God to exhibit this divine attribute. **Not to love is not to know God because God is love.** (v. 8) When love is absent God cannot be present ; His own love has been displayed in the gift of His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (v. 10). If we love one another God abides in us and His love is perfected in us (v. 12). Proof of God abiding in us and of our abiding in Him is given us by the Spirit's witness and the Spirit makes us witness in our turn to the great truth that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.(v. 14).

Love is not only mentioned on our part towards our brother. In chapter 2 verse 15 rival objects of our love are spoken of as being mutually exclusive. The love of the world and the love of the Father are incapable of co-existence in one heart. What the world produces (v. 16) is diametrically opposed to the characteristics of the family of God and must pass away with the world itself, leaving the will of God and the one who follows it to abide unchallenged for ever.

Truth and Error

Returning now to the first chapter, we find another contrast between those who have truth in themselves, demonstrated by keeping His commandments, and liars who fail to do so. Liars are those who make claims they cannot substantiate, such as claiming fellowship with God (v. 6), having no sin (v. 8).

In chapter 2 liars are associated with antichrist in denial of the Father and the Son. Truth is derived from God through the believer's Unction from the Holy One (vv. 20 and 27) of whom the Lord spoke in John 16 : 13 as the Spirit of Truth Who was to guide the Apostles into all the truth.

In chapter 4 we are instructed to test or prove spirits ; the Spirit of God can be identified by the confession of "Jesus Christ come in flesh", by which expression we understand the incarnation of the Son of God as the Anointed One. Failure so to confess Him indicates that the spirit of antichrist is at work. At the time John wrote it was already in the world. The world was to pay attention to it but the believers were to overcome it in the greater power of Him that was in them by the divine Unction. The Apostles' testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit would distinguish between those who were or were not of God, by the reception given to their testimony.

Children of God and of the Devil

Just as the spirits are distinguished, so the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil. Here it is not a matter of confession but of practice : those who practise righteousness are children of God (the statement of chapter 3 verse 6 may appear contradictory to the statement in chapter 1 verse 8, "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us". Perhaps the word "commit" used in the Authorised Version is unfortunate because every one of us "commits" sin as a result of the old nature. Our Lord said that every tree is known by its fruit ; uprightness and a proper attitude towards sin must indicate that a man is "of God". Any other rendering of this passage would be out of keeping with the general teaching of Scripture.)

The practice of sin involves a rejection of law. The expression "transgression of the law", or preferably "lawlessness", implies a walk without regard for the constraints imposed through God's authority. The fact of the Lord Jesus having come to take away our sins requires that whoever "dwells in Him" should have due regard to God's view of our sins and to the work of Christ in atonement, (cf the word by Paul : "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound ? God forbid !" Romans 6 vv. 1 & 2.) Those who are righteous in God's sight must practise righteousness as He did (v. 7) and failure to do so is an indication of being "of the devil" who was the source of sin and who has propagated its practice from the fall until the present day. The manifestation of the Son of God has been for the purpose of destroying the devil's works (v. 8). "God's seed" planted in our hearts by the New Birth is the means of preventing in us the practice of sin (v. 9) and because we are His children we are distinguishable from the devil's children, who neither practise righteousness nor love their brother. These are "of the world" (ch. 4 v. 5), they speak of the world and them the world hears. God's children are spoken of as being "of God" (ch. 4 v. 4), "born of God" (v. 7), "dwelling in God (v. 12) and God in them" (v. 16) and "in Him and in His Son" (ch. 5 v. 20).

Confidence and Fear

Reference has already been made above to the believer's boldness towards God and this is worthy of further comment. There are three different connections in which it is mentioned as follows : in chapter 2 verse 28 there is reference to confidence at His appearing, for the unbeliever a matter of terror and for one who does not abide in Him a matter of shame. In chapter 3 verses 19 and 21, as already seen, assurance is received and exercised in our attitude and in prayer towards God as a result of our conscience being at rest through our exercising love towards our brother. In chapter 5 vv 14 and 15, confidence in prayer is related to the assurance that God hears us when we pray according to His will, so that we have the petitions desired of Him. In chapter 4 verse 18, fear is mentioned in contrast to confidence. Fear cannot exist with love ; perfect love casts out fear and God's love is perfected in us because God dwells in us and we in Him.

The Epistle concludes with a profound statement of faith. Its purpose is **that we may know** that we have Eternal Life.

We know the reality of sinless divine nature ;

We know we are of God and distinct from the world which lies in the wicked one ;

We know the Son of God is come and opened our understanding so that **we may know** Him that is true, the True God and Eternal Life.

Yet idols abound ; they did so in John's day and they do so in ours.

The world is full of bright objects that glitter in front of our eyes and distract us from the True Light shining about us and in our hearts. How watchful we need to be that the glory due to the True God is not bestowed elsewhere and that we discern the false nature of everything that is not derived from the Source of Divine Light.

THE TEN GATES OF JERUSALEM _____ JOHN BARNES.

(continued)

THE third of the gates referred to is called the Old Gate. The frothy character of much modern thinking is far from the solid masonry of the Old Gate. Jude's word, "The faith once (for all) delivered to the saints," has often been thought of in this context. A massive modernization program is in progress and everything is undergoing reconstruction. If men's efforts in government, industrial relations, international affairs etc. are anything to go by, their interference in spiritual institutions will be as sorry a mess as those just referred to. It is often said that we must keep abreast of the times, but we certainly have no mandate for the modification or adjustment of the truth. The truth as it is in Jesus has been passed on to us by the faithful servants of Christ of the early church in holy writings carefully preserved for us in infinite grace. We are under obligation to maintain that truth in its power and purity and not in any way to modify it to conform to current thinking.

The name Jehoiada is linked with this gate ; "The Lord knows (i.e. cares for) him." The Old Gate may not strike a popular note in a world set on the destruction of ancient landmarks, but the worker who strives to maintain truth as it was committed to the pristine church may work in the consciousness that the eye of the Lord is on him, and that He cares. HE cares ; men may care little, even, unhappily, some believers, but the christian who has a reverence for the name and honour of the Lord will be encouraged to remember that He cares for His own interests. Paseah means lame. Many of us feel our own ineptitude and incapacity for the severe demands of christian labour and hardly feel up to the struggle. Lameness is a crippling deficiency, nevertheless, Scripture considers startling possibilities ; "The lame take the prey." We may also remember, in this connection, that it was halting Jacob who became Israel, a prince with God.

There is a recurring theme in this chapter ; that of response. This is implicit in the name Meshullam, which we have already seen and which is reverted to later. It means, repaying. The next name, Besodiah, is 'the secret of the Lord' and stands in vivid contrast to the brash and

foolish utterances of the modern Balaams. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will shew them His covenant." This goes back to what He purposed in His own heart. He has not changed His purpose nor the terms in which it has been made known. The Old Gate takes us back to the unfolding of the truth of God as at the beginning and firmly sets aside the puerile novelties of today.

Melatiah, 'delivered of the Lord,' suggests the real liberty there is to be found in the truth committed to the saints. People today are on the search for liberty, but let us beware lest the much vaunted 'lib' movements lead us into a more galling bondage than before. "The truth," says the Lord Jesus, "Shall make you free." Man's lies, like the Devil's, promise increased freedom but only lead into systematic bondage.

The Gibeonites next referred to may have been some remnants of the nation mentioned in the book of Joshua who, guilefully, attached themselves to Israel. Jadon, "Whom God will judge," or perhaps, "vindicate" may have some significance. Despite their doubtful beginning the Gibeonites were here devoted to the service of the Lord in the dangerous and difficult work of rebuilding. Saul had acted against them and incurred the anger of the Lord. (2 Samuel 21) A promise is a promise, and the man who swears, even to his own disadvantage, is expected to keep his word. (Psalms 15) So God vindicated the Gibeonites. The reference to Mizpah in these verses may have something like this in mind. "The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." Trustworthiness is of immense value at any time. In a day like our own, when so many values are being eroded away, its value is incalculable. Under the prying eye of the enemy any tendency to carelessness would be spotted immediately and advantage taken of it. The knowledge, too, that we are at all times under the watchful eye of the Lord should encourage to faithfulness and vigilance.

These men laboured up to the throne of the governor. There would seem to be the thought of discipline here. Discipline is irksome only to the rebellious. The truly dedicated worker recognizes the need for plan and order and will work happily in the bonds of fellowship so outlined *and within the divine guidelines laid down.*

The next name is "Uzziel," "the strength of the Mighty God". That the saints should be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man was Paul's earnest prayer for them. We can count on that, surely, if we labour faithfully for Him in His work. The few, feeble labourers on the wall may have looked a pathetic sight to onlookers; the Samaritans mocked them, as we know. We may also be objects of mockery and derision to onlookers, *but the might of the God of Power* is not to be despised. No fox will break down work done in that power. That fox, Herod, could not interrupt the majestic course of the Son of God in His labours nor His entry into glory on their completion. So, if we labour in that strength, we need not fear the foxes.

Harhaiah, "the anger of the Lord," seems to be derived from the root, "to wax hot, or to burn fiercely." It may be associated with the idea of smelting for here we have goldsmiths. The apostle Peter speaks of the trial of faith and refers to the use of the fire in that process. He includes the explanatory phrase, "if need be," in the verse. (1 Peter 1 : 6) There is divine necessity in the smelting process because there is so much

dross in the ore of our lives to be removed by the action of the fire if the pure gold is to be procured. The hot, burning furnace is a necessary, not an arbitrary act. The spiritual goldsmith will work for and value what is of value to God. Gold was one of the precious metals used in the structure of the tabernacle; the holy places glittered with objects made of this costly metal, which, with other valuable metals and stones, speak to us of features of our adorable Lord. If we are to build anything of lasting value and for the glory of God it must partake of the nature of that which is precious to Him; gold, silver, precious stones.

Hananiah, "graciously given of God," son of one of the apothecaries, worked next. The holy anointing oils and perfumes as used in the worship of the Lord were the special province of the apothecaries. This seems to be suggestive of a fine appreciation of the infinite fragrance of the Lord Jesus; not an appreciation we have by nature, but one graciously given to us of God. (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:11 etc.) These men whose work was of such a delicate nature, nevertheless fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. This is an expression of great power. Accustomed as they were to the use of small instruments and fine measurements, they did rough, heavy work with huge stones on a broad stretch of the city wall and fortified it. An appreciation of the fragrant features of Christ is not incompatible with great christian manliness. Who was more manly than Paul who endured floggings from Jews and Romans in addition to innumerable other hardships? But there was also that about him which suggests an almost womanly tenderness; the meekness and gentleness of Christ—an apothecary's appreciation, surely.

Next to them repaired Rephiah, "healed of the Lord." The root seems to be the same as in that lovely name, Jehovah Rophi. (Exodus 15:26) There is healing power in the Lord. At Marah, where life's bitter waters failed to assuage the thirst of Israel, the Lord shewed Moses a **Tree**. We have got to get back to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; we cannot leave it out of our reckoning. Not that any believer wishes to do so, but much modern thinking subtly stresses other things as important and the prominence of the cross is lost sight of. The **Tree** is needed with its healing power.

The son of Hur, "a cleft or cavern," is named next. This may cause us to think of the Rock of Ages, cleft for sin, and of how, like the defenceless conies, the believer finds a place of refuge in the safety of the immense, impregnable Rock. The figure of the Rock is of frequent application to divine Persons in Scripture. The other Hur who is mentioned in the book of Exodus was a prayer supporter of Moses, the man of God. What a privilege to be a prayer helper of the saints in their battle against the enemy, and to continue instant in prayer till the going down of the sun. The ruler of half of Jerusalem was obviously a man of some standing and authority, but, unlike the Tekoan nobles he did not allow his position to interfere with his involvement in the work of the Lord.

The next portion of the wall was repaired by Jedaiah, "known of the Lord," the son of Harumaph. This name is thought to have reference to consecration to religious uses. The man worked over against his house. The thought of a man's house devoted to the service of the Lord is beautiful. This is a fine place in which to serve. A man has relationships there and these ideas are taken up in the great epistles of Paul to the

Ephesians and the Colossians in some detail. Husbands, wives, parents, children, masters and servants are all referred to in their varied relationships, and here is a valuable sphere of service. Today, some are so concerned in hearing well known speakers that they tend to neglect the work that is there to hand in the home. On Horeb's lonely mountain the Lord asked Moses a very important question ; " What is that in thine hand ? " It was a simple shepherd's staff. What I have in my hand may be only a dish mop or some equally plebeian instrument, but perhaps this is what the Lord wishes me to use in His service. The question may possibly be pertinent to some of our lives.

Next laboured Hattush, " assembled." The real togetherness of God's family is sometimes forgotten in the arena of party differences, but the truth is that He gathers His saints. Man-made gatherings are not togetherness in the divine sense. " Where two or three are, having been gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst," is believed to be an accurate rendering of this great verse. The saints are not simply to come together ; they are brought together. A Power other than their own has attracted them together to Him. It is not a matter of emotions or the enthusiasms generated by vast companies, but the attraction of His Person. " Thou hast drawn our footsteps hither." Two or three represent a very unspectacular company. Today it has become popular in some quarters to sneer at this, but these are the words of the Saviour Himself, evidently having in mind just such days as those we live in.

Hashabniah, " esteemed of the Lord." Some gatherings of the saints may be small, but where service is for the Lord, He values and esteems it. He says, " There am I ". Malchijah, " royal by God's appointment," follows. This may bring the story of Mephibosheth to mind. The line of Saul had lost the throne and Mephibosheth was now a commoner and of an enemy family also, but the gracious act of the king made this outcast as one of the king's sons, and appointed his place at the royal table. The humble mason, toiling on the city wall, dirty with mortar and saturated with perspiration, is one of the king's sons. This bestows a dignity on labour, however menial or dirty, in the service of the Master. The son of Harim follows. Though a detracting physical feature seems to be associated with the root, as indeed in the case of Harumaph, there is also the thought of devotion. Perhaps some of us consider physical, social or educational deficiencies to be a bar to the service of the Lord. But this need not be the case. The maimed Ehud of Judges 2 did yeoman service for God and this has frequently been so. Many, poor in health, even crippled, have served effectively and faithfully.

Hashub, " much esteemed," the son of Pahath-Moab comes after this. The title Pahath-Moab apparently means, governor of Moab, but there is no suggestion of interests other than at the holy city. Every available hand was needed and these great characters gave their help willingly.

The tower of the furnaces was probably used in the smelting of precious metals like gold. Great application of heat is needed. This is severe work, and the great heat required to remove impurities from the ore is not pleasant but its final outcome is blessed indeed.

Shallum, " retribution," may hint at the acceptance of chastisement and its distressing consequences. There may also be a connecting thought with the truth of the trespass offering. (Leviticus 5 : 16) The son of

Halosheth has, perhaps, some reference to private prayer. A man of secret prayer dealings with God would be a powerful influence for blessing in remnant conditions, such as in Nehemiah's days, or in our own. The ruler of the other half of the city, he would be a man of great influence. His daughters worked with him. Not content to bask in the reflected glory of their famous father nor yet to lean on their femininity or delicacy, they worked with him on the wall. Those of us who have had the opportunity of examining parts of those ancient walls which still remain have been amazed at the sheer immensity of the stones used by those builders of long ago. It was serious, heavy work, done by hand without the aid of labour-saving modern machinery. For delicate women-folk to help the men in such work postulates a very great determination. These were Old Testament Priscillas and Phoebies; women of worth.

The fourth gate was the valley gate. One goes **down** into valleys and this is where reconciliations are effected. David, proceeding to the chastisement of the churlish Nabal was descending into a valley while the foolish Nabal's intelligent wife, Abigail, was descending to meet him from the other side, intent on preventing, if possible, a tragedy. (1 Samuel 25) Her success is one of the lovely stories of Old Testament history. "Humble yourselves," James advises us, "Under the mighty hand of God." Compare also Ephesians 4 : 2, 3. Peacekeeping is on the line of humility.

Hanun, "favoured," and the inhabitants of Zanoah are then mentioned. Some give the meaning of Hanun as "stinking." If this is accurate it may suggest an acknowledgement of our naturally repulsive condition and how we are brought into acceptance. "I am black," confesses the Shulamite, "But comely."

These men built up to the next gate, the Dung Gate. Paul says of things which he may have reckoned on the credit side of his account, "I do count them but dung." This gate naturally follows the valley gate, going still further down. Refuse has to be taken out of cities and disposed of properly. It is as important to destroy poisons as it is to provide food. Healthy conditions cannot be maintained if poisons are allowed to accumulate.

We have already seen the name Malchaiah, "Royal by God's appointment," and we may have a hint here that only the truly humble shall be exalted: "That He may exalt you in due time." The name Rechab, meaning "Horseman," could provide us with a link with the Philippian epistle. Philippians means, "Lovers of horses" and is suggestive of racing. In the epistle to the brethren there Paul presents to them the idea of going down in chapter 2 and this precedes the idea of pressing on in the race which he develops in chapter 3. The prize is available but it is for the humble, not the uplifted.

The ruler of part of Beth-Haccerem, the house of the vineyard, is consistent with the line of thought here. The pressures come before the joys. The lowly place is not one we find easy to take, normally, but its pressures lead to real participation in the joy of the Lord. Wine, in this spiritual sense, surely cheereth God and man.

(to be continued)

MARKS OF CHRISTIAN NORMALITY J. STODDART

IF the pattern of normal Christianity is to be found alone in the New Testament it follows that much around us in these days must be regarded as abnormal. It is surely a humbling contemplation that in the vast Christian profession so little would appear to reflect the Scriptural pattern and norm of our faith. This could result either from inattention to the Word or, as is common in our day, from partial or complete rejection of its supreme authority. The "two-edged sword" would preclude our tendency to complacency or self-righteousness in this, and provide the only safe and reliable means of testing how we measure up to normality, the marks of which are so clearly set forth.

Nowhere more than in the Epistle to the Ephesians is the **normal** level of Christianity portrayed, although some may think that its elevated character is rather higher than normal in practice. Careful study of this epistle, however, reveals that neither correction of doctrine nor practice are prominent, while, of course, hortative warnings and practical injunctions are abundant. Thus it can be said that, as abnormalities are evidently non-existent, we have Christianity at its **normal level**. Here, then, we may look for and find many marks of true normality. In a previous paper, we drew attention to the recurring word "exceeding" as one of the characteristics of Ephesians. It may be of further interest and profit now to consider yet another repeated phrase in these chapters which would appear to be vitally connected with the great truths presented. This expression is "all the saints" or "all saints" contained in chapters 1 : 15, 3 : 18, 3 : 8 and 6 : 18. It would surely be agreed that this fourfold insistence of these words is another characteristic of the epistle underlining that which is normal in the various contexts as they occur.

Let us consider the first of these marks of normality in ch. 1 : 15. Here the apostle gives thanks for "their faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints." If we would discern one great mark of Christian normality surely here it is. It may be said that faith in the Lord Jesus is the fundamental norm of true Christianity and happily in evidence all around us, at least in these favoured climes. But can the same be said of the equally normal feature of "love to all the saints"? At the time of writing to the Ephesian church this love was as explicit as their faith and evidently a real norm of their practice and not merely an ethic of their creed. In the later history of this church the Lord Jesus Himself has to lay it to their charge that they had "left their first love" (Revelation 2 : 4) while no complaint is made as to giving up their faith. Herein, it would seem, lay the root cause of all subsequent decadence in Church history. How very soon the chilling influences of legality had quenched the warmth of Christian love, for certainly nothing had impaired their critical faculty and swift denouncement of those considered "evil." (cf. Revelation 2 : 2). Nevertheless they had "fallen" to such extent that their candlestick of testimony would be removed unless there was repentance. How salutary is the lesson to be learned from this! And how it measures the gravity of departure, not only from truth, but from the norm of "love to all the saints." Was not this in the Lord's mind when,

in Matthew 5 : 46/47, He said, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye extraordinary? Do not also the Gentiles the same?" May our hearts be kindled to a greater expression of "love to **all** the saints" as we remember the words of 1 John 3 : 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (the writer here regards the words "all the saints" as co-extensive with "the brethren")

Next we shall consider our phrase as it occurs in Ephesians 3 : 8. "Unto me, who am less than the least of **all saints**, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is most understandable that humility should be normal to Christian life, since He Who is forever our Pattern "humbled Himself" in manhood's lowly form. And was ever such incomparable humility seen in human form? Yet this is the example of the mind which is to be in us. (cf. Philippians 2 : 5) Consistent, therefore, with his own ministry, the apostle Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, humbly speaks of himself as "less than the least of **all saints**"; and not for a moment can we think of this as an indulgence in false modesty, or the kind of pride which apes humility. No, this man had thoroughly learned the lesson he enjoined upon others, "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." (Romans 12 : 3) and "in lowliness, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves." (Philippians 2 : 3) (J.N.D. Trans.) But in this sober assessment of himself he takes into account "all saints", not only the distinguished apostles who were before him in time, but every soul who belonged to Christ, whether awkward, ill-instructed, loose, legal, immature or contentious. In his own estimation he was "less than the least of **all saints**". If this was not merely priggish rhetoric—and it most certainly was not—then dare we in this decadent day take a more superior place? If then this can be considered a mark of Christian normality, how far can we be said to be living normal Christian lives?

In ch. 3 : 18 Paul prays for them (and us) "that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with **all saints** what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God". No written revelation of the truth alone could impart to the saints the conscious appreciation of its immense worth; the apostle is obliged to pray (as did the Lord Jesus Himself in John 17) that God Himself would effect this in them for His glory. But if the vast scope of God's counsels (the primary subject of the epistle) were to be rightly apprehended it could only be so if the heart associated it "**with all saints**". The moment a narrower line than this is entertained the apprehension would be distorted and spiritual vision dimmed. Thus the clear mark of Christian normality here would be that all the saints are intelligently in our affections and prayers when we contemplate the exalted truth of our place of favour and nearness in the Person of God's Son. Would not our expressions of worship and prayer be enriched and fellowship itself sweetened if our thoughts of "**all the saints**" were maintained at this high level?

Finally, we look at the expression "for all saints" in ch. 6 : 18.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication **for all saints**; and for me. . . .” Every Christian would allow that prayer must be one of the great marks of the normal Christian. What truly dependent creatures we are, whether we recognise it or not. How rightly it has been said that the path of faith is completely untenable to nature. In the strife of battle against “principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (v. 12) we must needs “put on the whole armour of God”, and prayer is part of that panoply. Here it is not praying for our personal needs (a legitimate and necessary exercise elsewhere) but intercessory concern for the whole household of faith, **for all saints**. Nor must we confine this to the needs of the local company, though representative of the whole. The intense language of v. 18 is related to the concept of the Church universal unfolded in the content of this epistle. She is the Bride of Christ, for whom He gave Himself and presently subject to sanctification and cleansing by the water of the Word in view of the day of presentation to Himself. Hence the necessity for the kind of prayer “for all saints” enjoined in this verse. It is in regard to the constant assault of the powers of darkness on that which is dearest to the heart of Christ. Of course, individual servants of Christ are often the spearhead of Satan’s attacks because their aim is to maintain and prosper the Lord’s interests in this world, which Satan would destroy if that were possible. Thus the humble apostle, entrusted with the greatest service ever given to any mortal, asks not only prayer “for all saints” but adds “and for me.” He was not “already perfect” (Philippians 3 : 12) but still in the arena of danger he needed the prayers of the saints to enable him in his service for Christ.

In these four references to “all the saints” we are thus able to see the true marks of Christian normality and humbly judge how far we approximate or otherwise to what the Lord expects from us. The attachment of names to cleavages between Christians as in Corinthians ch. 1 is the very negation of everything Scripture teaches. The plea of “break-up” and “changed conditions of this day” is nothing but the denial of the divine standard set forth in the expression “**all the saints**.” Beloved brethren, let us who have been favoured to rejoice in and to some extent understand the truth of Ephesians seek grace to “maintain (“to use diligence to keep”) the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace” (Ephesians 4 : 3 J.N.D.). Let us resolutely refuse to compromise such wonderful truth in the interests of expediency, convenience, differentiation of companies, and many other less worthy considerations. The Holy Spirit abides with and indwells us with a view to implementing every divine thought, and who would dare say that this is impossible to-day? It would be to concede victory to the Enemy and capitulate to the Enemy’s ultimate and most coveted plan.

YOUTH AT ST. ANDREWS: 1974

1. "THERE IS A LAD HERE" ————— W. F. S. TAYLOR

John 6 : 1-14

WE are expecting a blessing in our Conference during the next few days, and we can be sure of receiving it if we approach the meetings in the spirit of Isaiah 40 : 31. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength". This is God's absolute promise to us here at St. Andrew's. Then we shall indeed "praise the Lord for His goodness". As I look around the company, my heart is moved to see so many young Christians eager to hear the Word of God. It is my earnest prayer that I may be enabled to say something which will stir up and challenge the young folks, and, as a bonus, the older people also ! We often hear that this is "a day of small things". I am tired of hearing this, because so far as the grace of God is concerned, we are living in a time of unsurpassed opportunity. We can blaze a trail for God in this sin-sick society if we learn the lesson of this incident in John 6. If assemblies are small, and we feel our efforts are being discouraged, and our service seems to us less fruitful than it ought to be, how often we sit back and console ourselves with the thought that nothing better can be expected in 'a day of small things'. If we were really to apply the Scripture about 'a day of small things', (Zechariah 4 : 10), then we would find that such a day is **not** to be despised. God's Spirit using His servants' toil can make even this **a day of great things**. Do not let the enemy deter you or damp your enthusiasm for God's service by talk like this.

Let us take note of four points in this Scripture. A lad gave what he had, no more, no less : Jesus took what the lad was willing to give : Jesus blessed what the lad gave : glory was brought to the Master as the result.

We are not serving a defeated Christ, but a victorious Christ who possesses all power in heaven and in earth. What then can He do with my five loaves and two fishes ? He can completely change my weakness into His strength, if only I am prepared to give what I have. You may be saying, "but I'm a nobody". Good ! Then God can use you. It is only when you think you are somebody that you are no use to God. Perhaps you also say, "the brethren take no notice of me". Always remember that your service is primarily to the Lord, the risen Christ. Nevertheless, you might be mistaken about the brethren. It is a great thing to have their fellowship, and older brethren are thrilled to see younger brethren taking an interest in the things of God, and seeking to serve Him. And God calls you and gives you a job, with the ability to do it, not because you yourself are able, but because you have been prepared to give all you have—even if only five loaves and two fishes—keeping nothing back. You cannot keep something for yourself and give God the rest. There must be total surrender.

This lad in John 6 had every opportunity to slip away, seeing the crowd, and realising that the situation was impossible, and just eat the

loaves and fishes himself. He could have taken care of number one ! The point I am making here, is that God has no time for the selfish. God's service is an unselfish service. Some young people who want to serve God say to themselves, "I'll wait until I've made some money, **then** I'll serve God" ; or, "I'll wait until I've graduated, **then** I'll serve God" ; or perhaps, "I'll wait until I achieve my ambition, **then** I'll serve God". These projects are quite understandable. They really want to serve God. But there is a '**then**' in their thinking. If I go out to serve God, it is quite true that there will be something, perhaps quite legitimate, I must deprive myself of. Always remember that so long as you do it for God, the Bank of Heaven pays the highest real interest rates ! You will not be the loser. God can open up your way, even in these matters, when things seem impossible, because you have relied on Him and dedicated your all to Him. I am not talking only of those whose service entails platform work, for I believe that platform service is one of the lesser services. Thousands of young people are serving God, not only from platforms, but steadily going on, seeking the Master's will, seeking His way for them, dedicating their all to Him. They will become men of God, men and women who value the Word of God, and the work of Christ, and the lost souls of men for whom the Lord died. This is the kind of Christian whom God wants in His service.

There may be a young mother here, to whom Satan is saying that you cannot serve God. Running a house and bringing up children leaves you no time for service. You have enough to do. But the enemy does not tell you that by bringing up your children in the fear of the Lord you are performing a tremendous service for Him. As you put a child to bed at night, and tell him or her of the love of Jesus, so that that child trusts the Saviour, and grows up a man of God, you are giving your five loaves and two fishes.

Now please note that we cannot serve God as and how we please. We cannot serve God in our own way, although we are always tempted to do just that, like so many today. If we are not serving in obedience to God, then disaster lies ahead. In this incident there is the test of faith, and then the test of obedience, and these two invariably go side by side. There is the multitude, and there is the paltry provision ; how are they to be fed ? This is the test of faith, and it was a real test. There are some 300 people here today, and if I were given five loaves and two fishes I would feel as Philip felt. Lord, increase our faith !

Now came the test of obedience, because the Master instructed, "Make them sit down". It all seemed so pointless, when there was not enough food, but we read, "and they made them sit down". They may have failed in the test of faith, but they passed the test of obedience with flying colours. We often think that if we introduced new methods we might succeed. Notice this from John 6 : if we are seeking to serve the Lord Christ, we are not in the entertainment business, we are in the catering business. Our responsibility is to feed the people, not to entertain them.

Let us note also that the Lord Jesus gave the loaves and fishes to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the hungry crowd. He could have done all this Himself, but the risen Christ, in whom is all power, condescends to use us to do His work. Whatever you seek to do for Him, first spend time at the Master's feet waiting for His instructions. Get into

the presence of the risen Christ, and He will use you even as He used the disciples in this chapter.

In conclusion, let me say this ; time is short, and the old saying remains true. "Only one life, it will soon be past. Only what's done for Jesus will last".

2. CONVERSION _____ GRAEME W. FAIRBAIRN

1 Thessalonians 1.

WE have read about the Thessalonians that they turned **from** idols and they turned **to** God, and conversion is a turning **from** and a turning **to**. Remember what Jesus said, "Except ye be converted . . . ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven". It is the gateway to all our Christian life and all our Christian experience. What I want you to remember is the greatness of this change. I read a book recently about the "Abominable Snowman" of the Himalayas. The book could be evidence for or against. Now let us say for the sake of argument that before I read it I did not believe it, and after I read it I did. I changed my mind. You say I have been "converted" because I have changed my point of view. It does not make a scrap of difference to my life whether I believe in the "Abominable Snowman" or no. I am exactly the same sort of person. I live exactly the same sort of life, but when it comes to conversion to God it is very different, because it makes such a radical and tremendous change in our lives.

Conversion is a New Beginning

Whenever the word of God is preached in the Old Testament and the New Testament, there is one word which keeps coming up again and again, that is "repentance". When the Old Testament prophets preached, they preached "repentance". When John the Baptist came, he preached "Repent". When Jesus Himself came He preached "Repent and believe the gospel". In the Acts, we find that the apostles preached "Repent and be baptised" ; "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent". I think the idea of repentance is something which goes very closely with conversion. I want to emphasise the seriousness of repentance and conversion. It means a complete turning our backs upon the old life. Sometimes I think that people today get the idea that becoming a Christian and coming to Jesus simply means that if we have Jesus in our lives it is like, as it were, a plain diet to be supplemented by cream cakes. Sometimes we do not realise the greatness of the change—the turning from sin, from our old lives, to God and to Christ. And, of course, this is the central point we all have to get hold of about conversion. When we come to Jesus, when we realise just Who He is, He is the Son of God, that we need a Saviour and He is the only One in the whole universe Who can help us, that He has died on the cross for us, that He has risen again from the dead for our justification and when we have, as it were, stretched out our hands to Him and opened our hearts' doors and let Him come

in, when we confess Him as our Saviour and Lord, this is conversion, a turning to Christ. Christianity is Christ and we are converted when we turn to Him. I think we must get this idea and remember it—get it into our heads that conversion is a new beginning, the turning from our old life of sin. It is turning to that new life which He alone can give us.

Conversion is a New Way of Living

It was said in the last verse we read that the Thessalonians turned from idols. The world in which Paul and the early Christians preached was a pagan world and people worshipped idols of stone and clay and iron. To be a Christian meant to turn away from these completely. A good example is in Acts 19. We find that many people turned to Christ who were sorcerers, and it says “many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men and they counted the price of them and found it 50,000 pieces of silver”. And the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily. They completely burned those idolatrous things which were associated with their old life. There was a complete turning from idols. Not many Western people today have their little idols set up on the mantleshelf to be worshipped. But let us be sure that people **have** their idols today. An idol is simply that which somebody serves and worships and lives for. Idols are very common today. We can go so far as saying that if God is not on the throne of our lives, then somebody or something must be. What are the idols that people have today ? It may be money, fame, a boy friend, a girl friend, a car. It may just be yourself, and pleasure, or your career. It could be anything ; it may be something perfectly good or it may be something evil. An idol is something that somebody worships and lives for and holds that sway that God and God alone deserves to hold in anyone’s life. We have turned from idols. I think I am right in saying that, no true Christian worships an idol or really serves an idol. We have left those behind ; but sometimes we have some very longing looks at those idols which perhaps once we served. Remember the words of John in his first letter, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols”.

Conversion, however, is not only turning **from**, but turning **to**, and we learn of the Thessalonians that they turned from idols to the living God. Now this question of “the living God” is very interesting. It means something rather more than saying that God exists. The God Whom the Israelites worshipped was a living God—not like the idols. He was the living God worshipped by His people, and this God is our God.

When Richard Wurmbrand first went to America, there had been a lot of talk about the death of God, and the one who met him off the plane said to him, “Doctor Wurmbrand, God is dead. What do you have to say ? ” And it was typical of his reply when he said “It must have been very sudden because I was talking to Him a few moments ago”. It is true. We know this God because He is the living God. “You ask me how I know He lives ? He lives within my heart.” And the God we have turned to serve is the living God Who works in us and through us. We can look to Him day by day to lead us, to guide us, because He is the living God.

Let us notice that they were called to serve, not just to believe in

Him in a vague way, not just to talk about Him. The Thessalonians turned to serve Him. My understanding about the Scriptures is that everyone who is converted is a servant of God. It is not an optional extra. We may not be very faithful servants but we are exhorted to serve this God because we are called His servants.

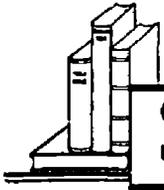
Conversion gives a Hope for the Future

When they were converted, for the remainder of their lives they had to wait for God's Son from heaven. Are we waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ? We may be living in the very last days before He returns. Those who are young may feel problems here. I can hear some younger Christians saying, "That is all very well for brother so-and-so. He is 85. He has lived his life. Of course he is waiting for the Lord to come. I am young and my life is ahead of me. How can I really, honestly say that I want the Lord to come—that I am really waiting for Him?" The early Christians wanted Him to come. Just before Jesus died, when He was telling them that He was going away, they were sorrowful. Their hearts were heavy when they knew that He was going away. Why was it? They had been with Him for years. They had walked with Him, they talked to Him, they lived with Him, they followed Him, they depended on Him for everything. Of course they were sad that He was going away. Of course they were longing for Him to return because they loved Him, because they had been with Him. And I think that if we spent a little more time with the Lord, more time walking with Him and talking with Him, then we would learn to love Him more. He would be more real to us, so that we could say more truthfully that we are longing and waiting for His return.

Conclusion

Two questions arise from these thoughts on conversion which we must ask ourselves. The first one is very simple and that is, Are you converted? There are two classes of people who call themselves sportsmen, and say they are interested in sport. There are players and mere spectators. The latter are not "in it" at all. Now we are at a Christian conference. If our friends where we work or go to school knew that we were at a Christian conference, they would know that we were all Christians. But if you have never been converted, you can enjoy yourself, you may find the meetings very interesting, very helpful, very profitable, but if you are not converted, in a very real sense you are here only as a spectator. Now we must leave that with you and with God. You know whether you have been converted.

There is another difficulty that people may have in their minds—some doubts. Some can go back to the very day when they trusted in Jesus, but there may be some who cannot remember the exact day. I cannot tell you the exact date I was converted. Does that mean I am not a Christian? Now let me say this, I don't depend on my birth certificate to know that I am alive! The important thing is, have you **now** turned away from your sins and have you **now** trusted in Christ and made Him your own?



YOUTH AT ST. ANDREWS: 1974

3. BAPTISM

J. STODDART

Matthew 28 : 19, 20 ; Romans 6 : 1-11

THIS subject is surrounded by controversy. Probably it is the most controversial subject in the whole of Christian truth, so I am not going to attempt tonight to unravel any of the knots that have caused controversy for many who are here. But, in fact, what I propose to do in the time that remains to me, is simply to suggest three questions and to seek humbly to find scriptural answers to them.

1. Why should I be baptised ?
2. What does baptism mean ?
3. What results should follow my baptism ?

One wishes and prays that the Lord might make a simple issue, not only for our minds, but as a matter for our hearts.

Why should I be baptised ?

Simply because, having trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, this implies, and commits us to, obedience, unquestioning obedience to Him. And it is His commandment, as we have read in Matthew 28. Before He left this world He gave instructions to His apostles as to what they were to do in His absence. And surely there is nothing more straightforward in the world than the words which Jesus used on that occasion, "Go ye therefore into all the world and make disciples of all nations", and making disciples there, is pretty much the equivalent of conversion through preaching the gospel and the Spirit of God working in power in our hearts.

Now you will agree with me, that since this is so perfectly plain and clear, these words require only one answer from us all, and that is obedience ; obedience, of course, of faith, not a slavish, legal obedience, but obedience to the One Who has loved us and Whom we dearly love. And Jesus said to His apostles, you will remember, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 14 : 15). I suppose we would all like to think of ourselves as the friends of Jesus, and in that way we are committed to doing the things that He has commanded. Secondly, Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them", not write them on the wall or just merely think about them in an interesting way. In Samuel 15 : 22, Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams". Obedience is the very first thing that is implicit in the new life produced by conversion.

What does Baptism Mean ?

This is, I feel, the most important thing for us in the subject tonight. I was baptised at the age of 16, because of the answer that we have seen to the first question. It was a command, and as "the answer of a good conscience towards God", as I Peter 3 : 21 makes it, and nothing more. But there is more about the underlying meaning of baptism, the doctrine of baptism. Do not let us shirk that word, doctrine. It simply means teaching, the underlying meaning of a thing. In Romans 6, we find a very great deal more than that. We there learn that baptism identifies us with Jesus Christ in His death. This is the doctrinal meaning of baptism, symbolising our burial with Him, unto death—His death of course. In the gospel, we believed that the Lord's death and burial removed forever from the sight of God our sins in their totality, so that never again can our sins ever come up against us. In believing that, was our conversion, by simple faith in the Saviour and His finished work, because He died as my substitute. I love the word, though it does not seem to occur as a word in Scripture, but the truth of substitution is certainly there.

Therefore His death was my death, and the ordinance, or symbol, of baptism is that which declares this identity. Let us illustrate this with a story from Napoleon's day. A man was conscripted to serve in the army of Napoleon. It was a very hard case, because he was a married man with a young family, and a very good friend of his came along and said, "I'll stand in for you. I'll turn up in your stead". In course of time that substitute went into battle and was killed. And then, the first man was called up again ; but he protested that this was quite impossible and illegal, because legally he was dead. His substitute had died, therefore he could not be called upon to serve in the army. In this he was upheld by the emperor, but the emperor made one condition, that for the rest of his life he must change his name, and live in the name of the man who had died for him. Now I believe that this is very, very relevant to our subject of baptism tonight. In baptism we testify to the fact that we have by faith died with Christ, and been buried with Him. This is symbolised in the waters of baptism, so that when we come out of the waters of baptism an entirely new vista faces us. This leads us neatly on to my last question.

What Results should Follow my Baptism ?

In Romans 6 : 4 we see, I think, quite a clear answer. Do I just go on as I did before, pleasing myself and serving sin ? Since there has been a change effected in conversion, should I not pursue this now actively in the Spirit's power ? Paul says, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" Now all this is applied and connected with the glorious subject of baptism. It has been said, and it is true, that baptism is not for heaven. You do not have to be baptised to go to heaven but baptism is for this earthly life. It is in order that the **newness of life** might be seen in testimony in us in this world.

Now what kind of a new life is it ? To sing nice choruses in better company ? I know all that is very good but I would like to give you a

more concrete example of what new life really means. In Acts 2 : 41, 42 we read, "Then they that gladly received his word (that is Peter's preaching of Christ) were baptised : (and now comes the **newness of life**). . . and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers". Now there is a wonderful chain, with all kinds of links in it, of new interests, and **newness of life** indeed, that never had any place in us before. And there is before us in this **newness of life** a new prospect, as we have been reminded. We are under a new Lordship, a new Master, Who is caring for us all the way and we are to be identified with Him in His death and in His resurrection. Perhaps it is better to say we are associated with Him in His resurrection life. So the answer to the first question is a very clear one. It should be a newness of life. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life. . . more abundantly". Do our lives evidence this ?

I am going to ask the question about baptism that we were asked about conversion. "Have you been baptised ?" If you tell me that you are not going to be baptised, do you know what I think it is like ? It is like a soldier, a volunteer, joining the army and then refusing to wear the Queen's uniform. He just says, "No. In the army I have got to give the soldier's salute, but I am not going to wear that uniform, I do not like it". To me that is the life of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ who has never been baptised at any time. I am not talking about times now, but baptism has never taken place. There is no more golden opportunity than this present one.

Briefly, in closing, let me give you some examples for study in the book of Acts, of conversion and baptism. In Acts 8 : 26-40, we have the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The 16th chapter is a classic in this and it has already been referred to. Please study the two cases of Lydia and the jailor. I am making abundant allowance for others who have different thoughts about this and I am by no means making this a closed argument for believers' baptism though this is my own persuasion. Rather, I want our young people to study this for themselves, getting down to the Scriptures and getting out the Concordance and finding where baptism is mentioned and they will find a very great blessing for themselves in it. Let me reiterate, that whatever our thoughts may be as to the time for baptism, or the mode of baptism, the one thing that is true in every case is that baptism is essential, not essential for our eternal salvation but essential for a life of testimony and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus in this world.

4. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

COLIN CURRY

[Dr. Curry's address will probably be printed in full later. It was in three sections : 1. What Scripture says about itself (2 Timothy 4 : 16 ; 2 Peter 1 : 19 and 21 ; Deuteronomy 18 : 18 ; 1 Corinthians 2 : 31 and 14 : 37). 2. What Christ said about Scripture (John 17 : 17 ; 10 : 34, 35 ; Luke 4 : 4 ; 24 : 46). 3. What the Scriptures prove themselves to be. Only section 3 is given here].

Psalm 19 : 7-14 This Psalm has two distinct sections, and it is the second section, verses 7-14, which we have read beginning "The Law of the

Lord". Here we are to talk about what the Scriptures prove themselves to be, with a proper and humble approach to them. One of the things that strikes one about these verses is their concise nature. Someone has said that Hebrew poetry is the only kind that stays poetry when you translate it and you get some sense of the Hebrew poetry even reading the English version. How magnificent are those first three verses and I would like to pick out first, the nouns, then the adjectives and then the verbs because there is a wealth of detail here.

If you look at the nouns, it seems to me, you see aspects of Scripture. The Scriptures are law. They are also testimony. They are also precepts. They are also commandments. They are also fear, and they are judgments. These are the six nouns that are in those three verses. Nothing more than a very brief statement about each of them can be made in the time, but first we have here that the law, the **revealed will** of God, or of Jehovah, is perfect. We have God's witnessing to Himself in the Scriptures, testimony from God about Himself. There are **precepts** here. I think precepts rather than statutes is the right word here. It means the detail and the precision and the small pieces that, put together, form this harmonious whole that are there within the Scriptures. They give instruction for every situation. Scripture is the precepts of the Lord, in one sense. In another aspect, it is **commandments**, that is, it has authority. The authority of the Scripture is something of which we need to be aware. Further it is spoken of as **fear**, its power to evoke reverence and respect. A proper, humble approach to Scripture is implied in this. There are **judgments**, that is there is discernment about things and about situations. God's view about various kinds of things is presented to us in the Scriptures for our information and for our learning, so that we may be able to learn to take the same kind of view about things as God does. Scripture is all these things. These are different aspects of Scripture.

It seems to me that the adjectives present qualities of Scripture to us and it is said to be perfect. "The law of Jehovah is **perfect**." Flawless, it is complete and harmoniously whole, both in detail and as a whole. It is **sure**, firm, rocklike, impregnable. It stands, whether people take notice of it or not. It is sure, this Book of ours, here in our hands; **right**, straight, there is no duplicity about it. **Pure**, it is undiluted. It is unmixed with other things. It is all of the same kind. There are not other things mixed in with it to spoil it and to confuse us. It is all the pure, undiluted word of God. It is **clean**, and how many things can we look at that are clean in our day! Pollution and taint are on the face of most things, but the word of God is pure, and it is also clean. It is **true** and **righteous** altogether. It is dependable, genuine, altogether righteous, through and through.

The effects of Scripture are in the verbs. It says that it **converts** the soul. Spiritual renewal is to be found there. It says it **makes the simple wise**. Wisdom is to be found there. It says it **rejoices** the heart. Satisfaction is to be found there. It **enlightens** the eyes. It casts light upon things and lets us see where we are going: "A lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." It **endures**. There is something that is firm about it, as I said already, and there is something establishing about it. It makes the recipient of it stand on his feet firm and sure. Also there are the other sides of the effects of Scripture. In those later verses the Psalmist says,

“By them is thy servant **warned.**” There is warning there. There is cleansing there. “**Cleanse** thou me from secret faults.” Protection and guardianship are to be found by keeping close to the word of God. Verse 13 reads, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins”. There is about that, if we imbibe it, which will keep us back from ways which are displeasing, untrue to the One to Whom we belong.

Lastly, reactions to Scripture seem to me to come in the last few verses. It is very plain that in verses 7 to 10, the Psalmist talks about Scripture, without talking about himself. Now in verse 11 he gets down to bringing himself in and begins to talk about himself as “Thy servant”. Here one sees that the man that is involved with the Scriptures is inside the Scriptures and imbibing them and letting them affect him. He begins to find himself in the position of one who wants to serve the One Who speaks to him in the Scriptures. He finds himself as “Thy servant,” and here is a question we can put to ourselves. We can finish with questions perhaps. Are we being brought into personal contact with the Author of Scripture? By imbibing, do we find the Scriptures to be valuable in the way the Psalmist did? Do we find the Scriptures to be sweet and desirable and rewarding in the way the Psalmist did? Are we alert to the rightness of the proper response? That last verse (verse 14) so rightly makes it plain that the Psalmist was alert to the rightness of a proper response to all that he received from the word of God. Do we feel that meditation in a proper way is needed? Because being involved in such a wonderful thing, our response ought surely to be that we want to be in it, we want to be affected by it, we want to be in the good of it. Do we feel like that in view of all the precious things available to us?

I would like, in closing, to return to those statements, those kinds of statements that Christ made. One kind of statement was, “It is written”. There is no question that that is true. We have our bibles here and it is all written. It is written, whether we read it or not. But the other kind of question that He asked of all sorts of people, “Did you never read that which was spoken,” or “Did you never read” this thing that He quoted? Again and again, “Did ye never read?” “Did ye never understand?” He asked whether they were reading their written Scriptures. I am talking to you tonight about what is written—Scripture, but there is another side to this, whether or not we read it. The next address gives help at this point.

5. BIBLE READING AND BIBLE STUDY _____ ALAN BRADLEY

[Mr. Bradley began by reading 1 Timothy 4 : 12—16 ; 2 Timothy 2 : 15 and Romans 12 : 1—2. Please read them now. If we are to realise the transforming power of the Word in our lives, our **attitudes** of mind must be : dependence on God expressed in prayer ; a receptive attitude ; and a teachable attitude. Our **objectives** will be : the knowledge of God ; to know Christ better ; and transformed lives].

I suggest to you that by **reading**, we acquire the knowledge of what the Scriptures say, and by **studying** the Scriptures we get the understanding of what the Scriptures mean. And we need to have both of these aspects, both reading and studying.

As to **reading** I would like to suggest just four words of advice and guidance. Reading the Bible is basic to spiritual health. As our food is necessary every day (and we do not often miss a meal) so, reading the Scriptures is essential to our spiritual health.

First, we should read the Word in order **to know what the Word says**. And I underline that word 'know' at this stage. I would like young Christians to get into the Word of God, and read it consistently until they know what every verse in the Scriptures says. Just that. I do not say, in the early stages, that we should understand what the Scripture says, but that we should read the Scriptures in order that we know what it says. After all, if we have never read a verse of Scripture, the Holy Spirit cannot very well use that Scripture to our blessing. So there is a great need for us to read the Word of God, and to read it through in order that we know what the Scriptures have to say. I do not think we can say very much more on that score, except to get on with it, and do it.

Secondly, we should read the Scriptures **in a systematic way**, not just haphazardly, a verse here and a verse there, but rather, read the whole of the Bible. On that happy day when I was converted, a copy of John's Gospel was put into my hands and I was told "There you are. Start with John's Gospel. And then go on to Acts. And then read Romans, and take in the rest of the New Testament. And then think about reading the Old Testament". For we need to read the whole of the Bible, not just small, selected parts of it. I think we need to be systematic and go to it so as to cover the whole of the Bible in a reasonable time. And can I suggest that perhaps eighteen months, with a bit of persistence, and no doubt less if we do it with enthusiasm, one can read the whole of the Scriptures. And again (looking back to my own experience, and my own doggedness), repeat the process; read it a second time and do not hesitate at that; if you are still up to it read the Scriptures a third time. It may take you five years to cover the Scriptures three times over, but at the end of that time you will know what the Scriptures have to say, and you will have acquired to yourself a basic knowledge upon which a lifetime of study can be devoted.

Can I add next that we should read the Scriptures **regularly**? How important it is that we set aside a time and we regularly and consistently stick to it, to read the Scriptures some time in the day! Now I cannot obviously lay down rules for everyone. Our lives are as different as our faces, and what is suitable to one is not suitable to another. Some people find it more convenient to read the Scriptures in the evening when the work of the day is over, when perhaps you have a few moments on your own, then you can read your portion for the day. But if we are honest, we would have to admit that as we read at the end of the day, slowly the eyelids get heavier, and our minds are perhaps not at their best, we are not getting the most out of the Word at that time of the day. We might even be guilty of dropping off and having to start again. That may not be the case. Great blessing has come to those students of the Bedtime Bible School, but at the same time there is this danger of tiredness overcoming our enthusiasm for the Lord. Perhaps better, (I only suggest it, I do not lay down in a rigid way), perhaps better it would be, to read the Scriptures in the morning, when there is a new day at hand, when the mind and the body are rested, and when you are fresh, and you can begin

the day with the Lord and with His Word. When you think of it, if you begin the day by having a lie-in, that is really giving the victory to Satan, is it not? And if you give in to Satan at the beginning, you cannot really expect to get the victory later in the day. On the other hand, if we are ready to give the Lord the first part of the day and "Resist the devil", the bible tells us he will flee from you.

Fourthly, let us read additionally, **in any spare time** that you have, any spare moment during the day, and have your Pocket Testament with you and take it out and read it. In the bus, or in the train, or during the tea-break or the lunch-hour, whenever you have a spare moment don't be afraid to take out your pocket Testament and read it.

However shy and embarrassed you might be about speaking for the Lord in public, if you sit down in a public place and take out your Testament, and read it, not as a witness primarily, but just to get the knowledge of the Scriptures, see if that is not a witness to those who are there! See if they don't start asking questions! And there is the perfect opportunity to tell them of the Saviour Whom we love.

Four words of advice then. I have put before the younger members of our group here today, some of the benefits of my own little experience. Can I ask the older ones who are here, in the light of these four simple rules, how much more progress do you suppose you might have made in your own Christian experience if someone had given you these four rules twenty odd years ago? How much further, perhaps, might you have got on in the life of faith if you had adopted these rules and persisted in them? How important it is for young people particularly, when the mind is young and fresh, when it can absorb and memorise information and facts readily and easily, to go in for this reading in order that your life and potential for God may be utilised as you go out to serve Him in this world.

Let us now pass quickly on to the subject of **study**. Studying the Scriptures is obviously a much deeper thing than just reading the Scriptures. We read in order to acquire knowledge, but in order to get understanding we have to study. I will indicate two forms of study, individual study of the Scripture and collective study. The individual study, of course, is by far the harder. You have to do it on your own. Satan does not like to see anyone making progress in these things. Satan makes it difficult to study the Word, as opposed to reading it. It requires that old-fashioned quality of self-discipline if you are going to progress and I cannot see any escape for it, but never forget that God's Spirit is on your side.

The first essential in studying the Word of God is that we should make use of a **quiet time** in the day. You must read the Bible anyway, but in addition, you have somehow got to design your life so that there is a quiet period in it in which you can get close to God's Word. You can think about it and you can study it. No servant of God has ever been really useful to Him without this. Each of us must set aside some time in which to be quiet with the Lord during that day. How you do it is your responsibility, to work it out before the Lord.

And in addition to spending time in quiet with the Lord, we need during the course of the day, if this is possible, to **meditate** upon what the Scriptures say, not consciously sitting down and attempting to study it,

but just turning over in the mind, processing that information, meditating, sorting it out, saying, "That is valuable. I am going to hold onto that!" Meditate on the Word just as those animals in the field chew the cud, ruminate, process what they have gathered in the field.

Perhaps it is during times like this, of meditation and quietness that that third aspect of study, more mysterious still, whereby God can speak to your heart, and the **special enlightenment from God's Spirit** can come into your life. Peter must have done some of this: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this to you, Peter", (the Lord Jesus said to him one day) "but my Father which is in heaven". Remember Samuel, and how he answered God, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth". So also we in our lives have somehow or other got to make time for the claims of God.

That is the individual side of it, but then, of course, there is the collective side. We study the Scriptures collectively when we come together in our assembly Bible Readings. The continuity of our assembly life depends on the young people becoming involved in the assembly Bible Readings. Young people, do you realise the heritage which is yours in meetings like ours? And what an encouragement it is to those who are older, to have bustling young men clawing at truth in order that they might get at the heart of things for themselves and for their own gain. Young people, if perhaps you do not feel that the assembly Bible Readings are just your cup of tea, you go home tonight and study, ruminate, and meditate on the meaning of that verse, Hebrews 10:25, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is", and you go and participate in those assembly Bible Readings.

[The speaker continued with further helps in collective study: special addresses, conferences like this at St. Andrews, but stressed the prime need for private study. He said, "If you are unable to find time in your life. . . it may be that God has to deal with you in another way. . . He might take you out of the Bedside Bible College and put you into the School of Hard Knocks". Lastly, in addition to the Bible itself, the **equipment** needed will include a Concordance, and he advised the starting of a personal library of books, (examples given were books by W. T. P. Wolston and F. B. Hole), and also of a series of notebooks to continued through life].

THE TEN GATES OF JERUSALEM _____ JOHN BARNES.

Nehemiah 3.

(concluded)

THE sixth gate is the Fountain Gate. Its connection with the thought of John 4 is not difficult to see. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The divine sources of spiritual life opened up for impoverished man by the finished work of the Son are inexhaustible. Shallun, "Retribution," the son of Col-hoseh, the "All-seer", built this gate. The man who sees all

grasps the entire plan and apprehends what God is doing. He has made known unto us the mystery of His will and has told us that He is working out everything according to the counsel of His own will. Even the retributive dealings of the Lord with His people, on account of their unfaithfulness, would be understood. The true blessings of discipline are available to them "that are exercised thereby." As grasping the purpose of the Lord in His dealings, His actions within it's scope would be understood and bowed to. The stream of blessing would thus be enabled to flow unhindered into our lives, bringing us more and more into the values and joys of eternal life. The pool of Siloam is associated with this gate, Siloam meaning "sent". The One who brought the knowledge of this blessing to Sychar was indeed the promised Christ, the Sent-One of the Father, as John so often thinks of Him in writing his gospel. There is a vast surplus in the thought of the pool and there is also great productivity—the king's garden. Rest, refreshment, beauty and food are all included in such an idea. And the stairs are there. The Song of Songs refers to the secret of the stairs. (2 : 14 N.T.) The word seems to mean, basically, a steep, inaccessible place. What rich unfoldings of otherwise inaccessible wonders have the saints been brought into ! The true Joseph, sitting just as He was by the Samaritan well, His richly laden branches running over the Jewish wall to the spiritually deprived outside the privileged boundaries of Israel, was indeed the true Zaphnath—Paaneah, the Revealer of secrets, the Saviour of the life of the world ; and He was recognized and appreciated in this blessedly twofold way. "He told me all things that ever I did," confessed the wondering woman. "He is the Saviour of the world," said the men.

The next worker to be mentioned is a namesake of the writer, Nehemiah, which means "comfort of the Lord." He was the son of Azbuk, "the strong emptied." The power of the Lord becomes really available to us when we become conscious of our essential weakness and are thus prepared to lean on His strong arm. "When I am weak, then I am strong," writes Paul, and says again, "His strength is made perfect in weakness." It is when we give up our own futile efforts that God can take us up and use us for Himself in His service in His own mighty power.

Beth-zur means 'the house built on the rock.' This is where the strength of the structure really lies. In Matthew 7, speaking of one of the buildings in His parable the Lord says, "It fell not **because** it was founded upon a rock".

The work of rebuilding was then continued over against the sepulchres of David. This may appear to strike a sombre note if not a note of defeat, but, in fact, David makes way for his son, Solomon. The son of David stands as typical of David's greater Son, the true Builder who rears up everything for God's glory and for the blessing of men. Solomon was the great builder of the Old Testament. David had building ambitions but it was his son who fulfilled them. The Lord Jesus fills out the typical outline sketched out in Solomon and builds up that which can withstand the attacks of God's enemies.

This work was continued to the pool that was made and to the house of the mighty. The pool was **made** ; resources have been procured at infinite cost and made available for man. The house is the house of the Mighty ; He is the Mighty God. Though, as far as man's myopic vision

may seem to shew, things may look very small in the christian circle, we have been brought to no crumbling ruin but to a structure reared in infinite power and maintained securely against any attack. In Matthew 16 the Lord Jesus says, "I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The next workers to be mentioned were Levites. We know that they were set apart to care for the vessels and materials of the Tabernacle and later, of the Temple. During the long desert journey they carried various parts of the dismantled structure to its new resting place. These men were prepared to shoulder the burdens of the Lord's service and to carry things along in His interests. This is tough, often unrewarding toil, but He sees it and there could be no doubt of His appreciation of every service, however menial, done for Him. A cup of cold water given to a servant of the Lord in love for Him does not pass unnoticed.

Rehum, "merciful," the son of Bani, "built," are named. Here again the idea of building is emphasized. Builders erect structures, they do not break them down. It takes skill and patience to build up; any fool can knock things down.

Hashabiah, ruler of half part of Keilah laboured in his part. Hashabiah means, "esteemed of the Lord," and Keilah is "fortress." The strength of this position seems to be clearly in the mind of the writer and the Lord's approval of what is being done for Him is also plain. Moreover, those whom the Lord approves of may count on His support in the work, and may rely on His protection.

Alongside of them repaired their brethren, "Bavai," meaning "with the desire of the Lord," or, according to others, "by the mercy of the Lord." The co-operation of the brotherhood in the mercy of the Lord is a most valuable adjunct to recovery. Brothers have community of nature and interests and as in the family labour in sympathy with the desire of the Lord. Another worker to be named here is the son of Henadad, "favour of the most eminent." The place of privilege the Lord has brought us into may be thought of; "Brought into favour in the Beloved"; the "most Eminent" indeed, the Chiefest among ten thousand. Keilah is again referred to; What a fortress it is to our souls as we consider the place of honour into which divine grace has brought us!

There follows the name of Ezer, "treasure or treasury." What wealth we find in the divine store; the riches of God's grace have been poured out lavishly on us bringing us the munificence of every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. This man was the son of Jeshua, "salvation of the Lord." The work of grace is His and we are happy to recognise it and enjoy its countless benefits. The work at this point went up to the armoury at the turning, or the corner of the wall. This is suggestive of Christ as the great Head of the corner and is an expression full of strong ideas. A long wall without corners or buttresses is said to be weak and not likely to last. No building which leaves Christ out will be of any real or lasting value. This Stone, rejected by the builders in their human cleverness, has, nevertheless, become the Head of the corner. The armoury of the Ephesian epistle is linked with a strong presentation of our Lord as Head in the supremacy of His universal Headship.

Baruch, "blessed," the son of Zabbai, "the clemency of the Lord," laboured earnestly from the corner. An appreciation of the supremacy of

our Saviour as the One who is at the centre of all that God is doing, would help to give purpose and energy to work done for Him. Work of this kind for such a Person is worth putting some effort into. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is sound advice and in connection with the work of the Lord could not be more powerfully stated. These men, blessed in the lovingkindness of the Lord, worked with all their hearts from the strong corner to the house of Eliashib, whom we have already considered.

Then wrought Meremoth, "elevations," the son of Urijah, "light of the Lord," a name we have also already seen. This work was by the house of Eliashib and again we have a hint of opposition in the name of Koz, an 'enemy.' We are warned by the Lord that a man's foes shall be those of his own household. The residence of the high priest is no guarantee of immunity from this sad apostasy. Eli found this out, no doubt through his own laxity of discipline, but even the pious Samuel bred sons who were very different to their revered father.

The men of the plain are the next in order to be referred to. It is probably true to say that the church is largely made up of ordinary men and women, plain people who would claim no special ability, but if, on account of this they did nothing, how little would be done. There are always leading men and women of great gift upon whose enabled shoulders fall many heavy burdens, but there are others who labour with them, less gifted, less able, but they do their part. In Athens there was Dionysius, an important man ; a woman, evidently also of some standing, named Damaris, and there were others with them. Most of us are content to think of ourselves in this group, but our service, humble though it be, is needed. Some are five talent men ; some are two talent men ; most of us are one talent men, but we are not to conclude on that account that what we have is of so little value as to be unusable. These men of the plain worked on the same wall as the rulers and the goldsmiths, and they did their valuable little bit towards the work of restoration. In a work of this kind every hand is valuable.

Benjamin is next named, "son of my right hand," and Hashub, "much esteemed." They laboured over against their house. This is a most estimable contribution to the service of the Lord. Many use their homes as centres of christian interest and service just as these brethren put their right hand to the work. Those who so labour merit the hearty fellowship of the brethren. Every christian household should, in its small way, be a reflection of the life of the assembly.

Azariah, "helped of the Lord," son of Maaseiah. "the work of the Lord," son of Ananiah, "whom the Lord covers," worked also by his house. The names are surely of great interest. Those who devote themselves to the work of the Lord and do it in accordance with His will may count on His support.

Binnui, "building," son of Henadad, "favour of the chief, most high," worked from the house of Azariah to the turning of the wall, even the corner. As we have thought, corners are strong points in buildings, so these helpers did important work.

Palal, "judge," may be suggestive of maturity, of discrimination. How needful this quality is in times of recovery. Grace is much required

but it must not lean towards the laxity which permits the inclusion of that which is of man, even though pleasant and humanly attractive. Sound spiritual judgement is an essential.

Son of Uzai, "swiftness of the Lord," would, perhaps, emphasize the fact that though we sometimes think of God as slow to act, when He does move, He moves with lightning speed. This man's work was carried out on one of the wall's corners to the tower which lieth out. This would be an exposed, defensive position and of great importance to the security of the city, where meticulous care would be needed and watchfulness would be a required feature in the masons as they worked. The tower was connected with the king's high house. It may, in christian terms, perhaps be related to the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the highest place in glory, a feature of truth unacceptable to the enemies of our Lord but which the true believer would wish to hold against any attack. For we know and rejoice in the fact that the One whom men slew and hanged on a tree, Him has God exalted to His high house.

This tower was by the court of the prison ; a solemn thought. The rejected Son of Man is the One to whom God has committed all judgement **because** He is the Son of man. The enemies of the Lord and of His work will not be allowed liberty to destroy what is of Him ; He will be victorious over every foe. In Ephesians 1 : 11 it says of God that "He worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will." He will work everything out to His own satisfaction and glory and we can be in the good of this certain outcome.

Pedaiah laboured in the adjacent site. His name means "redemption of the Lord." His father was Parosh, "cowardly." Many of us feel how descriptive of us would such a name be. Timothy was evidently inclined to be timorous and Paul wrote to him urging him not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of His apostle, His prisoner. And it was the desire of Paul's own heart to be bold in the testimony of the Lord. This man was involved in the work, a dangerous enterprise, so it is clear that he was helped to overcome his natural inclination.

The Nethinims, "temple servants," dwelt in Ophel. Ophel was built to a very great height by Manasseh. Perhaps there is a suggestion here of the heights of the heavenly calling of the saints today, thought of as those who serve in the temple. This was in the eastward part of Zion. We know that the sun rises in the east and it is the expectation of our hearts that, very soon, the Sun of righteousness will arise from that quarter. One would not wish to strain these seed thoughts, but perhaps this is a hint. This place was close to the Water Gate, the seventh of the gates. In Ezekiel 47 there is a prophecy of the issue of a river of living waters from beneath the threshold of the millennial temple eastward. We have the privilege of giving testimony today to this Coming One and to offer the free gift of living waters to whosoever will. (Rev. 22 : 17) How refreshing to our hearts that there is a Water Gate untainted by man's corrupt influences. Again there is a notice of a tower that lieth out. We have already made a suggestion on this idea.

The Tekoites were assiduous workers. Not content with one section of the wall they are again referred to as labouring on another. It is frequently said, "If you want something done ask a busy man to do it." There may be some truth in that. These men worked on what was possibly one of the most vital portions of the wall ; the **great** tower that

lieth out. If a tower is great it is because it has important defensive functions. There are those who really care about the interests of the Lord; such are perhaps like the Tekoites. The Tekoite nobles did not addict themselves to the service so it is probable that the Tekoite commoners felt they should do twice as much for that reason.

The Horse Gate is now thought of and is the eighth of the gates. This is suggestive of battle. Isaiah speaks of them that turn the battle to the gates (ch. 28), as though they defended the city right up to the entrance and succeeded in routing the enemy at the very gate. The priests work in this location, every man beside his own house. It would be helpful if the Lord's people would seek to take up His service in a priestly spirit, as ministering to Him. Paul carried out his work of evangelising the Gentiles in this spirit, as has often been noted; "That the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Romans 15 : 16.

Zadok, "just," comes to notice. Another of the same name has been noticed. This man, son of Immer, "He promised," worked alongside his home, strong, no doubt, in the sense of the faithfulness of the Lord.

Shemaiah,—“heard of the Lord,” son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the East gate is then referred to. This is the ninth of the gates this chapter reviews. We have already suggested a thought on the idea of the east and this gate would remind us of the soon coming of the One who loves us. Are we high enough above the sordid level of this squalid world to catch a glimpse of the rays of His glory as they gleam over earth's dark horizon? He will hear the heart-call of His saints, "Come Lord Jesus."

We have noticed that certain names recur in this chapter. Hananiah, "gracious gift of God," is a name we have seen. This one was son of Shelemiah, "repaid of the Lord." There are few believers who would need the incentive of reward to persuade them to put their hand to the Lord's work, but there will be reward for all done for Him. His gifts multiply blessings; "Grace and peace be multiplied."

Hanun, "giving gratuitously," would suggest the free gift of God. Every gift is free, of course, but God's giving is so generous that the expression is strengthened in this beautiful way.

The son of Zalaph repaired another stretch of the wall. He was the sixth son. A sixth son may have been justified in considering himself of small importance; he would have a small place in family affairs. We recall how David was considered (1 Samuel 16 : 11) He was not important enough to be called in to pass before Samuel, but the Lord had not chosen the others. This man worked on the structure, doing his bit towards strengthening the city's fortifications. The name means "fracture, break," and we feel this in our day particularly as we think of tiny assemblies, the fractured remains of once great gatherings, or think of ourselves personally, like Mephibosheth, lame through the fall. But we could still be workers in His interest.

Meshullam, "repaying," a name already seen, the son of Berechiah, "blessed of the Lord," laboured over against his chamber. Here was a brother in touch with the Lord in the secret place, his closet. How valuable a co-worker in remnant times! What a spring of useful service for God and His people!

Then came Malchiah, "royal by God's appointment," son of a goldsmith, one who valued precious things. He worked to the place of the Nethinims, high up there on the heights of Ophel. The merchants come in for a mention. This would serve to remind us of the parable of the talents and of our obligation to make use of the substance the Lord has committed to our trust, "Occupy," He has said, "till I come."

These men worked up to the last of the ten gates, the Gate Miphkad, a word which has the meaning of appointment or assignment. This may cause us to think of the purpose of God. He is working towards the fulfilment of what He set out to do and He will complete it. He has appointed this and He will permit nothing to prevent its accomplishment. Surely we reach here the finality of all christian work, that the purpose of the Father might be accomplished. It **will** be done whatever we do, but how happy it would be for us to be working in view of it and in conformity with it.

From this final gate the work was completed to the point where we began in our chapter, the Sheep Gate. This completes the circle of defensive fortifications which environed the city. Perhaps the eventual return to the Sheep Gate would remind us that the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus, the basis of blessing for guilty sinners, will never be forgotten. The joy of our hearts in a coming day will be to sing a song of thanksgiving to "Him that loosed us from our sins in His own blood."

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

The Upper Room Discourse

(Notes on the Concordance, (p.16), continued from p.64, and concluded.)

The reader is advised that these notes, on the most profound themes available to faith, will not yield their power and sweetness to a cursory reading. The most careful and prayerful perusal and reflection will be required. It is also recommended that they be kept for reference for future study of these chapters.

Go (away), Depart. The imminent departure of the Lord Jesus is obviously the prime occasion for the upper room discourse. To the fact of His going away we owe these hallowed words. There is surely nothing strained or far-fetched about noting that the great fact of the departure from this world of the Lord Jesus is referred to with recognisably different shades of meaning, and that we would do well if we could make these differences available for our meditations on these communications.

A helpful note is to be found in Westcott's "Gospel of John" (English text) p.122, on John 7 : 33. "Three Greek words are translated 'go' in St. John, and two of them in similar connexions. Each word expresses a distinct aspect of departure, and its special force must be taken into account . . . **hupago** emphasises the personal act of going in

itself, as a withdrawal (8 : 14, 21f, 13 : 31, 33, 36, 14 : 4f, 28, 16 : 5, 10, 16f). **poreuomai** marks the going as connected with a purpose, a mission, an end to be gained, a work to be done (7 : 35, 14 : 3, 12, 28, 16 : 7, 28). **aperchomai** expresses a simple separation, the point left (6 : 68, 16 : 7).

I think that the distinctions suggested would be best brought out by proposing a paraphrase of a short passage which contains all three words, alongside the A.V. : 16 : 5 - 7.

“But now I go my way to him that sent me ; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ? But . . . sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless . . . it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

Paraphrase : “But now I am moving my presence (hupago) to him that sent me ; and none of you asketh me, Where are you moving your presence to ? But . . . sorrow hath filled your heart (because you see my moving away only as a loss). But . . . it is really **gain** for you that I leave (aperchomai) you ; because if I do not leave you, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but my going is with a purpose (poreuomai), that of sending the Comforter unto you.”

Abide, Remain, Continue, Dwell. It is not possible to overestimate the importance of the Christian's incorporating the truth contained in these words into his spirit. The one Greek word which is translated in A.V. by these four words is fundamental to John's writings. It occurs 119 times in the New Testament, and of these, 67 are in John's writings, including 41 in the Gospel, and this includes the 16 occurrences in the Upper Room discourse. In these chapters, it appears only in 14 and 15. Its prominent place in John's vocabulary presents very strongly his insistence that only in Christ and in His faith are available to faith the things which never pass away. The basic meaning is **permanence**, and the two principal applications are to a permanent as distinct from a temporary dwelling-place, and to qualities such as fruit, including joy, which do not pass away. It is easy to see that in this concept of the permanence of Divine things as constituting the ultimate reality “lying back of the never-ending process of change” we have the answer to the most ancient of the philosopher's quests.

Regarding the permanent, eternal dwelling in or with, we ought to take into account the related word ‘**mone**’ appearing in 14 : 2 and 23, “many mansions” and “we will make our abode with him”. We are assured, for our heart's peace, satisfaction and gladness, of two things. First, Jesus has gone to prepare an eternal dwelling-place for us in the Father's house. Second, in the meantime, to those who love and obey, the Father and the Son will come and make their dwelling-place by the Spirit the Comforter.

Another aspect of the dwelling-place is that the disciple is invited to live uninterruptedly in Jesus, (15 : 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10) and this is the way to the development and experience of the qualities, that is, fruit, which are lasting and permanent.

The essential quality of Christianity, as providing the things which last for ever, is well illustrated in 2 Corinthians 3 : 11. In Judaism are things which, although introduced with glory, are done away. In

Christianity are things which continue (**meno**) in glory. Over every attractive offer presented by the world, must be written ; It will not last, and with this agrees 1 John 2 : 17. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof : but he that doeth the will of God abideth (**meno**) for ever".

Send. The contexts in which this word appears in John's gospel in general and in these chapters in particular, bear witness to its great significance, whether we have grasped this or not. Eternal life is to know the Father, the true God, and Jesus Christ, His Sent One. This would almost imply that the diety of Christ is involved in the word 'sent'. In ch. 9 the word looms large : Siloam is by interpretation Sent. This refers us back to Isaiah 8 : 6 and then further to 6 : 8 for the roots of its meaning.

Two Greek words are used. In chs. 13 to 16, (with one exception in 13 : 16), the word is **pempo**. In ch. 17 the word is **apostello**. The distinction between the two is not outstandingly clear, since both words are used of the sending of the disciples as well as the sending of the Lord and Comforter. The attempt to distinguish is made by Westcott on p. 298 dealing with John 20 :21. He sees **apostello** (from which the word apostle' is derived) as "conveying the notion of a special commission, and so far a delegated authority. **Pempo** implies the sending without the additional notion of delegated authority".

Believe. It is fitting that the last of the words selected for study from the Upper Room discourse on the basis of frequency of occurrence should deal with our door into this new world of fellowship with the Father and Son, that is, faith. In the edition of the New Translation (New Testament) with Darby's full notes, there is a very useful paragraph on 2 Timothy 1 : 12 dealing with the various constructions connected with the verb 'believe' found in the New Testament. Perhaps the fundamental belief is referred to twice in 14 : 11 ; "Believe me". The J.N.D. note reads, "the habitual use therefore is with a dative, to believe a "**person**", and this might very well be thought of as the basic saving faith Scripture brings before us, in that in Romans 4 : 3 we have "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness".

Then we have to note the form, "believe in" a person. On this form, Bernard says (I.C.C. p. 17) "The phrase 'to believe in Christ', in Him as distinct from believing His words, or being convinced of certain facts about Him, is not found in the Synoptists ; but in John . . . 35 times", out of a total of 100 occurrences of the verb 'believe', nine times as often as it is used by the Synoptists. In the Upper Room discourse this form occurs 5 times : 14 : 1 (twice), 12, 16 : 9 and 17 : 20.

Once the right foundation is laid by believing Christ, and believing in (**eis**) Christ, then we can rightly move to believing statements concerning the Father and Son, and this form appears 6 times in these chapters :

believe that I am He 13 : 19

believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me 14 :10

believe that I came out from God 16 : 27 and 30

believe that Thou did'st send Me 17 : 8 and 21.

In so far as the disciple enters into the deep meaning of statements such as these, he is indeed drinking of the living water, and knows the promise, "shall never thirst again".

THE PHILIPPIANS AND THE GOSPEL ——— **ANDRÉ GIBERT**

(translated from the French)*

ONE cause, as well as a result of our spiritual feebleness is the tendency to separate the evangelisation from the normal life of the assembly.

Sometimes evangelisation—this is still restricted in its meaning to seeking and appealing to the unconverted—is considered as the sole Christian activity, and as an activity to be exercised in total independence of the assembly: people will join hands with everything done in christendom so long as the good news is being spread. Does it not often happen that the whole of the Christian life is made to turn on gospel campaigns, willing to measure their value by the noise they make or by the quality of their organisation? Quiet evangelisation is easily forgotten, and that of personal contacts or example, that which goes on in the family, in the ordinary meetings, that which 'seizes the opportunity', that which is unseen. And the principles in the Word as to the meetings, assembly discipline, and separation from evil, are soon held for out-moded, if not even denied. The service of adoration, worship and edification would be treated as secondary matters, if not negligible. The discernment of false doctrines, and the refusal to show fellowship with those who hold them passes for a lack of love and for a petty spirit, so great is the exclusive concern for evangelisation thus understood.

Sometimes, on the other hand, we are in danger of falling into indifference in assembly activity relative to the obligation of evangelisation, although this is so precious and so urgent if only we take to heart the needs of the masses of unconverted souls. Even if we give material support to evangelists, colporteurs or missionaries, it would appear that we are afraid of such activities as possibly distracting attention from tasks held to be more elevated. For fear of seeing doctrinal evil invade the assembly of God, such people would retreat entirely from these services, which are after all of inestimable value, which belong to the assembly as such, and which can only be exercised in separation from the world. Thus there is formed, perhaps thoughtlessly, a private society, not to say a little professing body, distinct, although in the bosom of the totality of professing Christianity. The result would be sectarianism. By a striking inconsistency, certain ones who put a brake on zeal for evangelisation, loudly deplore that conversions are no longer seen. They fail to recognise that we do not reap because we do not sow.

*appeared first in *Messenger Evangélique*, 1961, p. 141.

From both sides the danger is in dissociating the spread of the gospel from the life of the assembly. Now the Word never separates them.

The growth of the body of Christ, according to Ephesians 4, its edification in the primary sense of the word, involves evangelists in the same way as pastors and teachers. Both are given by the Lord and are responsible before Him, but they all act "for the perfecting of the saints ; with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4 :12)

The assembly itself does not evangelise, any more than it shepherds or teaches : it is shepherded by the pastors, taught by the teachers, and it is, in like manner, recruited by means of the evangelists, all "the work of the ministry" being carried out on the foundation which the apostles and prophets have laid once for all by the Holy Spirit. He is the divine worker who adds, conversion after conversion, the new members with which He occupies himself thereafter ; and too often His power—the only power which counts—is not recognised in evangelisation. Such is the normal way in which the body of Christ is formed, in the balance of the actions which work together for its growth. Paul, when he moved out into the work, had been set apart by the assembly according to the command given by the Holy Spirit who had called him ; then he had been commended to the grace of God by it ; and he continued in close association with the local assembly which had thus acted in his case. (Acts 13 : 1 14 : 26 15 : 40 18 : 22).

Have we not largely lost sight of this necessary harmony, and that for lack of love to the Lord, to his assembly, and for souls ?

We can learn much on this subject in reading the epistle of Paul to the Philippians, this epistle of so practical a character, the epistle of experience and of the Christian life in action, and so direct in its affectionate exhortations that one could call it the heart-to-heart epistle.

One of its traits is precisely the close association, which the apostle is intent on strengthening still more, between the Philippians and himself in the work of the Gospel. This epistle is not exactly addressed to the assembly as such ; but "all the saints who are in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers" certainly represent an assembly in activity, functioning in good health, with the means given by God, and all the saints are called to live and to strive together, without exception. Paul himself does not take the title of an apostle, but that of a bondsman of Jesus Christ, just like Timothy ; he is a servant specially called, but who is writing to his fellowservants : a special place and work have been assigned to him, but he addresses the saints, "all the saints", as so many collaborators in the work of the gospel.

The Gospel is here at the centre of the apostle's concerns. The matter in hand is the Gospel in its full meaning : "Christ preached" (1 : 15), "Christ announced" (1 : 18). The good news of salvation, it is Christ. It is much more than a question of moving the hearers and of making religious feeling vibrate in them, but rather to lead them to Christ, Christ dead, Christ resurrected, Christ in the glory, Christ the example and the power of the Christian life, Christ who is going to come again. It is too often forgotten that evangelising goes much further than

making an appeal, however urgent, to souls. Casting the net is the first operation, in one sense the easiest ; but other operations which demand perseverance are also required, knowing how to draw in the net, then how to use wisdom in gathering the fish into containers and not let them plunge back into their old life. We preach Christ, Paul said, "exhorting every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1 : 28, 29).

The Gospel is "the gospel of God . . . concerning His Son" and the evangelist would not be satisfied with vaguely moving feelings ; he has to lead souls to Christ. Men are called out of darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and placed under the authority of Christ as Lord. Drawn out of the world, they are by the Spirit of God introduced into the assembly where care and teaching has to be given to them under the action of the same Spirit.

"Minister of the Gospel," as he was of the assembly (Colossians 1 : 23, 25), the apostle never ceases to have at heart "the furtherance of the Gospel", in other words its progress among the nations. He relates everything, his efforts, his joys, his fears, his affections, to this Gospel. The word recurs frequently in our epistle where the good news is in a way personified. He speaks of the defence and confirmation of the Gospel (1 : 7, 16), of the faith of the Gospel alongside which we must strive (27) ; he presents Timothy as having served in the Gospel (2 : 22) ; he addresses to his fellow labourer a request to assist, he says, "those who have striven along with me in the Gospel" (4 : 3).

Now he was thankful to God and he prayed earnestly, with joy, about the Philippians, because of the part they had played in the Gospel "from the first day until now" (1 : 5). This began at the time when Paul and Silas sowed the Gospel at Philippi in reproach and under the lash. This fellowship in the Gospel was continuing now that the apostle was afresh "in bonds". Grace had been with him for the defence and confirmation of the Gospel for which he, Paul, was "set", and they had been partakers of this grace.

All this was for him a great joy and strong encouragement. His great desire is that the Philippians might persevere, and he stimulates them. He associates them with the exercises he was at that moment experiencing in his service. Let them not be afflicted by the circumstances through which he is passing : "they have turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel". Let them not be saddened if some are preaching Christ out of party spirit or vainglory : "Christ is preached", and Paul rejoices in it ; to be sure, he does not require the Philippians to associate themselves with those who are acting in this way, but he wants to see them rejoicing with him that Christ, the true good news, is being preached. And since they have to keep up the same fight they saw in him (1 : 30), he exhorts them to strive "together, with one soul, in the same conflict with the faith of the Gospel, and not frightened in anything by the opposers". He does not distinguish some only among them, who would be called to present the Gospel in virtue of a special gift—not that it could not be the case and that certain of them might not be recognised as qualified "evangelists"—but he simply addresses them collectively : "all the saints" have to work in this field. All are set as lights : let them all present the Word of life, let them all "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4 : 5).

In fact they were all taking part, in thought, in prayers, and through the material help they were sending to him, in the labour and in the needs of the evangelists who had gone out into the world. They were doing it in a holy zeal for Christ and for souls. But the apostle does not separate, in his spirit, the Gospel from the totality of their Christian service. "The faith of the Gospel", which they had received, by which they lived, was engaged in battle, and they were fighting by its side. What a privilege for every Christian, to be able to act in this way, "presenting the word of life", and what a favour to be able to do it together!

But—and is this not the very basis and intention, the 'raison d'être' of the epistle?—this fight for the Gospel cannot be victoriously carried on if the Philippians are not walking worthily, individually and as an assembly. The apostle has confidence in the Lord, but he exhorts them to conduct themselves "worthily of the Gospel" (1 : 27). The evangelisation of the world is bound in the closest way with what the world can see of the conduct of the saints. Among the 'worthys' to which the Christian life ought to bear witness, (see Ephesians 4 : 1, Colossians 1 : 10, 1 Thessalonians 2 : 12), we have here that of the Gospel. The Word of life cannot be presented only in words, independently of its practical effects.

Three points especially are dealt with in Philippians in this connection. Each will profit by reflecting on them for himself; we will only be able to mention them.

We find first **fellowship among the saints**. The apostle cannot have his joy fulfilled in thinking of his dear Philippians if they are not walking fully in the same path. How can they "strive together", with him in the Gospel, alongside the faith of the Gospel, if they are dis-united? Do we need to recall the accents so touching with which he urges them to have the same thought, the same love, the same feeling, to think one thing, to think the same thing? It is so that Euodias and Syntyche, who had striven alongside Paul in the Gospel, might re-discover the same thought in the Lord, that he asks his yokefellow to help them. The secret is in a humility for which the pattern is supplied by Jesus (ch 2), and in the entire devotion of which Paul is the example, he who, since he had been laid hold of by Christ, was following after, seeking to lay hold of Him (ch. 3).

To this is linked **practical holiness**. Those who are saved must "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling", and make it evident to everyone: "that ye might be blameless and pure, irreproachable children of God", in your conduct—and not only in your position in Christ (2 : 12, 13). There is great danger of their allowing themselves to be turned towards "earthly things". The worldliness of certain who were nevertheless professing Christians made the apostle weep (3 : 18, 19); what would he say of our days? With the same insistence full of gentleness, he exhorts them to think on things that are venerable, just, pure, aimable, of good report (4 : 8), so as to enjoy the presence of and fellowship with God. In this fellowship with God the fellowship of the saints will be effortlessly realised. Thus we will show to the world peace and joy in the Lord. What a testimony, and what evangelisation! "For me to

believe in their Saviour", wrote sarcastically an unbelieving philosopher, "his disciples must have more an air of being saved."

And finally, it is indispensable to preserve **sound doctrine**. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" (3 : 2),—of those who teach doctrines calculated to lead souls astray. The Christian has for his distinctive part to "worship by the Spirit of God", "to glory in Christ Jesus", and to "have no confidence in the flesh" (v. 3),—primarily religious flesh. Paul is contending, here as in other epistles, against legality, this great and unchanging enemy, which takes advantage of the ignorance of Christians. There is no properly doctrinal statement in this epistle, but it is full of Christ, who is Himself the heart of the doctrine. For a person to have no confidence in the flesh, he must be rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and for this, he must know Him, be occupied with Him as the Word presents Him. Paul had preached Christ to the Philippians as he knew Him and as he desired always to know Him better; it was "because of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus", his Lord, that he counted all things loss. To bring people to know Christ, that is the aim of evangelisation, the subject of the Gospel. Neither sentimental emotion nor cold theory have any standing here, but a living Person.

Now, to return to an important point, is it not manifest that at the present time some people, whose zeal in evangelisation is beyond question, appear no longer to know clearly what, at bottom, this Gospel is, of which they wish to be the heralds. To appeal, to awaken souls, is excellent in its place; but to stop there, without the presentation of Jesus Christ exactly and clearly according to Scripture, is this "to preach Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4 : 5)? The danger is then to occupy souls with their experiences, their exercises, their activities, and finally with themselves, much more than with the Object of faith. It is important then, that he who evangelises is himself penetrated by that Object. Let us not forget that there is a zeal which is not according to knowledge, and that the Gospel of Christ can be "perverted". It is often necessary to struggle to maintain it in its purity. Let us ponder Galatians 1 : 6-10.

But that very thing is an imperative reason for those who are happy enough to have been taught according to sound doctrine to be careful to pass it on to others. "Preach the word," says Paul to Timothy; "be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4 : 2). Just as those who evangelise have the duty to be sound in doctrine, so also those who are sound in doctrine have the duty to evangelise.

If Christ is the source, the aim and the pattern of practical living, if He constitutes the bond between believers by being their common object, if they have no other glory, if He is their all,—then let us not be anxious about the Gospel: Christ will be presented to the world, preached by the evangelists, shown forth by the conduct of the saints. Thus the Philippians were participating in the confirmation of the Gospel. We are far from presenting such a picture. Does that excuse us, and authorise us also to leave no stone unturned in order to present such a picture. To refuse to be spokesmen for the Word of life would be to desert the most sacred of causes. But in order to preach Christ, we must live Christ.

THE "CERTIFIED" GOSPEL _____ J. STODDART

Some Tests from Galatians ch. 1.

IN these days of high pressure advertising and exaggerated claims in almost every sphere, it is surely wise to ensure that we obtain a **genuine** article. Nowhere does this apply more than to the many "modern" gospels ostensibly propounded to accommodate modern thinking and to cope with modern needs and conditions. Without encroaching on valuable space to detail these, it is easy to think of such distortions as comprise the "social gospel", the "salvation-by-works gospel", the "do-it-yourself gospel", the "charismatic gospel" and many others beside.

"It's the real thing," claims an advertisement for a popular brand of refreshment in these days, and doubtless this assurance carries much weight among its many consumers. Good it is to be sure that we have "the real thing", and particularly with regard to the Gospel we believe. Have we examined the hall-marks of what we believe recently? Are there such hall-marks to be recognised in the Gospel of our salvation? Let us consider the expression used by the apostle in Galatians ch. 1:11 (A.V.). "I **certify** you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man." Surely the intention here is to assure true believers that the hall-marks are self-evident in the only genuine Gospel.

Some time ago a member of Parliament was pressing for the adoption of a Bill to have **all** real silver and gold articles hall-marked. To emphasise the need for this he produced a fine piece of silver-plate in the House which bore no hall-marks. He said that it had been examined by different experts, some of whom regarded it as "very valuable" while the others were equally sure that it was "quite worthless". How, apart from hall-marks, could the ordinary inexperienced person protect himself against fraud and deception? Thus the apostle, by the Spirit, provides three valuable hall-marks by which he "certifies" the genuineness of the Gospel which he preached. The Galatians—and many another since—had turned aside from "the grace of Christ unto another gospel." (v. 6) But how quickly he asserts that it is not **another**, but a perversion of the Gospel of Christ, completely fraudulent and without credential, whether preached by man or angel, either of whom would call down a solemn anathema.

The first hall-mark of the Genuine Gospel, then, is its **SOURCE**. It is divine in origin (vvs. 11 & 12), only communicated to the apostle by "revelation of Jesus Christ". No other so-called gospel could claim this. However much it might appear to resemble the truth it would prove to be spurious because of its origin with men. Doubtless enough there would be persuasive arguments in the Judaistic teaching to which the Galatians had given ear, but its source was in the perverted minds of men and not in God Himself. How very important it is therefore to test the source of what we believe, and only in the Gospel of Christ as preached by the apostle do we find this assured hall-mark of divine origin.

Secondly, the **SUBJECT** of the Gospel must provide an unmistak-

able hall-mark of the genuineness of the Gospel he preached. This is surely the content of vv. 3 & 4. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." Was there ever a subject so wholly divine and yet so eminently suited to the need of mankind? No other gospel, of whatever origin, could present such an adequate and authentic message, to tell out the heart of God in the giving of His Son to die for the deliverance of sinful men. You bogus preachers of "another gospel", what have you to compare with such a message as this? Christ's Person and His perfect sacrifice are not enough for you and you must dare to pervert the truth that delivers men in order to imprison them in their sins and the hopelessness of self-effort! Little wonder that solemn curse rests upon you who perpetrate trouble in the spread of untruth!

But, lastly, the **SEQUEL** to the Gospel must be the acid test of its validity for only that which is good, and therefore of God, can produce good. (cf. 3 John 11). Consequently the apostle appeals to his well-known past as an arch-enemy of Christ and Christians, as that upon which the light of the Gospel had demonstrated its sequel. His exceeding zeal for his Jewish religion knew no abatement and yielded a handsome profit to him until that never-to-be-forgotten day on the Damascus road when "God. . . called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen." (vv. 15/16). The sequel was unmistakable in the complete reversal of all he ever thought or did hitherto. Blinded by the glory that shone upon him, he remained without sight and without food for three whole days. But God was not only to reveal His Son to him but in him, to produce the image of Christ in this man. How would such a sequel be effected? Perhaps a rather crude illustration from the photographic world might help us to understand this. A camera lens is normally opened for a fraction of a second to take the picture of the object before it. The image is instantly transferred to the sensitive film in the camera, after which the acid process must take place. (The writer refers here to the simplest and most elementary form of photography. More advanced methods, particularly in colour, have been produced, but the elementary form serves the present purpose.) In the dark room and the acid bath used for development, the image on the film only slowly appears and eventually is suitable for making prints. The "light above the brightness of the sun" had shone into the dark heart of Saul of Tarsus (cf. 2 Cor. 4 : 6) and the impress of Christ was instantly laid there. But let us think of the developing process which followed so that what had shone in might shine out, "for the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ" (2 Cor. 4 : 4/6 J.N.D.).

After his conversion, we might have thought he would hurry to the great centre of Christian testimony at Jerusalem, to join the other apostles. But contrary to our expectation he went into Arabia and there in desert country alone with God who can tell what deep lessons he was to learn! Perhaps still more surprising, he moves to Damascus, the very target of his erstwhile persecuting activities. Wouldn't they be ready to kill him there as a turncoat? Here was part of that developing process by which God's Son was to be revealed in Him. Thus we read in Acts 9 : 20, "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." Now the light was shining out through him to others.

Their amazement was not surprising. Could this really be the same person who had actually destroyed in Jerusalem those who called on this Name and did he not intend to do the same here? But what transformation had taken place since then! And now on to Jerusalem where many fears were still entertained as to him and doubts as to whether he was really a disciple. Only the assurance of Barnabas allayed their suspicions, "and he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. And he spake boldly in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians, but they went about to slay him." (Acts 9 : 27/29). Truly the apostle was now undergoing the "acid test" which would only result in Christ shining ever more brightly in his life. But seeing danger awaiting him, the brethren sent him away to the regions of Syria and Silicia. Here lay Tarsus where he was reared and where he might well be jeered and scoffed at by his old school companions. But no diminution of the brightness of that light now shining through him is recorded. In other places the apostle was "unknown by face" but well-known by reputation that, "he which persecuted us in times past now **preacheth** the faith which once he destroyed." And now we see the wonderful **SEQUEL** to all God's ways of grace with Paul and with all His Own. V. 24 says, "And they glorified God in me." Is not this the very "**certification**" of the Gospel itself, that what could never be produced by the Law or the perverted "gospels" of others is the sequel to believing its message. "Another gospel" could only be a worthless counterfeit productive of nothing but "trouble" and bearing no hall-marks of divine authenticity. Thanks be to our God for unmasking these fraudulent attempts by deceivers to rob Him of His glory, and for providing for us in this day of deceptions the unmistakable hall-marks of the "certified Gospel" which is still "His power unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1 : 16).

YOUTH AT ST. ANDREWS: 1974

6. PRAYER

C. D. BLAKEBOROUGH

Read : John 14 : 12-14 ; 15 : 7, 16 ; 16 : 23, 24, 26.

LAST night the subject was "The Holy Scriptures" and then "Bible Reading and our Bible Study". You could say we were considering the food of a Christian, the essential food which all Christians have to take in order to grow. This evening we are considering an equally important subject and one could refer to this as **the air which a Christian breathes**. We have already been reminded earlier today of one picture of this. In the reading someone made a picture of a diver down at the bottom of the sea, receiving his air through a windpipe, and we can liken ourselves as being on this earth, surrounded by a fog of sin, selfishness and pride, and the only pure and unpolluted air that we breathe would be the air that we breathe from heaven itself. There are many other similes of prayer. It has been likened to electricity, something which you cannot really explain, but each of us knows its power, and all we have

to do is to turn on the switch and the light comes on. If we connect with God in prayer, then we are connected with the source of all power. Or we could take another point of view and liken it to a kind of invisible protecting barrier as we walk, and if we keep up the barrier of prayer then the great enemy of our souls (Satan) will never be able to get through to attack, and we will be able to go through with impunity the temptations which he lays in our tracks.

The Conditions of Successful Prayer

By this I mean prayers that are answered. Hebrews 10 : 22, in its four clauses, instructs us what we are to do as we draw near to God in prayer.

“With a true heart”	No deceit
“In full assurance of faith”	No doubts
“Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”	No secret and deliberate sin
“Our bodies washed with pure water”	No taint from the world unconfessed and unforgiven

These four would seem to be some of the most prominent ways in which we find it difficult to enter into the presence of God. How many times have we gone to our knees with the best of intentions and somehow the heavens have seemed like brass and our prayers did not seem to get beyond the ceiling. The cause could very easily have been one of these four hindrances. Confirmation is found also in the Old Testament, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66 : 18), or “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save ; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear : but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59 : 1, 2). Other hindrances we must avoid, as in James 4 : 3, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”. This warns us against self-centred prayers. And finally, in this list of hindrances to prayer, there is an unforgiving spirit against which we read “ If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5 : 23, 24).

The Example of the Lord Jesus

Let us note some of the occasions when He found it necessary to be found in prayer : when He went up into the mountain to pray, when in the early morning He prayed, when He prayed with His friends, when He prayed before some great event in the future and when He prayed in the great crisis of His life. These are all examples for us to follow. From the way He organised His life, we can learn how we also can organise our lives. In such a study we find practical suggestions for overcoming our difficulties.

Our subject of prayer will be found to go hand in hand with what

Mr. Bradley said yesterday about Bible Reading. The Lord Jesus rose a great while before day and prayed to God. At times of special crisis He had special seasons of prayer, continuing all night in prayer to God. So our first suggestion is to **set aside a regular time**, preferably in the morning, because that would appear to be the time when our Lord was found upon His knees. This is the time when you may be wide awake. Also, special needs or crises in our lives will need **special concentration at prayer time**. Further, our prayers should be so closely linked with ruminating in the Scriptures that the two become almost indistinguishable. Therefore, it is suggested, that we link our prayers with thinking and meditating on some portion of Scripture.

Other Suggestions

We, who are learning of Him, find our own special difficulty in **wandering thoughts**, and here perhaps we have to work out our own solution with the Lord's help. One suggestion is to **say the words**, either aloud or at least with movement of the lips, as Hannah did. Keeping a **prayer list** is another help. There are permanent subjects for our prayers like parents, brothers, sisters, our children or one's wife or husband, but for others which change, we may well find help in keeping a prayer list. I have my prayer list going back over the many years, written in the back of a book where I keep my study notes. This ensures when I start a new book, I start a new prayer list, and one can look back over the prayer list of many years ago and it all comes faintly back, but a prayer list, I would suggest, is an essential part of your armoury when praying.

To all who are younger, I would suggest humbly and with fear of contradiction, perhaps, that there might be occasions when **written prayers** are not amiss. They will change very frequently, but sometimes there are phrases that will provoke thoughts of worship and praise in your hearts. One could write out Scriptures which strike one when reading. Old Testament prayers often contain phrases which are particularly provocative and they can be adopted for purposes of helping the Christian in his prayer life.

Many have found very suggestive an acrostic on the word "Acts":

A	Adoration
C	Confession
T	Thanksgiving
S	Supplication

The Heart of the Matter

Finally, let us come to what I think is really at the heart of the whole matter, the four passages I read from John's gospel. They have one phrase in common—"In my name". Prayer is linking in with God's purposes. Prayer is getting oneself enmeshed, in gear, with God's plan and purpose. Prayer does not alter God's purposes. Prayer gets you involved in them. Prayer is trying to think God's thoughts after He has thought them. To be enmeshed with God is the best illustration I know. Our prayer life is all bound up with this one key thing—getting involved in God's plans for this world, for this company, for this group of friends.

In this way our prayers are really beyond ourselves, because they are involved in God's greater plan, for a greater number of people than ourselves, for the assembly. In this light let us close with these four passages in John.

15 : 16 "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you". God has chosen you to be enmeshed with His purposes. That is why He answers your prayers.

15 : 7 "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you". If we are abiding in the thoughts of the Lord Jesus, if we are living in Him, if our lives are bound up with what God wants for us, then He will answer our prayers.

16 : 23, 24 "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you . . . ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". Joy is a familiar word. If we are enmeshed with God's purposes, then suddenly our lives will not be surrounded with barriers and hindrances, because God is One who removes barriers, Who changes the scenes to suit His plans.

14 : 12, 13 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son". The secret of answered prayer, the secret of being enmeshed in God's purpose, is that we should have that one aim in view, that God the Father should be glorified in His Son.

7. THE LORD'S SUPPER

J. S. BLACKBURN

Read : 1 Corinthians 11 : 23-26 ; Luke 22 : 14-20 ; John 13 : 1-8

BECAUSE I shall be so limited in what I can say, I shall first state rather baldly certain Bible facts.

1. Acts 20 : 7 "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. . ." Every first day of every week the disciples came together to break bread and we may be thankful to God that most of us are in a community where these scriptural directions are honoured. In this we are at one with the disciples who away back in the earliest days came together on the first day of the week to break bread.

2. 1 Corinthians 11 : 18 to the end of 14 : 40, we have the kind of gathering in which the Lord's supper is to be celebrated. We have there a gathering in which any man may speak, in which the women are silent and their heads must be covered and there are other marks about which I cannot now speak particularly.

3. 1 Corinthians 12 : 8. It is the Holy Spirit Who presides at the Lord's supper, and no man. He gives the words that are to be used for addressing the Lord and He gives the words that are to be helpful to the other persons present.

4. 1 Corinthians 14 : 15 and 16. Here we have the kind of things that it is understood we should do on this occasion when the Lord's supper is celebrated. These are praying, singing, blessing and giving thanks.

exactly as specified in these verses and we will all recognise them as the very things we do. We will take courage from the fact that we are in a strict line of a scriptural pattern in doing just these things under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

One of the main impressions that I want to leave with you is that we have read two accounts of the Lord's supper, that is, separate accounts of the two parts. One is in the three synoptic gospels; we have read it in Luke. In this part we read about the loaf and the cup and these words of the Saviour, "This do for a remembrance of me". The main central themes of this part, the first part of the Lord's supper, are the presence of the Lord Himself and our remembrance of Him, in the sense that we have Him in our thoughts and in our minds, not primarily in all His many glories, but as He was there upon the cross, the body given and the blood shed. But we have another account of this occasion, which occupies chapters 13-17 of the Gospel of John. I charge you to notice that very specifically it is talking about the supper and what Jesus did during the supper. In this second part of the supper there is no doubt at all what the theme is. The Lord Jesus Christ first of all prepared them that they might have part with Him. Having part with Him was that He spoke to them about the Father. He was there with them and He was speaking to them about the Father and in the end He lifted up His heart and addressed the Father. It is the communion with the Father and the worship of the Father that characterises the second part of the Lord's Supper. What can I say to middle-teenagers to awaken in every heart a great desire after experiencing the blessing that can come to us when our hearts go out to the Lord Jesus Christ in response to Him as He has said to us "This do in remembrance of me"? How we pray that we may be able to help each other in awakening a real desire to experience the blessing that comes from the presence of the Lord and from our being entirely engaged and occupied in response to Himself! We are not there to make our requests to Him on that occasion, (this is most important in its time and place) but we are there because the Lord Jesus desires response from the hearts of His own and in that response there is the greatest fulness of blessing in the deepening of our appreciation of His love for us. Under the constraining power of that love we have the whole mind and body and heart controlled. It is the strongest power available to us for being sustained in the Christian pathway.

So far as I am concerned I cannot get away from the thought that all the events of the last night of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ tell us of the great desire that He had to have the hearts and thoughts of His disciples with Him at the time of His suffering. See Him in Gethsemane. He took the three favoured disciples with Him and asked them to pray with Him. When He came and found them sleeping, He said "Could ye not watch one hour with me?" How there breathes through these words the deep desire of the Saviour that He might have the hearts of His disciples responding to Himself! Week by week the Lord's Supper is intended to evoke this response. The Lord Jesus desires that He might have the hearts of His own responding to Him for the great love where-with He has loved them.

Please never forget the second part of the Lord's supper. It is of this that the Lord Jesus says in Hebrews 2:12 "I will declare thy name

(the Father) unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee". In the first part our thoughts, and our hymns and our prayers are directed to the Lord Jesus reflecting and meditating upon His suffering love, and responding to Him. In the second part, the Lord Jesus Christ occupies us with the fact that He has revealed the Father, and it is in having part with Him that we come to know the Father, and in fellowship with the Father our hearts are moved to worship the Father.

I can quite well believe that our young friends will say "I really do not understand why you make so much of this". Well, you do know the Father. It is very natural to you, when you pray, to say "Father", and the Holy Scripture agrees with that when it says "I write unto you little children because you have known the Father." Now if once you get the fact that one of the greatest things that Jesus did was to reveal the Father, to make the last revelation of the secret of the nature of God in this relationship of love (the Father and the Son), then you have made a start. It is rather like Philippians 3 about which we shall be thinking in the morning. There the apostle says that although he knows the Lord Jesus Christ, yet he does not consider himself to be a person who has got it; he considers himself to be a person who is continuing and ever deepening in grasping what the Saviour has laid hold of him for. If you want to learn more of the Father then make chapter 13 of John's gospel a life-long centre for meditation and communion.

Now finally, I want to give a little by way of advice as to the problem of wandering thoughts which applies in superabundant measure to young people at the Lord's supper. What are we actually to be doing during those possibly silent times during the Lord's supper? The first thing is to seek to realise the Lord's presence. Just think always as a start of the first institution of the supper, how outside there was a hostile world of Sadducees, Pharisees and high priests and the brutal tramp of the Roman legion. But inside there was the peace that belonged to the presence of Jesus. We can easily visualise these twelve men and how their attention was rivetted to what Jesus was doing and saying, when He took the loaf and the cup and afterwards when He prepared the disciples to have part with Him. By such a reflection we can help our thoughts and our hearts to realise the presence of the Lord Jesus, for He has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst".

My second hint is this, that it is a good thing to make a purpose in your heart to follow very closely the hymns and the prayers and the bible readings; seek in prayerful response to grasp the connection between them, the progress, the line along which the Spirit of God is leading His people in their thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ and in their thoughts of the Father.

A CONTEMPLATION OF THE CROSS ————— F. W. BOYD

HOW little of significance can be said of this subject of all subjects ! We read with wonder the short statement of Peter, so full of pathos and horror when he says he was “a witness of the sufferings of the Christ”. When Simeon took the infant Saviour in his arms, he said to Mary his mother what must have been a great enigma to her at the time “A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also **that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed**”. It is an enigma no longer for the thoughts of all who look at the cross are affected either for or against our Lord.

In the light of this do our hearts react as that of Mary of Bethany ? Sitting at His feet and hearing His word and knowing His love, we find her intelligent concerning that event of events which was to take place. Only eight days before that last Passover, at the feast intended to celebrate the return of her brother Lazarus from the tomb, each was taking his meal. Not so Mary. Her Lord is going His way to Calvary : the way He must go to do the Father’s will, the way He must go to fulfil His destiny as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Mary takes the alabaster box of ointment—breaks it and tenderly anoints the feet of Jesus. Further she bows herself and wipes them with her hair. Her Lord knew the reason why, although none of the disciples were discerning enough. “Against the day of my burying hath she done this”, He said. In the intelligence of this truth there is no mention of her going to the sepulchre.

In contrast to this we see the reaction of the disciples. At the crucifixion cowardice gripped their hearts. They “all forsook Him and fled”. Are we better than they ? The writer at least finds this consideration very searching and humiliating. The prophetic word to Mary we find applies to **us** also. Let us not forget that there was one who hung himself in the potter’s field. He also was one of the twelve.

However, there were others at the Cross—those who “sitting down watched Him there”. From the religious leaders, the multitudes, the soldiers and even the two thieves crucified with Him, what was their reaction ? Mockery for a dying man, temptation to leave the Cross, spitting, and reviling for God’s Lamb—the Saviour. Pity ? There was none to pity, but there were vinegar and gall, vile, venomous hatred and finally a spear thrust. Why were so many there on that busy day before the Passover ? For them even the Cross contained an **entertainment value**. But this was no ordinary crucifixion. “About the sixth hour there was a . . . darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour . . . and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit ; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost. Now when the centurian saw what was done he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man”. The crowd also could no longer remain indifferent, “And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned”. (Luke 23 : 44-48)

We cannot hope to understand the mind of God himself, nor can we fathom the person and mind of Christ, especially knowing that as God the Son He knew all things. Not only was His the foreknowledge of God but His also the councils and the plan of redemption. He became man nonetheless—suffered, wept and committed all things into the hands of His Father.

So as a child on earth He says “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” and prophetically in the Psalms “Lo I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will O my God.”

In one single chapter in Luke we have the Lord Himself warning His disciples at least four times about the Cross, even to some of the details. (ch. 9 vv. 22, 31, 44, 51). Peter declares the God-given title of “The Christ of God”, but there is no escape for Him. Suffering and glory are connected with this Name. In another place Jesus instructs some of His own regarding the implication of this title when He says “ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”. This leads to another title, that of the Son of Man. The title is connected with His death for He became man in order to die. It is also with the purpose of having the Age to Come put in subjection to Him. But here, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain and be raised the third day.”

Again at the transfiguration—that preview of the Kingdom, evidenced here by the glory of the resurrection—Moses was there out of Death; Elijah was there who had ascended in the chariot of fire; Christ was there in Glory, but note, the subject of their conversation was the Cross which is the only basis of this victory over death. It could not just happen by chance. Death is no casual visitor, but a reality, a power that affects every man. It is called the last enemy but will eventually be destroyed, thank God. Here, however, is the One who would taste death for every man; so they “spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem”.

When the disciples also wondered at the mighty power of God in setting aside the dark powers of evil the Lord again directs them to the foundation of the matter, the means by which God would work. This is the basis of God’s power. “Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men”. “And it came to pass when the time was come that He should be received up (i.e. to heaven), He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”.

Following the account of the feeding of the five thousand in John 6 our Lord speaks of the far-reaching effects of His death. The whole passage speaks of the importance of each individual eating and drinking the body and the blood of the Son of Man if he is to come into life. This has the deepest significance and whilst this eating is not meant in a literal, physical way, it can only refer to death. Life for him who eats, death for the Son of Man. What a contemplation for Him who spoke these words! Again “I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”. The statements in Luke **foretold His death** but those in John **committed Him**

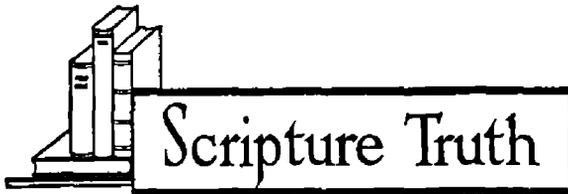
to His death. Is this supreme offering the full extent of His sorrow? Is it welcomed? Is it even received? In addition "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. How sad! Do we wonder Jesus said "Will ye also go away"?

All His works were to bless and bring life to dying men. He would protect His sheep from all harm, from the power of the wolf, that is, Satan, with His own life as well as giving them life. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." and "I lay down my life for the sheep". Again the Lord had to contemplate the Cross. And He would not abide alone, cost what it might. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit". The hour had come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Gethsemane—who can contemplate His anguish here? Even the disciples were a stone's throw away and to their shame they slept. But Christ kneels down and He prays. "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. . . and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground". This cup cannot be removed, it is the wrath of God against sin. He is committed to it. His very coming into the world was for this. He must accept and drink its bitter contents. The betrayer is at hand and Jesus goes alone to His cross.

We have been taking a brief look at moments in the Lord's life on earth when He considered its sorrowful termination at the cross, and some of its far-reaching effects. It was always before Him. Before closing this short paper I should like to look at the other side of the matter for there is another side, the victorious one. I refer to the upper room. When instituting the Supper the Lord presented two separate elements—the loaf speaking of His body—that in which He was to suffer, and the cup speaking not only of the shed blood, but also of the blessing brought in by it, "this cup is the New Covenant in My blood. . . shed for many". The loaf and the cup are separate, the blood shed is separated from the body. The suffering has been borne but it is now looked at as finished. Death has taken place. The work of redemption is accomplished and God can bless as God, righteously. At the contemplation of the havoc wrought by the death of Lazarus, Jesus wept. Here He contemplates His own death and wonder of wonders, He gives **thanks**. Again in scripture Jesus is presented prophetically as the Man of Sorrows. Here is the only time on earth when we read of His singing, and at what a time! And at what a prospect! "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives"—yes, to the betrayer and the Cross. What submission to the Father's will, what moral supremacy, what certainty, what victory!

Another marvel is that He is not singing here in solitude but His own have the privilege of uniting with Him. Perhaps we ourselves are not always close enough to Him to be intelligently responsive to His leading. May we have grace to be so.



MAY/JUNE, 1975.

YOUTH AT ST. ANDREWS: 1974

8. OUTREACH: A TESTIMONY

DOUGLAS HENDERSON

(Douglas Henderson and his wife Elizabeth are young missionaries in Zaire with their three young children. The first part of his address gave an account of the present condition of their work, and then he proceeded to tell how he was called to it.)

NOW I would like to pass on to the question of how people like myself and Rod become involved in a job like this, because not so many years ago I would have laughed at the idea that I would end up in this sort of work. It started years ago, as a younger Christian, when I was troubled by many of the problems we have been dealing with in this conference. I was desperate for reality in the Christian life. That is to say I was sure that I was saved but it became clear to me when I read the New Testament that it was talking about something that I did not have, and when I looked around at other people and tried to get help, I did not find too much understanding. I was bothered by the question about knowing the Lord Jesus. We all know what that word means in ordinary life, but when I tried to apply it to knowing the Lord and someone asked what it means, I could not answer. I had no experience corresponding to Scriptures such as we find at the beginning of 2 Peter: "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (1:3) are found through the knowledge of Him Who hath called us. I was bothered by the examples from the Old Testament. Look at Moses, a friend of God; he spoke with Him face to face. He was under the old covenant, and we are under the new—a new and living way. Does our experience of God even come up to his? These were the things that disturbed me greatly. I just felt that I was saved—I knew that much—and that was the end of it. There was nothing—no joy in it, nothing like that. I just got to the stage when I realised that either this thing had to be given up, or I must find whether there **was** something more in it. I was at a stage like that. I was sure enough of my conversion, to rest at that point, and to consider pushing on. What finally caught my attention was John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him". I thought to myself, well **here's** something! Now, of course, this verse is in a set of three, with promises of the presence of the Holy Spirit Who comes from the Father, and admittedly there is a sense in which these things are true of any Christian, but there

is a term a speaker used this morning, and I remember the reaction I used to have it. He said, "Well, it is in the Spirit". Now, if someone said that to me when I was at this stage, it was as though someone stuck a pin in me, and I went down again ; because when that was said, I thought it meant that there was no reason to look for any reality, any experience. I felt this was a way of explaining things away. Now, in actual fact, if something is true in the Spirit, then that is a reason to expect experience.

So, I had this promise, this verse particularly, and the question is, where do you start with such a thing ? We face up to the fact that we are called to obey. Where do we begin ? We were reading this morning Philippians 3 : 16 and it really tells us there to begin where we are. Turn to it : "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule". In other words, encouraging us to press on to the goal, Paul said, "as many as be perfect . . . God shall reveal even this unto you" (verse 15) "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (verse 16). We are told to obey where we are. That is the beginning. Now for everyone, this is going to be quite a different path. If you commit yourself to this, the Holy Spirit is going to begin drawing your attention to things that must be put in order ; simple things like the challenge of giving, acknowledging your faults, bringing the ordinary problems of life to God in prayer. You may think that is very dull and ordinary, but you know He loves us, and He wants us to draw near to Him in everyday things. He has numbered the very hairs of your head. Just think of His interest and His love. It is not the sort of thing we are capable of doing ourselves, but this is presented as an example of the interest of God in you. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you". And as far as I have been able to apply this thing, it has brought reality, the thing I was looking for.

The call to Zaire was just another one of those things the Holy Spirit drew my attention to, so you might know that I went because I was faced again with a choice, as we are faced with a choice in Philippians. Paul was talking about suffering the loss of all things, and counting them filth that he might gain Christ. To me, there is a choice in that. You either face this loss or you don't gain Christ, in a certain way. We are not talking now about being saved. We are talking about Christian experience. We are talking about a living relationship with a living God. In Zaire I am glad to say that we have had confirmation of this. We have been able to see things happening that enable me to testify to the presence of a living God, the living God because He does things.

I am going to finish with some points from 1 Corinthians 1 : 30 "For of him are ye . . . redemption : That, according as it is written, he that boasts let him boast in the Lord". We know the Lord Jesus, and we trust Him for salvation, but how many of us have really found in our own experience that He has been made to us wisdom, righteousness, holiness (that is the practical expression of it according to the note in the New Translation). This is not holiness in theory, but it is in practice. Now, of course, these things are ours as Christians. You can rest there if you wish. You can say, "That's it". But what we have been called to is to experience the help of the Lord Jesus in these things. And the point I am trying to make is that if you young people will not commit your-

selves fully, you are not going to experience this. I am not denying that you are Christians, but you are going to suffer loss.

There is an extreme case given in 1 Corinthians 3, where it talks about one's work, and the day the fire will test the work, and we have this man who has mis-spent his whole life and suffers loss. He is plucked out as a brand from the burning, because he is the Lord's own. He is a saved man, but he has mis-used his life; has been misdirected. I am thinking specially of young people, because you are still at the stage when you struggle with things. As we get older, and I am aware of the process beginning already, there is a danger of settling down. Things become formed in your mind, and what you have got you settle for. But you are at the time now that you must not let go your high hopes of Christianity. You sense there is something real there. You feel there is something there that you are not experiencing. If you feel like that, you stick with it, because you are right.

And this is, to sum up, the sort of thing that has pushed me into this work, in obedience. Don't think we do not have any problems. It is the beginning of the fight when you move on in this way, but they are the problems of living, not the problems of death. They are the problems of life, and outreach is natural after this. If you have something real in your heart, if you know, have experience of the presence of the Lord Jesus Who loves you, you start talking about it. And this sort of thing leads naturally to outreach, which is the title of our talk tonight.

9. OUTREACH: A CHALLENGE ————— RODERICK HARBOTTLE

(Rod. Harbottle has been serving the Lord in Turkey, and having been expelled from that land, is now working among Turkish "guest workers" in Germany. What follows is an extract from his address, which also includes a vigorous call for recruits for the Lord's service abroad).

Jesus said to the disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matthew 28 : 18, 19).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16 : 15).

OUR subject tonight is the outreach of the gospel. It is absolutely essential that every Christian and every Christian company in this world should be 100% actively involved in "the gospel enterprise". We are all in it together, and really there are only two alternatives, either we reach out or we die out. Mention has been made of the complaint that this is a day of small things. It is a day of small things, if we make it so. Our small minds, thinking small things, make for eventual small things, small meetings that die out. That is the situation unless we reach out. And not reaching out, as we have seen here, is disobedience to the very specific command of our Lord, one of the last commands that He gave before He left this earth to go to the glory. So it is, "reach out, or die out". Or, as someone else has said, "evangelise, or fossilize". And when the Lord Jesus said, "Go", He means you, whether you are 60 or

16. The Lord Jesus desired that when you respond to Him you not only remember Him in His death, but you remember also the activity that He came to earth to do. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. And if we sit around and do not seek and save those people around us who are lost, then we are disobeying our Lord. I believe we are going to need to see a revolution in outreach in our meetings, otherwise our meetings will eventually die out. I am very stirred in my heart about this, and I know that the brothers who invited us to share in this difficult topic are concerned too that the Lord would stir up our hearts to see that there is something lacking in our Christian experience. And some of the "reality" is going out, leaning on Him, finding His strength, as we go on doing the things that we do not really like to do or want to do. But when we go out and find Him supporting us, it suddenly becomes a pure joy to tell the Saviour out to others who do not know Him. The Lord Jesus, in the chapter which is filled with the subject of outreach, John chapter 4 says, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (verses 32 and 34). Yes, the whole work of outreach that the Lord Jesus was involved in, includes seeking worshippers for the Father. Outreach is not just the gospel, it is bringing people into the wonderful place of privilege which the Brethren are so active in expounding, opening the Scriptures out to us concerning the tremendous privilege of knowing the Father. But unless we go out and bring people in, how will they get to know the Father? And if we just sit around and enjoy it for ourselves, is that not selfish? Is that not seeking our own things instead of the things of others?

I would like to suggest one or two things that we might consider doing in the work of outreach. They are not exhaustive. You can think of many other things that you could do in your area. But I would like to say again, so often it is left to the young people, or to individuals in our meetings to be involved in this outreach. There is not a serious getting together of the elder brethren and the younger ones, praying, asking the Lord to lead them definitely, into a big outreach that really hits the town where you live, for the Lord Jesus.

That brings me to another point which is very much on my heart concerning this, and that is that too often we expect people to come, to come to that wonderful preaching of the gospel on Sunday night at 6-30 and we sit around and wait for them to come. Perhaps we go and invite them, but I would say that there is no longer a tradition of going and sitting listening to a lecture, especially one about Christianity. But if we go to their homes and visit them there with a gospel magazine and speak with them about the Lord, prayerfully, seeking His strength, it will be found that those people who never come to the gospel meeting, will perhaps invite you in and start a conversation which may eventually lead to a tremendous opportunity to tell them about a living Saviour. And once you have gone round your area near your home or near your meeting, you might find some who will not come to your gospel meeting, but will come to your home for coffee, and perhaps eventually you can easily start a Bible study in your home. God has really blessed this in some countries—Bible studies in the home.

You know we are shamed by some of these pernicious sects who propogate their views so widely. You know how they do it? They never invite people to their halls. What they do is to go to the people where they are in their homes. Of course, when they have got them, then they take them to their halls. The Lord Jesus told us to go to where the people are, not to expect them to come to us. Paul said in Acts 20 : 20. "I . . . have taught you publicly, and from house to house". The apostles were engaged in this kind of way, going from house to house, finding the people where they were and seeking to win them for God. There is much to be done in this land of England, and I pray the Lord will stir up the hearts of those who are here to go back to their meetings and get on their knees and ask the Lord to show them how they should be more actively engaged in reaching out for the Lord Jesus Christ as a response to that wonderful love of His. Is it not worth the sacrifice of our time and energy for His glory? And then we will come into something of the "reality". We will find that doing this work is food for our souls, just as Jesus found it. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4 : 32, 34).

Or, you can give out tracts. That was one of the things I found hardest to do, to go into a street and give out tracts. When I surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, that was the first thing I did. It was the hardest thing for me to do, and I went and did it. I think that was what brought "reality" to me, not only committing yourself in a theoretical way, but going and doing something about it.

And when you give out tracts, let me suggest that you do not just have a publisher's name appended, but you add something saying, "If this little message has meant something to you, please write to this address. We would love to correspond with you and send you a free copy of the Gospel of John, and other helpful literature". Then you will find the people who are interested. I often think that people who give out tracts with no such invitation on them, are like a fisherman going to the sea and throwing hooks in, but the hooks are not attached to a line. They will never pull in any fish! However many fish get on the hooks, they never pull any in. That is the same with tracts. If we do not have any means of after-communication or follow-up, we will never see the fish we have caught.

We began with the Scripture, "Go and make disciples", and it was addressed to disciples. May I suggest that we cannot make disciples unless we are disciples ourselves. It was that which turned my life upside down. The challenge of New Testament discipleship is largely forgotten in our soft Western, modern Christianity. It is found very vividly in Luke 14 : 25/27, "And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple". These verses knocked me on the floor; and I pray that they may knock you on the floor. They are very hard sayings. If our love for the Lord Jesus Christ is not greater than the greatest love in our lives, then we cannot be His disciples. We are not willing to be identified with Him, in all the

scorn that comes to His name. We are not willing to end our ambitions, take up our cross, and go another way, the way that leads to death as far as this world is concerned, and may even lead to martyrdom. If we are not willing to take some active steps along that road with that cross on our backs, we cannot be His disciples. It says, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14 : 33). It means that all those beautiful things that we possess, or at least, that we are stewards for, if we do not give them all to Him, we cannot be His disciples. I am glad the Lord Jesus Christ makes this absolute demand upon us. It shows to me again the wonder of His dying love, because He gave everything He had for us. Let us pray that everyone of us may face up to this challenge to be disciples, to make a decision that everything we own, everything we are belongs to Him, and that we will fall at His feet, and take His directions as to how He wants us to use our lives as His disciples.

THE HAND OF THE OFFERER --- JOHN BARNES.

THERE is an act of identification included in the ceremonial of each of the four main offerings of Leviticus which entails the use of the offerer's hand.

1 : 4. "He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering."

2 : 2 "He shall take thereof his handful of the flour thereof."

3 : 2 "He shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering."

4 : 4 "He shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head."

These four sacrifices represent the whole range of offerings referred to in Psalm 40 and cited in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 10. They seem to be the four foundation stones on which the entire sacrificial system of Leviticus is reared. Since each of the offerings sets forth a different view of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is probable that the act of identification has reference, in each instance, to a different aspect of His work.

1. **The Burnt Offering.** It is well understood that the prominent thought in the burnt offering relates to that aspect of the death of the Lord Jesus in which He is represented as offering Himself without spot to God, a holy Sacrifice of a sweet savour to Him. The fragrance of this sacrifice is thought of as ascending to God, a special verb being used, in this connection, which emphasizes the idea of ascending and brings the thought of fragrance into prominence. When, therefore, the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the burnt offering it was an act of identification with the value of the offering in the way of **Acceptance**. This thought occurs in the explanatory details of the chapter. "For his acceptance before Jehovah." v. 3. "It shall be accepted for him," v. 4. N. Tr. The sacrifice itself, being offered unblemished, is considered to be acceptable to Jehovah. The offerer links himself with it in its acceptability and is so viewed as brought into acceptance. Carried over into New Testament terms, the believer is "Accepted in the Beloved." That

the Beloved Himself meets with the unqualified approval of the Father is beyond question. The believer, in faith leans on such an Offering and is received before the Father according to all its infinite value. None but the Son of His love could offer Himself acceptably to God, and in the Lord's death there was that feature of His work which rose to the throne as a precious fragrance. The obedience of the Son, even unto death, was an odour of a sweet smell to the Father. That we should be brought into favour in such a Person is a privilege beyond price.

No believer would question the infinite preciousness of the Lord's offering of Himself, without spot, to God. While our eyes see only beauty, only purity, only devotedness in the Saviour in the hour of His death, what must the Father have seen there as His eye, which sees **all**, scrutinized each detail of the perfection of His Person and work in the varied aspects presented! The offering was flayed and divided into its pieces, with the inwards and legs, a fact which has suggested to generations of students of the types the unfolding of the inward thoughts and motives, as well as the springs of walk, and every blessed feature of character of the Holy Sufferer. These are valued by the offerer according to the measure of his understanding, but what must have been the Father's own evaluation of that holy Offering? This, then, is the measure of the Christian's acceptance, and by laying his hand upon Christ in this way he stands in the consciousness of that favour before God.

It is wonderful that the apostle says that we are accepted in the "Beloved." This is much more than a legal acceptance, however greatly we should value such a standing as before God; it is an acceptance in the fulness of affection, a place in the heart of the Father in accordance with His own appreciation of the Son of His love.

2. **The Meat Offering.** It is believed that this second of the sacrifices is better called the "meal offering," the English word "meat" having a more particular meaning in modern English than formerly. This sacrifice has long been considered to depict, in a typical way, the wonderful Manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, lived out in humility on earth. His life was despised by men but was valued at its true worth by the Father. At His baptism in the river Jordan, the Father was pleased to make known His approval of the Son and He proclaimed it from an opened heaven. Again, in the holy mount, the Father reiterated His pleasure, His deep and full delight in His beloved Son.

It is marvellous that the privilege of sharing that pleasure should be permitted to the saints. This concept seems to be enfolded in our second reference; "He shall take out his handful . . ." In this case the act of identification seems to be suggestive of the believer's **Appreciation** of what is so valued by the Father. Spoken of in Proverbs 8 under the figure of "Wisdom," we read that He was daily the delight of God, and His delights were with the sons of men. It is the immeasurable joy of the believer to find his delight in the One who brought and who brings such pleasure to the heart of the Father. This is to be taken up by each one for himself; "HIS handful." This is suggestive of a real, personal appreciation of the Lord Jesus in the grace and beauty of His Person as Man. We are to enter appreciatively, for ourselves, into the perfections of our Lord and learn to value for ourselves what is set before the Father

for His pleasure.

The text reads, "His **handful** . . ." Not a mere pinch or a grain or two, but a handful. There is not only infinite worth to be seen there but infinite supply. There is no need for believers to be satisfied with a poor appreciation of Christ. What riches are available for our apprehension. The feel of that fine flour in the hand would enable the offerer to have some sense of its texture, of its fineness and smoothness.

May I also make a little suggestion. A handful of flour was supposed to be enough to sustain a man for a day. The thought of the priests partaking of this offering is an important part of this teaching. This appreciation is to be renewed daily. We cannot **live** on food we enjoyed a year ago ; we need fresh supplies to sustain us, and Christ is the Bread of life for us.

John, in his first epistle, remembers how he and the other apostles were privileged to "handle" the Lord Jesus. He told them, Himself, after His resurrection ; "Handle Me . . ." We must confess that such actual physical handling is out of our reach, but the change in the Lord's condition and position is firmly established for us in the Word. Mary, in the ardent affection of her nature would have embraced those blessed feet but the Lord Jesus warned her off ; "Touch Me not for I am not yet ascended to My Father." She was to learn that she could no longer touch Him in the old way but would be able to do so in a new way. "I am not **yet** ascended." The hint, surely, is that when He was ascended she would be able to touch Him in a new and spiritual way ; a way which is open to us. So we can take out our handful in true, spiritual appreciation of the adorable Person of the Lord and lay hold on this preciousness for ourselves.

3. **The Peace Offering.** This third of the main sacrifices, while called a peace offering is frequently referred to as the "communion offering," since it brings to mind the thought of the great system of fellowship into which the death of Christ has introduced us. Perhaps we could use the word **Association** to describe the meaning of this sacrifice. Every one who partakes of the altar of a pagan deity is considered to be in association with the altar of that particular god and so in fellowship with the other worshippers of that god. In 1 Corinthians 10 this matter is referred to concisely but quite fully. The pagan, Hebrew and Christian circles of fellowship are clearly seen. So, the Hebrew offerer is thought of as in communion with the altar as he offers and in partnership with the others as he eats of the sacrifices. In this chapter the expression, "the food of the offering" is used, and has attracted the attention of countless students. It has been concluded that it is God's food which is referred to and if we consider the texts we shall agree. Leviticus 3 : 11 and 16 both refer to that which is offered on the altar of burnt offering, which, therefore, ascends to God as a sweet savour. But parts of the peace offering were also food for the priestly company and for the offerer and his family. This suggests a very blessed communion indeed. The hymn writer puts it in these words : "Called to share the Father's pleasure in His well beloved Son." In that circle what wonders of fellowship abound ! The Father and the saints are there in happy fellowship. It may sound irreverent to speak of the Father and the brethren having a common appreciation of the Lord Jesus. No doubt there is a universe of difference between the levels

of that appreciation, His and theirs, but the Object of it is the same holy, blessed Person ; for the Father, the Son of His love ; for the saints, their Lord and Saviour.

Although Paul uses the Hebrew circle of fellowship as an illustration, as we have seen, he also points out that the Christian fellowship is distinct. (Hebrews 13 : 10) Those who cling to the system of shadows and reject the substantial realities brought to light in Christ have no part in this association which centres in Him. But every simple believer is so privileged and so called. "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Corinthians 1 : 9. In laying on the hand in this way the believer comes into association with all others who value the exalted Lord and so enjoys, in company with the saints, the things he has laid hold of for himself, individually.

4. **The Sin Offerings.** Finally we may dwell a little on what it means to us to "lay our hand" on the sin offerings. We can think of these together under the one heading, for, although there are important differences between the sin and trespass offerings they appear to be grouped under the expression "Offerings for sin." Hebrews 10 : 6 Here again the offerer is viewed as laying his hand upon the head of the animal he presents as an offering. In this case it is not a matter of the acceptability of the offering being reckoned to him but the substitution of the victim for the sinner. Perhaps we could think of Isaiah's words ; "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Peter, also, says so beautifully, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," and again, "By whose stripes ye were healed." The sinner could not bear his own sins. Such a load would sink him into hell for a lost eternity. But as he, in faith, accepts the sinless Substitute as His Saviour, he may be thought of as consciously laying his grateful hand on the blessed, accepted Sacrifice, and of seeing the transfer of guilt from himself to his sinless Substitute. The sin offerings were for **Atonement**. This conception is limited in the Old Testament by reason of the limitations of the Levitical system, but looked at as reaching its fulfilment in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, what blessing is seen to flow to the believers. The death of His Son has brought us into reconciliation with God. It was for us as enemies that this great work was done and so, as believers, we pass out of the camp of the enemy into the circle where the Beloved is the Centre. May the Lord help us to value more and more the privileges of Acceptance, Appreciation, Association and Atonement, all secured for us and centred for us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From "Saint Paul" by F. W. H. Myers

Yet not in solitude if Christ anear me
 Maketh Him workers for the great employ,
 Oh not in solitude, if souls that here me
 Catch from my joyaunce the surprise of joy.

FREE-FLOWING PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE ——— **COLIN CURRY****1. "A READY WRITER"**

(Psalm 45)

The Background

PSALM 45 is the turning-point within a connected series of psalms, commencing with Psalm 42. The dominant note in the preceding psalms is one of **despondency**. The faith of a godly man is severely tested, and is battling hard to survive. What comes later, in Psalms 46 to 48, has the marks of **great relief**, and thankful rejoicing in God.

In these later psalms God has proved Himself to be a mighty refuge (46 : 1, 11 ; 48 : 3). His intervention in times of great distress has been seen. His handling of adverse powers has been witnessed. Though a vast upheaval has taken place, His citadel remains unshaken. Security under His overshadowing care is a known reality. Psalm 47 is a celebration of victory ; rejoicings and applause suited to a great coronation day are heard. The King over the whole earth ascends His throne and takes up His rule. In Psalm 48 that rule is in progress ; God's kingdom is well established ; its benefits are felt. God is known in His handiwork. His grace and lovingkindness are to be admired in what they have achieved, now openly in view. His praise is called forth from the ends of the earth.

Before the turning point, however, none of these things are in evidence. These earlier psalms are full of deeply-felt questions. "**When** will relief ever come ?" "**Where** is God ?" "**Why** go I mourning ?" "**Why** art thou cast down, O my soul ?" "**Wherefore** hidest thou thy face ?" One spokesman voices what others like him also feel. Godly souls are in desperate straits. They are vulnerable to depression, and reproach too. They cry out in anguish. Wave after wave of despondency sweeps over the speaker. His resolute hope in God is fighting hard though all appearances are against it. He feels bereft and forgotten, and yet his faith rebuts the notion. All around is a barren landscape, and within him a deep thirst for the living God. He is cast down, disquieted, heavy-hearted, and at times unnerved. He feels cast out, too. On the face of it there seems a total loss of everything he had valued. He can remember former, much happier, experiences ; going with the throng to the house of God. His predecessors have told him of still earlier times, when God's power was demonstrated in wonderful ways. But now all is different. There is an almost overwhelming sense of drought within his soul, of bewilderment, darkness, and insecurity. He cries out for light and truth to lead him.

Set against this background Psalm 45 shines like a gem. It shows a total change of tone. It is the key to the relief and the response to God which follows. When the eye is lifted to Christ, and the heart is engaged there, how quickly the burden eases and the hopelessness departs !

The prophetic aspects of these psalms are real, and need to be given prominence. Perhaps the period of severest tribulation, through which the faithful of post-Christian times will pass, is principally in mind. These earlier psalms give some indication of the anguish of soul they will experience. Out of it all will come deliverance in due time ; God will

intervene to reverse all their losses and destroy their adversaries. But the sight of their Deliverer will be the most heartening experience of all, turning their darkness into light, and freeing their tongues in appreciation of Himself. This may well be the primary interpretation of the psalm. Nevertheless it surely has teaching for us. Occupation with the One to Whom this psalm directs us can bring into our own experience a great sense of release and joyful gratitude. This, moreover, is possible even when we are subject to pressures to which we are rightly sensitive, and which cannot leave us unaffected.

The Theme

The central theme of Psalm 45 is a person. The main section of the psalm, focussing on that person, occupies verses 2 to 8; subsidiary persons come into view in verses 9 to 17, and we shall not discuss these later verses. But the effect of the main theme on the one who is occupied with it is described in the opening verse. After dwelling on the principal part of the psalm we shall return to comment on verse 1. Later still we shall indicate some of the lessons for ourselves.

Hebrews 1 quotes verses 6 and 7 and firmly identifies the Person Who is at the heart of this psalm. We are told that only One Person (the Son) ever had this statement made about Him. It could not be used of others, not even of an angel. Verse 6 makes clear that this Person is no less than God Himself; and the eternity of His being is equally clear (in this and in other verses). On reflection, however, it is apparent that **all** the surrounding verses are uniquely true of Christ. Verse 2, for instance, contains words which can only soberly be used of Himself. It is straightforward inspired description of His personal excellences, perfectly expressed and wonderfully concise. Again, verse 8 (taken at slightly more than literal level) bespeaks graces and fragrances which surround His name alone. There are **some** comparative statements in these verses, setting Him alongside others. But He stands out, above and apart from them in certain unique senses; "**fairer** than the children of men", "**anointed** with the oil of gladness **above** thy fellows".

In a wonderful way, then, the psalm puts together expressions of the excellences and the glories of Christ. His diety, His supremacy and majesty, His eternity; yet also His personal excellence, His moral stature, displayed in His humanity. There are those He has associated with Himself, by supreme condescension and unbelievable grace. But He is pre-eminent in every sense, above them, amongst them, and in their regard. There are hints (no more than that) of sorrows which have contributed to the fragrance, and added to the blessedness, of the glories now being rehearsed. Some of His official splendours are plainly also being surveyed and appreciated. The throne and the sceptre are His. Righteousness, and abhorrence of iniquity, are the marks of His character and His rule. Truth and meekness and righteousness underlie the prosperity of all that He introduces. Judgment of adversaries is also entirely in His hands. Sharp arrows and sword are put to terrible use; though always in a just way and against those who deserve it well.

Before launching into his subject-matter the psalmist has a single introductory verse. It is the only verse which mentions himself at all. In contrast to the preceding psalms the writer is not in any way occupied with himself. He speaks of the way his theme affects him deeply, filling

his attention and commanding his responses. He finds that he has words which clamour to be expressed. The words come fluently ; yet they are also words of his own making, composed and put together from his considered personal appreciation of the graces and majesty of Christ. Such a magnificent theme impels him into warm and zealous response. His spiritual instincts are deeply stirred ; arising as they do from the true Source of all such motions. He finds that the "good matter" he has gained, in heart-attachment to Christ, **must** be formulated and voiced without restraint. He fulfils this urge in the ensuing verses. These opening sentences are fully confirmed in the substance and quality of the words which follow.

The Lessons

As we consider the spirit of the psalm-writer, thinking of it in the context of the earlier psalms, it seems right to draw one or two lessons. There are also a few questions which we must inevitably face.

First, those earlier psalms show plainly that the bible knows all about deep spiritual feelings, often felt yet often unspoken by the people of God. It expects neither insensitivity nor stoicism from us. It knows about our inward solitary feelings, our burdens, our despondencies, the sense of being overwhelmed and confused by the pressures which may beset us. It makes allowances for our anxieties, surrounded in life by mounting evils and excesses, where no true sympathy nor sustenance for the soul can be found. We are not expected to be blind to distressing and unwelcome things (things to be recognised in the Christian circle as well as elsewhere) ; the shortcomings, the weakness of faith, the capability of disloyalty, quite as possible within ourselves as with others. It is aware of our desires that God should show Himself more openly ; of the difficulties we have to face, often with long patience. It knows about our tendencies to reminisce, to hark back to happier days, to live in the past and to be short of substance to live on today ; about the way we cling to reports of great movements in the past, centuries and millennia ago. It treats none of these things as blameworthy ; it has a great sympathy for those under stress.

But secondly, the bible expects us to be balanced in our spiritual outlook, and to get our emphasis right. Other kinds of feelings than those we have outlined above are possible, and right too, today. It is advisable not to live in the past too much, nor in the unhappy present, but rather in the other (brighter) present where Christ is admired and drawn on, and where a great sense of liberty and joy is known. In **that** area of life there is real substance to feed on and to disseminate. Living there, the hopeful prospects, the victorious and sure future (His future, and ours too through His goodness), will dominate our vision. We shall have less time for looking back or looking down.

Finally we may ask ourselves how well or how poorly we match the psalmist as he speaks about Christ with such warmth out of a full heart. Is our Christianity formal or living ? How much does our faith set us on fire ? Are we slow in response and dead-pan in manner, when we purport to be engaged with Himself or in His interests ? Or is there a vigour about our demeanour, prompted by a real link with Himself ? Do we find ourselves impelled by what we know of Himself to formulate

our own personal appreciation and to express it in an individual way, in His praise and in His testimony? Are we busy and constructively active, like the psalmist, because we are more than superficially involved in the field of interest where Christ is supreme?

May we be able to face these questions; and may we live increasingly close to Him, so that responses worthy of Him may readily be made on our part.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

3. THE WORSHIP OF THE FATHER _____ J. T. MAWSON

IT is as the Father, name of infinite grace and love, that God desires to be worshipped, and as neither angels nor men knew Him in this way they could not worship Him. But the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, came to reveal Him in all the fulness of His love, and in Christ we see the Father seeking worshippers, not among angels, but among the sinful, unhappy sons of men.

Three great steps had to be taken by the Lord if God's end had to be reached, and it is interesting to see that these three steps were first revealed to women.

FIRST. **He must come into the world.**

SECOND. **He must go into death.**

THIRD. **He must ascend again to the Father.**

That the first of these great steps had been taken was revealed to the **woman of Sychar** (John iv.). What a need was hers! She was a woman with a sinful past, an empty heart, and a hopeless future; true picture of all who are outside the blessing that Christ has opened up. The Lord met her where she was and revealed Himself as the Giver of the living water, which should not only be in her a well of perennial satisfaction, but should spring up to its Source, the Father, and so yield satisfaction also to Him.

There had to be a probing work to fit her for this, as there must be with us all, and this work the Lord accomplished until He had brought her to the point where she confesses that Christ was her only hope. "I know" said she "that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when He is come He will tell us all things." The Lord's response, "I that speak unto thee, am He," changed her life, and sent her to witness to the men of the city that Christ had come. "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ." He searched the sinner and revealed Himself as the Saviour. So the men of the city say, "We have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed **the Christ, the Saviour of the world.**"

We become familiar with the great truths that are revealed to us in the Word, and consequently they often lose their greatness in our eyes, yet how wonderful it is that the Son of God should come into the world, and should come as the Saviour. Two things made this necessary, first, that God might be revealed, second, our need of salvation. It was God

who sent Him not to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. More than thirty times in the Gospel of John the Lord speaks of Himself as being sent into the world by the Father. He glories in it, and so shall we if we understand it. No angel could have fulfilled His mission. He only could make the Father known, and the Father sent Him to do this. The only begotten Son shone as the light in the darkness, He came near to men full of grace and truth, seeking for them in their misery, to take them out of it and lead them to His Father. David cried : "O send out Thy light and Thy truth : let them lead me Then will I go unto the altar of God, my exceeding joy : yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God." But David could never have imagined that God's light and truth would come forth in the person of God's Son, in order to lead multitudes to the Father Himself. But this has happened, and in it our souls do greatly rejoice.

But the revelation that He made of the Father would have been in vain, if He had taken no other steps than this. He must die. This was the second step. This fact was plain to MARY OF BETHANY. She alone of those who followed the Lord had perceived this. The disciples thought that they were following Him to the throne and kingdom, and to the outward senses it looked like it when multitudes of Jews followed Him because He had raised Lazarus from the dead. They were carried away by the temporary enthusiasm of the Jews which led them so far as to meet the Lord with loud hosannas. But Mary understood, and brought forth her alabaster box and poured its costly contents upon His feet. **For His burying she had kept it.** How long she had kept it we know not, but there it was to be brought out at the right moment. She honoured Him, owning His kingly glory by her act, but she knew that notwithstanding all that glory, He Himself was going into death. The relationship in which His own were to stand with Him before the Father could not be after the order of natural life, that life was forfeited by every sinner, none could abide in it except Christ who was sinless, and if He had chosen to live He must have lived alone, for "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." Even Lazarus, who was raised from the dead into the old natural life, must die again. If death were to be removed Christ must die ; if those who were under its power were to be delivered from it He must pass into the depths of it, for only by coming where we were could the Lord come into definite contact with us, and this He has done. His love to us, and His Father's will carried Him into death in His search for those whom He would bring forth out of death to be His brethren and worshippers of the Father.

But the third step had to be taken, He must go to the Father ; and for this He was constantly preparing His disciples from John 13 onwards.

We come now to our resurrection chapter, in which to **Mary Magdalene** was revealed the full and glorious truth. When she realized who He was she thought that the old relationship, that of an earthly Messiah in the midst of an earthly people, was to be resumed. Hence His words, "Touch Me not." He must ascend to His Father. The new relationship was to be a heavenly one.

Psalm xxii records for us the path of sorrow that the Lord trod in the fulfilment of the will of God and also of His triumph. And there we learn what was foremost in His mind ; for when heard from the horns of

the unicorns and brought out of death He exclaims, **“I will declare Thy Name amongst My brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto Thee.”** These very words of the Lord are quoted in Hebrews ii where we learn that the congregation in the midst of which He sings is the Church, and in the Church His brethren also are. The Church is the dwelling-place for God upon the earth to-day, in it He can rejoice ; those who form it “are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians ii, 22) ; and the brethren of Christ are the sons of men in whom He delights. So that at last He has His dwelling-place on the earth, and the sons of men in it.

But the Church is here only for a while, the brethren that form it are partakers of the heavenly calling, but in the fact that it is here, we see the triumph of Christ. Oh, that we understood it better. Consider that wonderful description that is ours—**“Holy Brethren.”** These two words are found in Psalm xxii. There, in giving the answer to His own question, **“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ”** the Lord says, **“But Thou art holy.”** This is the very nature of God, and this is the nature that is ours as those who are sanctified and one with the risen Christ, our Sanctifier ; and we are His brethren, those of whom He spoke when He said, **“I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren.”** Nature and relationship all according to God ! And this is His assembly, His Church, that which is of Himself. Where the Father’s name is known, where Christ triumphs in His own, and sings the praises of God. If God of old inhabited the praises of Israel, how much more will He dwell in this higher and perfect praise ! How blessedly habitable must that place be to Him in which His Well-beloved, raised up from the dead, sings in the company of His brethren.

CORRESPONDENCE

The **“Cheering Words”** Calendar and Mr. Bertram Adkins

Many readers of Scripture Truth are also readers of the **“Cheering Words”** Calendar. The loss sustained by the work connected with this Calendar by the passing of Mr. Adkins to be with the Lord (a sad moment for his friends, but joyful for himself), is the occasion of our receiving the letter which follows. Mr. Adkins was for several years the compiler of the Calendar :—

Soon after hearing of Mr. Adkins’ passing away, I read of the experience of Percy Mather, a C.I.M. worker, when travelling with George Hunter in Chinese Turkestan, near the Russian border. He wrote, **“We are camped by the River Mujuk on a high plateau in between two ranges of snow mountains. I have just been looking over our stores and find them very low. Not a bit of firewood, nor a piece of coal ! As far as sight is concerned, the outlook seems extremely poor. On June 27th, Mr. Hunter and I, together with a Mongol and a Turki boy, left Urumchi, hoping to travel to Kuldja by the mountain route, and work amongst Mongols and Kazaks by the way. When we reached one of the highest parts of the journey, our Mongol boy named Nimgir was taken ill with typhoid fever, and by the time we reached the river Mujuk he could go**

no further. We have now been held up several days, far away from any house, town or village. We passed the last house on June 29th. This district being high and cold is desolate at present, though we hear there are some Mongol tents twenty or more miles down the valley; but Nimgir is too weak to be moved, in fact he is in a very serious condition. We have used many medicines and much prayer, but his temperature still remains high.

"There has been very much rain in the mountains this year, and today, as I write, the clouds hang low, and a hailstorm is driving up the valley and rattling on our tent, and here we are, with a sick man badly in need of milk and our stores sadly depleted.

"I wonder what you friends are doing about it. Truly, as far as sight is concerned, there does not seem anything to encourage us.

"Yes, there is something, the Word of God! It seems more real and precious today and this morning the text at the head of this letter (2 Corinthians 5:7) appealed very strongly to me. We have also a "Cheering Words Calendar" hanging up in our tent, and the text for today is, 'Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?' (Luke 12:24)

"Truly these are cheering words, but since coming here we have not seen or heard a single raven

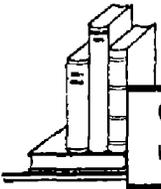
"July 17—Bright, cold, frosty morning. Ground covered with hailstones. Four ravens flying round our camp!

"July 18—"Cheering Words Calendar" text—Psalms 9:9, 10, 'The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek Thee'. . . .

"10 a.m. Whilst gathering fuel was surprised and delighted to see an English officer with two Indian servants approaching our tent. It was Col. Schonberg, formerly of the Indian army, who had seen our tent from a distance, and, leaving the road, had come along to inspect. . . . Shortly afterwards his caravan arrived with Turki and Indian servants. . . . In the course of the conversation the Colonel said; "Now to be practical, what can I give you in the way of stores?" We made a humble request, but he soon showed us that he could give us far more than we dare ask or imagine. . . .

"In the evening the Colonel invited us to dinner. A heavy wind was blowing, and the cook had great difficulty with the fire, but he made us a splendid dinner, which we thoroughly enjoyed, not having had any meat or vegetables for over a fortnight. . . .

"August 17—Arrived safely in Kuldja. Nimgir now regaining his usual health and strength. He owes much to the careful nursing of Mr. Hunter, who waited on him hand and foot. The long delay brought us into close touch with Mongols and Kazaks; gave us opportunity to preach the Gospel to many who had never heard it before, and who may never hear it again; **strengthened our faith in God, and in His Word**, and proved to us that God can prepare a table in the wilderness."



FISHERS OF MEN

JOHN FLETT

Mark 1 : 17

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" is the way the gospel of Mark begins, but we shall learn that it was to be carried on after He went back to heaven. Have we not neglected the gospel? Is there not a lack of power in our gospel preaching today? My purpose is not criticism, but that we might be stirred up afresh regarding this gospel.

The Training-ground

I venture to say that the gospel of Mark is the **training-ground** for the carrying on of that gospel that the Lord Jesus has committed to us. Are we in training today for the carrying of this gospel into the enemy's land, that souls might be saved, brought to know the Saviour, and our meetings built up and encouraged in the Lord? Are we in training? Young people, are you having this training? Sportsmen have to spend time in training or they are no use at all. If you and I are going to carry this gospel we are going to have to be in training. It cannot be committed to hands and hearts that are partly in this world, and partly in the next. That is living a life that is not in keeping with the gospel and the things of the Lord. My brethren, we cannot preach the gospel of God if we are half in the world and half in Christianity. It is no use preaching a gospel that says that Jesus Christ can satisfy if He is not satisfying you. There is something wrong. If you need the world to supplement your Christianity and your gospel, you will never make a preacher. Can He fill the heart so that we can manage without the world?

I want this verse to stand out, "Jesus said, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men". When He said to them "Come ye after me," etc., He spoke to them in a language which they understood. They knew when He spoke about fishing, that it meant real hardship, toil, disappointment, and sorrows. They knew that it meant all that. And when He called us to serve Him in this world, He called us in the language which would suit us. He did not call Paul that way. That would have been strange language to Paul. But when He called Paul, He said, "Stand before kings. . . for my name's sake". That suited a man of Paul's calibre. When He was raised from the dead, Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature", and when He said that, they were men that were trained and ready to take it on. Paul said, "We were allowed of God to be put in trust with the

gospel". The Person of the Christ, His work upon the cross, His resurrection and His glory, and His coming again, all that the gospel can do—can we be trusted to hold it, to preach it as He would have us to preach it, and not to be side-tracked into relying on the empty trends of our times? Are we prepared to take it as it is, this precious word, relying upon the Spirit of God only.

The Gospel Posseses Power

I said it was the training-ground and I am going to suggest some of the essentials in that training. The first lesson they learned that day was that there is power in the gospel (Mark 1 : 23-27). They went into the synagogue in Capernaum and there was a man with an unclean spirit, under the power of Satan, and the Lord Jesus dealt with that man, broke the power of Satan in his life and set him free, and the disciples learned that in the gospel there is power. We are so accustomed to hearing man speak about his power that we have forgotten that God says that there is power in His gospel. Remember how Paul stood on Mars Hill and we wish to stand with him, even if our knees tremble when we are standing. The modern church theologians would like to put it otherwise : "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it **was** the power of God unto salvation". It was all right for the Middle Ages, all right for the days of poverty, all right for the days when men did not know any better. But we do not need it today. It **was** the power of God. Do we believe it **is** the power of God unto salvation? It seems as though the gospel would never reach some men and women we can think of. They laugh. They talk. But I tell you again, there is power in the gospel. It can break the power of sin and can set the captive free. It is a far greater power than the atom, or the power in industry because it can change a man's life, a woman's life, turning them into new persons.

Power comes through Prayer

The second lesson they learned that day was the need for **prayer**. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (verse 35). Beloved, how much time do we spend praying for the souls of men and women? I like to think that when they found Him He was on His knees in the hills. It had an effect on those men. They got this lesson. Take up the book of Acts. Prayer, prayer, prayer, and prayer again, marks the book of Acts. They learned it well. Beloved, is that room packed out for the prayer meeting? If not, why not? Is not this the reason for the lack of power?

Do you rise early in the morning, young people? Is God the first person you speak to as you begin the day, when circumstances allow? This is the training-ground. How can we talk to people of the gospel if we do not know how to talk to God? The more a man talks and lives with God, the more he can talk to his fellow-men. We need to be oftener in the company of God than we are in the company of men. Someone has said, "Spend more time with God than you do before men". This is a searching word. You might say, "We can pray at home". You look

through the Scriptures. Individual prayer is important but see the power of collective prayer. There is power in the prayer meeting, when the saints are together. In the book of Acts, the place was shaken where they prayed. Everyone was filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Alas, how little we know of this !

The Master's Touch

The third thing that they learned that day was personal contact (vv 40-45). A leper comes to the Lord beseeching Him that He would heal him. Now the Lord Jesus could have said, "I will. Be thou clean", and the man would have been clean. But there was something more than that. He put forth His hand and He touched him. Personal contact, beloved ! This is an essential part of our training—personal contact. That man had not felt the touch of a human hand for years. How wonderful that the hand that he felt was the hand of the Master ! A church worker reports that he was down a dark alley one night and he stumbled over a man, lit a match to look at him, and saw that he was a poor tramp, filthy and shoeless. What did he do, run from him ? He got down beside him, snuggled up beside him as close as he could, put his hand in his bag and took out a pair of socks and put them on him. We need to get near men and women. You can do it. It is far greater work than pulpit work.

And the last thing they learned that day was (Mark 2 : 5), there was **pardon** for sins. Many people today, when they are preaching, are concerned about the body, that the body should be healed. When those men let down their friend into the presence of the Lord, their one thought was to get healing for the palsy ; but the Lord Jesus touched something far deeper than the palsy, the man's sins ! And what a lesson for the disciples that day ! They were not to be over-concerned with the body, for there was something deeper. Man has a need far greater than the body.

Before I depart from this, there is another deep lesson here (2 : 3-5). It took four men to carry that man to Christ. There is the need for **unity** in our service and in our gospel work today. Those men did not fall out about who was going to take the biggest part. Their one concern was to bring that man to Christ, because they knew that if they brought him he would get healed. We need to pull together in the work of the gospel. Let us drop our differences. Drop them, beloved, they are the tool of the enemy. If it is a fundamental difference, of course, you must stand your ground, but if it is not fundamental, drop it altogether. Give up nothing when it comes to the Person of Christ and His wonderful work on the cross. Face any difficulty, but stand for the truth. But beloved, when it is petty differences, little foxes that spoil the vines, drop them and bring men to Christ.

Give Him what you have

Now, some might say, "But I have not got a gift in any department at all". Have you not ? The story of the little boy who brought his five loaves and two fishes to Jesus is in Mark 6 and in all four gospels (John 6 : 9-11 ; Mark 6 : 41). Imagine that boy as he left home that day

to look for the Master. Put yourself into the land of Palestine. My eyes follow that boy from the moment he left home, and asked for food for the day, and his mother gave him five loaves and two fishes. He was going to see the great Teacher that day. He was in the vicinity. When he got there, there were 5,000 people there. He thought, "I'll never stand a chance; I'll never see Him". But he was not going to be stopped. He pushed his way through and eventually landed right at the front, in time to listen to the conversation that was going on: "200 pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them to eat". I like to think that that boy held up his bag and said, "You can have mine". But the disciples said, "Five loaves and two fishes! What are they among so many?" Put them into the hands of the Master, and 5,000 people are fed! Are you prepared tonight, young people, to put your five loaves and two fishes into the hands of the Master? He will feed many thousands.

I want to bring a word to Christian parents. A man of God, gone to heaven long ago, wrote these words, "Christian parents, what are we most concerned with, that our children should enter the University or enter the Kingdom of God, that they should pass examination after examination or grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Not that he thought lightly of education.

Bring the Children to Jesus

In Mark 10:13-16 we learn what to aim for in the children in our care. They brought the children to Jesus. Wise parents brought their children that He might touch them. Alas, today, there are not many wise parents in regard to the spiritual welfare of boys and girls in our country, and this applies in the work of the Sunday School. Have you a gift in that way? Give yourself wholly to it. Do not think it is a greater thing to stand on a platform or to address other Christians. Not at all. You are in the greatest field of evangelism in the world when in the Sunday School among the boys and girls. If your gift lies there again I say, give yourself wholly to it. Do not be side-tracked; work to bring the boys and girls on in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

In Mark 9:17-29, there is an anxious father who brings a son who is under the awful power of Satan. He brought him to the disciples and they could not do a thing. Was this part of the training-ground? Why did they not cast him out? They said, "Why could not we cast him out?" Here is a lesson for us in humility and dependence. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting", that is complete dependence on the power of God. Perhaps this lesson applies also to work amongst drug addicts and alcoholics. Is there no one amongst the young men and women who will devote themselves to the rescue of those that are captives to Satan and sin?

In chapter 9, there are also other very important lessons we can only mention. Will the Lord have to say to us when we get home with Him, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" (vv 33, 34). We shall be silent. How often it has been "Who should be the greatest?" Every tender conscience is smitten by this incident! Only a little later, another rebuke came home! The disciples found one casting out devils in Jesus' name. They said "We forbid him, because he

followeth not us" (vv 38, 39). Even if they are not walking **with us**, the Master says "Forbid him not". They belong to the Lord.

We find another circle in 5 : 19. There is a man converted, the power of Satan is broken in his life, and Jesus says, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee". That man was so overwhelmed with the power of the gospel, he did more than the Lord told him to do. He went out into the whole of Decapolis (ten cities). The city is a good place to get personal contacts.

Let us return to the four who brought their friend to Jesus. Perhaps you will be one who brings a friend to the Saviour. Give yourself wholly to prayer. There are people gifted for prayer, but neither preach, nor go on the street, nor take a Sunday School class. Will you put on your heart and on your prayer-list a brother or a sister who is going on the street, or teaches in the Sunday School, and give yourself wholly to prayer for that person, every day, and during the day, that the enemy will be kept from him or her and they be kept usable for the Lord.

Conclusion

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature". (16 : 15) It may be that the Lord is speaking to some of us, to take us out into the world, wholly and solely, ready for His work. We end the Book with the great commission. The gospel of Mark is the gospel of the Worker. It begins with Jesus working and it end with Him the same way. Death did not change Him. When the disciples went forth, the Lord was working with them, still the God-Man carrying on this glorious gospel.

May this glorious gospel be warmed afresh in our hearts, so that we commit ourselves again to Him.

YOUTH AT ST. ANDREWS: 1974

10. FELLOWSHIP

J. N. SHEPHERD

Romans 12 : 5 ; 1 Corinthians 1 : 9 ; 10 : 14-17 ;
2 Corinthians 6 : 14-18 ; 1 John 1 : 3-9.

ROMANS 12 : 1-5 brings us into the place of fellowship because immediately the Lord is really supreme in our lives, our bodies presented to Him in order that He might use them just as He will, we find that many, many other people have done the same. What a marvellous thing it is to be involved in this one body of which we have read ! "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another". It is in this way that the thought of the body is introduced into the epistle. Christ is Lord. He is soon going to be Lord universally. Is He Lord in your heart ? If He is, you will find that there are many others in the same position and they form a wonderful company, the most wonderful people in the world, the people of God. Do you remember when Moses, learned in all the wonders

of Egypt, stepped out of the palace in Egypt in order to associate himself with some wretched slaves because they were God's people? Never be ashamed of being associated with the people of God.

Some of us have had the privilege of travelling abroad and finding people in a foreign city, speaking a different language but gathering in the Name of the Lord Jesus. If you belong to Christ these people are your people. You are in fellowship with them. God has called us to this. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord". There is only one fellowship. It might be said, "The church of God is split in ribbons. Thousands of different sects and divisions". There is only **one** fellowship. There is only **one** body. The body of Christ is a unity, formed by God, not formed by men. It is never, in this sense, going to fail. It is going to be for the glory of God throughout eternal ages. Do you belong to it? If you belong to Christ, you do, and you have a part to play in it too. Let us get our thinking right on this subject!

In 1 Corinthians 10 : 16, 17 we find that the cup and the loaf of the Lord's supper are really the symbols of this very thing, this fellowship which we enjoy together. I am sure that you have heard many times words something like this addressed to the Lord in regard to the bread of the Lord's supper, "O Lord, we do this in communion with everyone of Thine own in every place". If indeed it is one body, and the one loaf speaks of that one body, then there are not **many** bodies, there are not many loaves in God's sight. We are all members one of another. Every member of Christ is involved in this. You can not get away from it. When we take the loaf and the cup we are doing this in communion with everyone who is the Lord's.

I want to take you now to 2 Corinthians 6 : 14-18. "Be ye **not** unequally yoked together with unbelievers". If this fellowship, into which we have been brought, is an all-inclusive fellowship involving everyone who belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is also an extremely exclusive fellowship. Do not be alarmed about the use of that word! My grandfather used to say to me "I belong to the 'Opex' brethren—Open to receive all them who belong to Christ and Exclusive of all evil". But continually the devil will seek to trap you into associations with evil. He may have done it already, at this moment. You may find yourself involved in some friendship, with someone who does not know your Saviour, who is not subject to your Lord, and it is very easy to find yourself involved, particularly if it might lead to marriage and a longing to go after those things which the other person does. I suppose all those of us who are older have seen so many young lives blighted, yes, blighted, literally blighted for the rest of their lives by being trapped by Satan into marriage with someone who is not a Christian. F. B. Hole used to say that the Christian has two natures, the worldling only has one, and if you as a Christian marry someone who is simply a worldling you will only have one nature in common with that person and that is your evil nature. How solemn it is to spend the whole of your life in such a plight! And so the Spirit of God says to you today (even if you have an arrangement to get married tomorrow) "Be ye **not** unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion has light with darkness?"

This does not only apply to marriage, but all the associations of life are involved in these verses. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people". Oh the wonderful grace and kindness of our God to make His saints in this way, the temple of God—the place where He dwells! Can you associate that with wrong things and wrong people? Remember what the Lord Jesus did with the Jewish temple, calling it "my Father's house" when He was here, turning out all that defiled the Name. Let the challenge of the holiness of God's house come home to us at this moment. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty". Do you really want your life ruined? If you are a Christian and you are going in for that which is associated with this dark world which crucified your Lord, you will never be happy again because all the time the knowledge of your disloyalty will be in your heart. You will never be able to get away from it. What a sad thing that would be!

That brings me to my last Scripture, 1 John 1:3-9. The apostle John, writing about "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" said, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ". It is impossible to imagine anything that is more wonderful than this. Verse 1 tells us that all that the apostles had seen and contemplated in the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was the substance of what is shared in this fellowship presented in verse 3. How perfect is everything He has done! How matchless His work at Calvary! This is the fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

This fellowship is also in the light of God. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. It is no use your saying "I have fellowship with God" if you are walking in darkness. The light of God shows up every speck of darkness. Everything in your life which is not consistent with this fellowship is silhouetted by the light shining from heaven. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another and the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus is over us in such a way that we are kept in that light.

Yet it is possible for us to be tripped up, and we are tripped up so frequently, alas. I just want to say this to you, have short accounts with God. Do not let it go on if you find there is some interruption of the fellowship. The cause of this interruption must be dealt with. How is it dealt with? Let me read it to you again, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". You have done something wrong, and you say, "Lord, I've done it", and the unrighteousness, and the sullied appearance of that thing in your life is entirely and absolutely removed immediately—"to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". The Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God and He is there as our Advocate—He knows all about us.

11. STEWARDSHIP

L. WALLER

The Principle of Stewardship

THE word stewardship or steward translates the word *oikonomia* which is very closely linked with our word economy, and the idea of a steward permeates all the Bible. A steward is a Manager, an Estate Manager in fact, a person who manages estates for an owner, a person who looks after a household or a person who has charge of his master's goods. The whole concept of stewardship is that we are in trust of someone else's property, and to us is given the job of stewards of the manifold grace of God (1 Peter 4 : 10) that we might handle these goods for the Master during the time of His absence and give an account to Him at the time of His return. The idea of stewardship also relates to almost every activity of Christian life, perhaps most notably to preaching the gospel in 1 Corinthians 4 : 1, where the apostle says "Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards". As preachers of the gospel we are stewards. Taking the gospel is not filling a date in some anxious brother's diary ; taking the gospel is not filling a magical hour at 6-30. Taking the gospel is part of the stewardship, something we have to manage and to handle on God's account in the light of the coming day. In "Stewards of Grace" the writer recalls the story of a man giving his trial sermon, and having finished he looked at his Bishop and said, "It will do sir, won't it ?"—on which the Bishop quietly and reverently said "Do what ?" Let those of us who have the stewardship of the gospel ask ourselves, are we taking this ministering as a bit of saintly entertaining, or as stewards of the manifold grace of God ?

We have been taken this week through important steps in the Christian life, and now, what are you going to do, how are you going to manage your life from now on ? If you do not manage it, it will just be frittered away. If it is not harnessed, if you do not look at it objectively, as you would look at a business or a farm, or a household, or an enterprise, it will vanish like vapour leaving little for God.

A Picture of Stewardship

If we can very quickly run down Genesis 39 : 1-9, 20, 23 ; 41 : 33-46, you will notice for yourselves the times the word "house" or "household" occurs. In chapter 41 : 33-46, Joseph had been in prison, and Pharaoh, by now, had had his dream and Joseph was brought out to stand before him and is saying, "Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt". In all this Joseph is the most outstanding picture of stewardship. In him was the Spirit of God. What circumstances Joseph passed through ! He passed from being a son in his father's house to being a slave in the household of Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard, to being a prisoner in Pharaoh's dungeon and from thence to be-

come second in the throne. In all the vicissitudes of his life he displayed a quality of acting in his master's interests, even when almost forgotten in a dungeon. But when he came to prominence there was no thought of bitterness in his mind but ever of setting forward his master's objectives, displaying those admirable qualities for which we know him so well.

The Practice of Stewardship

I want to deal with this under three headings. First, the stewardship of our **time**. Time must be managed, because all through our lives this is the one commodity that we cannot possibly get back. We cannot with certainty say that its opportunities will come again. Time is on the side of young people, and the older people would give anything to have their time over again and to use it for God. I beseech you, brethren, that you manage your time. Out of 168 hours in the week, if one makes generous subtractions of 40 for work, 24 for getting to work and getting back and all the incidentals of life, 56 hours for sleep (allowing for a rising time in the morning at 7-30 and retiring at 11-30) that still leaves us with another 48 hours of our time in any week to be managed. Now anyone here who is a farm manager or a business manager or an industrial manager or a commercial manager or an insurance manager, will tell you that you must sit down and write the potential you have with the hours at your disposal. If you do not manage them, they will just fritter away, disappear away from your fingers, and at the end of a week or a month or a year or a lifetime, you will be able to look back at unmanaged time. My dear brethren, I beseech you, no more than myself, to manage your time for God.

And secondly, our **money**. And I want to make this a very strong plea that we all think very seriously about the stewardship of our money, much or little. (See "The Stewardship of Money" by F. Mitchell of the former C.I.M.) I will divide this into a number of headings. Why should we give to God at all? Because of the simple fact that we owe to Him all that we have, because we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

Who should give? Everyone: we should all be giving. We must not leave it to our parents, but from the very earliest time that we have money, we should discipline ourselves to manage it for God, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

How should we give? Read in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 how the apostle writes about the wonderful gift that the Philippians were involved in. How should we give? Joyfully. "In the abundance of their joy" (2 Corinthians 8:2). These verses are bursting with thanksgiving: 2 Corinthians 9:7 "God loveth a cheerful giver". We should give sacrificially: 2 Corinthians 8:2 and 3. In their deep poverty and beyond, the Philippians gave to the work in the fellowship of the gospel. We should give wholeheartedly: 2 Corinthians 8:4. We should give liberally and purposefully: 2 Corinthians 9:7. "Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give". How should you give: joyfully, sacrificially, wholeheartedly, liberally, purposefully.

Someone was asking me today how can we make our money go a long way? I will tell you, give to the Lord. The last year has given us

all cause to reflect on the fact that the very foundations of modern society are paper and can disappear overnight. Do you want to make your money go a long way ? Give to God.

When should we give ? On the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16 : 2). And when we go together for that inestimable privilege of breaking bread, the passing round of the box is not the signal that it is all over. It is our opportunity to express in a practical way something of our thanksgiving and something of our return to God. John Wesley said that the last thing about a man to be converted was his pocket. My dear friends I would ask you that before you go to the Lord's table, for not only a preparedness of heart but for a preparedness of pocket.

Then lastly, how much should we give ? I am asking how much we should give, not how little. This must, above all, be the subject of planned management of money. Listen to a few Scriptures selected out of many through the Bible : Deuteronomy 16 : 17 ; Ezra 2 : 69 ; Leviticus 14 : 30 ; Acts 11 : 29 ; 1 Corinthians 16 : 2. My friends, in the light of last night's meeting I would plead that we "let go and let God" with some of our money rather than holding back. A tenth should be the absolute minimum that any one of us should ever contemplate giving to God. Why, even the Pharisee, upon whom we look disparagingly, said that he gave tithes of all he possessed. My dear friends, if under law they could do that, and they did it willingly, how much more should we in a day of grace, give superabundantly out of the largeness of our hearts, in response and gratitude to God. We could never manage our money any better than giving to God. Let us ever remember two great principles, that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses, and that the attainment of riches is set forth as the one thing above all others that impedes our spirituality.

To summarise, give to God ; give liberally ; give sacrificially ; give regularly ; give purposefully ; and give on the first day of the week as you come to remember Him in the breaking of bread.

Thirdly, under this heading of practical stewardship, I want to talk about the stewardship of our **homes** (1 Corinthians 16 : 15 ; Acts 17 : 2 and Romans 16 : 3). Priscilla and Aquila not only opened their home to the apostle Paul but also took Apollos there and taught him the way of God more perfectly. Our homes are wonderful places to manage for God for His glory, not just to do our own little things in and to be our own private corner, but under the bountiful hand of God, Who has given us houses for homes, let us manage them as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

The Prize of Stewardship

It is set forth very well in Matthew's gospel 25 : 14-23, the story of the Lord giving out the talents to be managed for Him during His absence. The essential reward or prize, is the Lord's commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant". And the Lord adds the prize of further service beyond the reach of failure. 1 Corinthians 4 : 2 says "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" and the whole concept of stewardship sets our lives in the light of the fact that sooner or later, and pray God it will be sooner, the good Master of the house will come back, and the time of managing will be past, the

time of stewardship will be over and then we shall give account before God of our stewardship of His manifold grace towards us. Faithfulness (not primarily success) is what is required of a Steward.

My friends, how faithful are you going to be to the ministry you receive this week ; how faithful to the reading of God's Word, to prayer, to the Lord's supper ? How true are we going to be to our baptism, and how concerned are we going to be with the fellowship of God's own Son ? When we look at the stewardship of our time, are we going to be faithful to God in that ? When it comes to money, is God's work going neglected ? For the work of the gospel, think of the resources in this room that could be put to the work of the gospel in faithful stewardship. Soon the good Master of the house is going to rise up and call us in as stewards before Him, and everyone of us is to give an account of our stewardship. Is it going to be that in our aims from this day forward we keep always in mind the words "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy lord" ?

THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA _____ J. STODDART

A Unique Title of the Lord Jesus

MANY and wonderful are the titles of the Lord Jesus in the Word, each inviting our careful study and eliciting our deepest adoration. But only in the Book of Revelation do we learn from His Own lips that, greater than all others, He is "the Alpha and the Omega", an expression which we find repeated three times, viz. ch. 1 : 8, ch. 21 : 6 and ch. 22 : 13. (see J.N.D. New Tr.) Every student of Scripture knows that these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, but when used as a title of the Lord Jesus, He Himself in each case explains the meaning of the expression lest its significance should be overlooked.

How truly enlightening it is that the first occurrence of the title should be at the **beginning** of the Book, before the rapidly changing scenes and issues of its pages are unfolded. In ch. 1 : 8 it might be thought—and rightly so—that the title is one of Deity since it is spoken by One Who is Jehovah, "which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." And we must remember that our blessed Saviour was the incarnate Word Who was "with God and Who was God in the beginning" (John 1 : 1). It has been noted as a characteristic of John's writings that references to God and Christ, the Father and the Son are interchanged freely. So that in this first mention of the Alpha and the Omega, while Deity is clearly involved, the incarnation is also implied, since the terms, "beginning and ending" and "which is and which was and which is to come", are related to a time-scale and could not be applied per se to eternity. It is indeed Jehovah, but as Man related to time and history.

Good it is for us then, as our lives are lived out in constantly changing conditions, beginnings and endings, to know Him, Who is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, "the Same yesterday,

and to-day, and forever." He moves with us through all the changing scenes of life, knowing the end from the beginning. "His ways are behind the scenes ; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind." (Synopsis Vol. 5 p. 594) The aged apostle John, in lonely exile in Patmos," was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day", and though parted far from his brethren and friends, he seemed hardly surprised to hear a voice behind him, "a great voice, as of a trumpet." Turning "to see the voice that spake with me", he sees "One like unto the Son of Man." But His great dignity and glory bring John down to His feet as dead. There he would have remained had not that right hand been laid upon him and a more familiar voice said, "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." What comfort, what banishment of fear that identification must have brought to John for now he knew that the Alpha and the Omega was none other than the Christ upon Whose bosom he once had lain, Whom he had seen crucified and raised from the dead, and now the glorified One. How glad we are that John was commanded to write what he had seen, so that we might share the thrill of knowing so great a Person, Who lives for us to-day and Who delights to pilot us through all the changes and chances of this present life and then to be with Him forever.

A most helpful summary of events in the Revelation has been made in a recent series of papers in this magazine, and it is intended to avoid any encroachment upon these here. One may be permitted, however, to refer to the other occurrences of the expression "the Alpha and the Omega." Thus, keeping in mind the events of the intervening chapters, we come to ch. 21 : 6. Here again the One who commands John to write says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." At this juncture the scenes of earthly conflict and judgement are left behind, carried to their conclusion from first to last by Him Who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, and it is He Who says, as He alone can, "It is done." Every divine thought connected with the Church, and Israel and the nations, the living and the dead, consummated by His wisdom and power, and for His glory. Here is the same blessed Person Who once sat on Sychar's well and said to a thirsty soul, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4 : 14). Now, at the end of all God's time-ways, still His loving heart is concerned to "give to him that is athirst of the water of life freely." Blessed Jesus, precious Saviour, "the Same yesterday, and to-day and forever." (Hebrews 13 : 8) In Revelation 7 : 17 it is **the Lamb**, "Who shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

Lastly, in Revelation 22 : 13, after saying, "Behold I come quickly ; and My reward is with Me to give every man according as his work shall be," (v. 12) He finally says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the first and the last." What strength this gives to His promise and what encouragement to us who still await its fulfilment, knowing that from first to last He will complete every undertaking committed by the Father into His hands. If He is the Alpha and the Omega,

the Beginning and the End, He must also be **everything in between**, and as "the end is not yet," (Matthew 24 : 6) we are living somewhere along the time-scale in which we can prove His sufficiency for every need of our pathway until "we see His blessed face and hear His well-known voice, Whose every whisper makes our heart rejoice." In the Book of Revelation we are privileged to see a preview of the magnitude of God's purpose and plans through time and into eternity, all competently undertaken by Him Who says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." How well we may entrust every detail of our little lives to One so infinitely great, and as loving as He is great. Let us listen afresh to His repeated and inviolable promise, "Surely, I come quickly." (cf. verses 7, 12 and 20) And with greater fervour than ever, let our glad response in bridal affection be, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

THE following questions have been received, based on a lecture on the Yom Kippur War. A pertinent quotation from this lecture reads as follows :—

“. . . I believe that there is only one elect people of God, and this elect people of God goes right back to Abraham, who was the father of all who believe, and that the true Israel has always been within Israel, right to the coming of the Messiah. Then they fell ; they rejected their Messiah, a terrible thing. . . I'm a Calvinist in this matter ; the pre-determined will of God was that the Jewish people fell, because in no other way could salvation come to the ends of the earth. . . But the apostle argues, "if their casting away, (i.e. the casting away of them) was the salvation of the Gentiles, what is going to be their receiving, their fulness. . . but life from the dead ?" What does he mean, their receiving ? Who receives them ? God receives them in the true Israel. . . They are all part of the same company. . . If the blow-up comes first, (that is, the world conflict sparked off by the next Arab-Israel war. Ed.) and then there is the conversion of the Jewish people, the great beginning of thousands and thousands of Jewish people being brought to Christ ; and if this is life from the dead, the impact on the whole body of Christ will be revolutionary. . . and the way God explains it in Romans 9, 10 and 11 is that there is only one tree. . . and all the Gentile believers who have been saved, brought into Christ, are members of Christ, fellow-members. Well, He says in the end the natural branches may be brought back. And so all Israel shall be saved. That's you and them, all Israel. . . ."

The general line taken in the questions is that the questioner rejects decisively this Calvinist view of Romans 9, 10 and 11, but feels that some difficulties, that is, passages which at first glance might be taken to favour the Calvinist view, need some explanation.

Question 1. We look upon the Patriarchs and Jewish saints as not being in the Kingdom. How can we interpret Matthew 8 : 11 ?

Answer. We look upon the Patriarchs and Jewish saints as not being in the Kingdom on earth from the time the Lord preached the Kingdom because He Himself says they were not in it. (Matthew 11 : 11-13 and Luke 16 : 16). We look upon Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as being in the Kingdom in the resurrection and in heaven because the Lord also says this in Matthew 8 : 11, (compare Luke 13 : 25-29). The "outer darkness" of Matthew 8 : 12, and the same, together with the fact that the feast described is, in Luke 13, after "the Master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door."

A great deal of confusion on this matter is because we fail to distinguish the destiny of the Old Testament saints in the resurrection and in heaven from the destiny of the Jewish nation on earth as in Romans 11 : 26 and Isaiah 2 : 2-5.

Question 2. In what capacity will the twelve sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes ?

Answer. This is a special case of the general truth given to Gentile believers in 1 Corinthians 6 : 2. "Do ye not know that the saints, (evidently including the Corinthian believers), shall judge the world ?" The twelve won preeminence in the Kingdom by "continuing with" Christ in His "temptations". (Luke 22 : 28-30). Since the twelve tribes of Israel will have preeminence in the Millennium, it is fitting that the preeminent rulers should judge them. Other believers will judge cities. (Luke 19 : 17-19)

Question 3. Why the Jewish references in the addresses to the Seven Churches ? Particularly in Smyrna and Philadelphia there are those "which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan".

Answer. This, to the writer also, is not an easy Scripture to understand. It might be found helpful to get behind the question and face the possibility that its meaning supports the Calvinist position that the family of God in all ages has been one. This would imply that the Old Testament nation and city can be called the Church, and that the New Testament Church can be called Jews. If this be the pattern into which the words quoted to Smyrna and Philadelphia fit, it means that these persons represented themselves as belonging to the Church, i.e. were Jews. I think that, **taken in isolation**, the words could mean this. But a clearly stated Scripture principle which probably supplies the ground for a correct understanding of several of the questions in this series, is "no Scripture is to be interpreted **in isolation** (from the rest of Scripture)." (2 Peter 1 : 20) It is in clear contradiction to the rest of Scripture to believe that the name "Jews" can be applied to the Church, and the word "Church" to Zion and Israel in the sense that both form one family.

On the other hand, the words could mean perfectly satisfactorily that there were those connected with these Churches whose opinion was that

as members of the Church they were Jews, a claim emphatically repudiated by the Lord in these letters. As clearly as the former interpretation is out of harmony with the rest of the New Testament, this latter belief occupies a very prominent place in the New Testament. It is not only repudiated by the Lord in these letters, but its repudiation is the principal subject of Galatians, and is present in several other epistles. The Judaising teachers who were everywhere in the Acts the opponents of Paul's work, were certainly saying that they themselves were subject to the Jewish law, and wished all other believers to be the same.

A subsidiary possibility of mistaken interpretation is avoided by noting that the word "blasphemy" is not, in Scripture, as it is in modern usage, something said derogatory to God only. In 2 Peter 2 : 11 and Titus 3 : 2, for example, it is speech derogatory to men or other beings.

(to be continued)

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

THIS extract I have found over many years to be illuminating. Without commending all the conclusions, the present interest in prophecy leads me to believe it will be found of interest in a field little understood and yet a necessary foundation for conclusions affecting our views on the Arab wars.

THE ASSYRIAN

(translation from "Cantiques des Degrés par H.R." pp 18-39)

A few words on the **Assyrian** of the last days (in the end). We have already made a remark which belongs to the very essence of prophecy. The persons and the events of prophecy are connected with the persons and the events of history, and so to speak continue them. Only minds which are strangers to the thoughts of God can deny it, for this phenomenon is constantly present in all prophecy. It is sufficient, amongst a multitude of instances, in order to convince oneself of this connection, to read chapters 7 and 8 of Isaiah and Daniel 11.

An equally evident fact is that the great majority of the events prophesied do not permit an interpretation limited to the past. It is important to affirm this in view of modern unbelief which either sees in the prophets accounts written after the event or curiously distorted or brings them down to the level of contemporary patriotic lucubration.

Having laid down this principle, let us return to the Assyrian. The Assyrian of the last days is a power occupying the ancient Assyria ; only remember that the geographical limits of that country have undergone continuous changes in the course of a long history filled with insurrections, wars and conquests, and one would have difficulty in defining historically its changing frontiers, in the manner possible for the ancient Roman Empire. The Asiatic boundaries of the present Turkish Empire (1909) could to some degree be likened to those of ancient Assyria. In fact, the Assyrian of prophecy possesses more extended frontiers than the historic Assyria, even than the Turkish Empire which today occupies

its territory. Moreover, the Assyrian of prophecy bears different names, but these names are not exactly identical. That most often used is Gog (Ezekiel 38, 39). It is concerning Gog, says Ezekeil, that "the prophets of Israel spoke": now the prophets of Israel spoke of the Assyrian (Ezekiel 38 : 17). But he is also called "**the King of the North**". By this term, we must understand a Kingdom situated to the north of Palestine, Asia Minor, which belonged in part to the changing dominion of the Assyrian, then became the share of Seleucus, one of the four generals of Alexander and the Antiochus's his successors. (Daniel 8 : 21-24 ; and 11). The different heads of this family are called the King of the North in Daniel 11, at the time of their conflicts with the King of the South (Egypt) and with the land of Israel, until his last representative, the Assyrian, comes to his end on the mountains of "the glorious land" (Daniel 11 : 40-45).

Numerous peoples constitute his power. In Ezekiel 38, the allies of Gog are Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, Persia, Etholia, Libya, Gomer, Togormah, when he comes from "out of the north parts" in the last days. We find a list similar, but less complete, in Ezekiel 32. We find there, with Ashur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the princes of the North, the Sidonians.

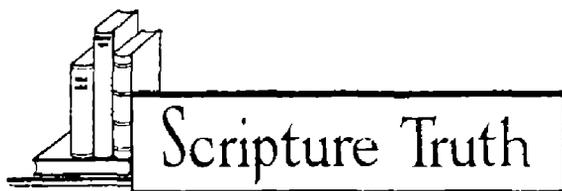
The prophet Joel, speaking of the prophetic invasion of the Assyrian, calls him "the northern (army)" (Joel 2 : 20), however, "the northern (army)" is, in other passages, Babylon and also the Medes and Persians. (See the whole of Jeremiah). In Daniel 8 : 23-25, the King of the North springs out of Alexander's empire, "and his power shall be great, but not in his own strength", that is to say that he will have the power of the Assyrians or of Gog, Russia (Ezekiel 38 : 2), as support and approval of his own strength.

In the last times, the Assyrian destroys Egypt, then is himself destroyed at the time of his last attack against Jerusalem. After this, during the Millennium, Assyria and Egypt will come to know the God of Israel. These three nations will be allied and established as a benediction in the midst of the earth (Isaiah 19 : 16-25).

Another power, named **the Nations**, is often mentioned in the closing conflict. We see, in Psalm 83, that they plot the extermination of Israel. Edom, as in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, occupies a preponderant place among them. The others are mentioned in its train; they are the Ishmaelites, Moab, the Hagarenes, Gebal, Ammon, Amalek, Philistines, Tyre. Asaph adds that "Ashur" is joined to them. It is manifest, that we are concerned here only with nations which surround the territory of Israel, and not with the innumerable hordes which follow in the train of Gog (Ezekiel 38 : 5-6) and which, we venture to think are possibly to be increased at the end by the kings of the East mentioned in Revelation 16 : 12.*

* For us, this question is rather posed than resolved. The kings of the East could form a separate enterprise, or even come to lend, in appearance, their support to the Beast against the Assyrian.

(to be continued)



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER, 1975.

CHRIST AND HIS COMPANIONS _____ ANDRE GIBERT

(translated by Miriam Venters)

"God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions," Hebrews 1 : 9 (J.N.D.)

"For we are become companions of the Christ, if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end." Hebrews 3 : 14 (J.N.D.)

COMPANIONS. The English word has a flavour of intimacy about it : etymologically speaking, the companion of someone is one who eats bread with him, in fact, one who shares, to a large extent, if not wholly, his activities and his very life. Our translation uses this word correctly in the passages quoted above, to translate the original word which simply means "partakers" (of or in), and which is translated as such in Hebrews 3 : 1 and 6 : 4. That such a bond as that of being "companions" can exist between the Lord Jesus and His own is to the glory of God ; it testifies to the efficacy of the work of Christ and to how much value God places upon the person of Christ. "They are all of one" (Hebrews 2 : 11). On the level of family relationships, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (2 : 11). In keeping with his official position, they are his companions.

Hebrews 1 : 9 Of the two passages from the epistle to the Hebrews where this word is found, the first is a quotation from Psalm 45 : 7. This psalm gives a prominent place to the unparalleled supremacy of the One who, God and man, is glorified above everyone and peculiarly above those who have themselves the honour of being called his companions. *They are acknowledged as the companions of the man of whom Jehovah has said : He "is my fellow" (Zechariah 13 : 7) ; but He is exalted above them.*

In Psalm 45 he is the King, the victorious Messiah. He will be manifested as such one day. Because he has loved righteousness, and hated wickedness he is "anointed with the oil of gladness above his companions". He will reign on the earth, and the faithful ones who have believed on him and have served him will reign with him, but beneath him. While here below, he was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power (Acts 10 : 38), and this being so went from place to place doing good, only to receive from men, insults, scorn and sufferings, and to find the cross at the end of his pathway as man of sorrows. He will be anointed with the oil of a triumphal gladness, he will be made ruler of a kingdom which he will then restore to his Father, at the end of the blissful millennial reign—this must be for

him one of the aspects of this joy which was "lying before him" when he "endured the cross, having despised the shame" (Hebrews 12 : 2)

Hebrews 1 : 9 is speaking about the same person, but seen as he is now, hidden from the earth, glorified in Heaven. He is Lord and Christ, assuredly (Acts 2 : 36) but he does not yet reign (Hebrews 2 : 9). He is the Son of God become Son of man, a Man through whom God "has spoken to us" and whom He has exalted to His right hand, his work accomplished. This Man, who is glorified in Heaven, the heavens opened to the believers so that they can contemplate him there, is the great subject of the epistle to the Hebrews. His companions possess his life, are destined to share his future glory, and they await Him, for He shall appear to those that look for him . . . for salvation, prior to the manifestation of this glory.

The "companions" who are spoken about in Psalm 45 are, prophetically, the Jewish Remnant of the last days. David's mighty men provide a type of the Remnant. During the time when the Lord was here below, the Remnant was represented by the disciples, to whom Jesus could say : "But ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you, as my Father has appointed unto me, a kingdom, that ye may . . . sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22 : 28-30). The faithful ones out of this future Remnant will have passed through the great tribulation (cf. Psalm 42 : 44) Once Christ has been manifested in glory, they will share the benefits of the oil of gladness with which he will be anointed ; surrounding them on the redeemed earth, all the new Israel will rejoice and with them the nations and all creation, with such joy as will re-echo that from Heaven, where the risen saints will be gathered !

But in the epistle to the Hebrews the "companions" are seen on this earth, the place where Jesus suffered and died, an earth not yet delivered from the bondage of sin, a scene of sighing and groaning for the creation, and for the "companions" one of trials and sorrows. But they are associated with a glorified Christ in Heaven. They are going to be with him, and He, himself is coming to fetch them. They are waiting for him. God has in mind "some better thing for them" than he had for his earthly people (Hebrews 11 : 40). Elsewhere in Scripture, the "companions" are considered as constituting the Bride of Christ, the Church who will reign with her Bridegroom, when the earthly Remnant will form the "friend of the Bridegroom" (John 3 : 29), his companions during the millennial age. The former are already his companions.

Hebrews 3 : 14 This second passage is addressed to these companions of the present time. They have, in this day, the day of grace, the privilege of having become "companions of the Christ". He will reveal them as such later in the glory.

It is indeed by a heavenly call and not an earthly one that they have been made "partakers" (same word, remember as "companions"). It is as having been called in this way, that they are invited to consider the Apostle and High Priest of their confession (Hebrews 3 : 1). It is no longer Jesus crucified, it is not yet Jesus manifested, it is Jesus glorified, waiting for all things to be subjected to him. They

view Him, in Heaven, and his glory reminds them of his sufferings, through which he has been perfected as the captain of their salvation and has been equipped for all the offices which are attached to this salvation. Everything is assured through their faith, on the basis of the eternal redemption procured at the cross (Hebrews 9 : 12), and they can go on in "the boldness and the boast of hope" (Hebrews 3 : 6).

"You are become companions of the Christ", they are told. What a subject of meditation for us, the statement of such an extraordinary privilege ! We were all of us, Jews and Gentiles, enemies, enemies of God, enemies of Christ, and now we have become his companions. We possess by faith the life of the One whose glory is promised to us. This does not come from within ourselves. He had to "taste death for everything". So, those who were once far off, without strength, ungodly, sinners and enemies, have been drawn from their lost condition because the "companion of Jehovah" while on earth, saw raised against him the sword of judgment which should have fallen on us, and was "wounded in the house of his friends". Shall we ever be able to "consider" sufficiently such a person ? This is how he has won his companions. Their present portion is to be disowned as he himself has been : to be companions of Christ today, can only mean to face shame and trial. But "yet a very little while he that comes will come" (Hebrews 10 : 37) In the meanwhile, the companions walk by faith under the direction of "the leader and completer of faith", heavenward, through this world, like Israel making their way to Canaan across the desert. On this journey His own are identified with him, for the purpose of worshipping God as Father, depending on Him and bearing witness to Him (Hebrews 2 : 11-13).

In the first instance it is a question of having received, by faith in His name, the "assurance" of being one of his own ; then, for each individual, it is a matter of actively guarding this position of companion of Christ until the end of the journey : "if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end". One sets out with a sure step, happy to be thus enlisted, and it is this initial assurance which we are called upon to hold firm. Vigilance is necessary in this, for obstacles and opponents are not lacking and they are to be feared. Satan whispers to the heart his perpetual cry "Yea, hath God said" and unbelief slips in to cause one to "turn away from the Living God" (Hebrews 3 : 12). Sin is always present in all its deceitfulness, seeking to allure us by the lusts of the old man (v. 13). It is not by looking to ourselves that we will be protected, but by "looking steadfastly on Jesus" (Hebrews 12 : 2). To trust in him implies that we must not trust ourselves. Apart from his own faithfulness, there would be neither companions of Christ nor faithfulness among his companions. Their assurance can only be firm in him.

We are exhorted here, not as we are in other places, to keep the commandments (and how many of the commandments of Jesus and of his Father are precious to the Christian !), nor to keep the unity of the Spirit (as important as that is), but we are to "hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end" (v 6), "the beginning of our assurance" (v. 14), and further on "our confession" (4 : 14), "the full assurance of hope unto the end" (6 : 11), "the confession of our

hope" (10 : 23), and finally," our confidence" (v. 35). In other words, it is a matter of continuing in the certainty of the initial salvation ("the beginning of your assurance") as well as of the final ("He shall appear the second time. . . for salvation"): another person has undertaken this salvation on our behalf, and it is this person, Christ, whom we find at the end as at the beginning, just as it is He who, in Heaven, takes care of his own, for "he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God, always living to intercede for them" (7 : 25). Left on our own, we would only be certain to fail hopelessly. But the certainty of Christ's perseverance and not of our own is offered to us : we have this and we can only keep it by faith. The whole issue, for the companions of the Christ, is to depend on their leader, holding him firm, and to rely on the "One that is able to keep you without stumbling" (Jude 24).

To be faithful, what does this mean for the Christian, if not, never to doubt the faithfulness of God ?

There is nothing which brings about more exercise of the soul, while at the same time sustaining the heart. This is so by the grace of God. The companions of Christ, would they desire to be anything other than strangers here in this world ? The warnings, the "if indeeds" are given to constrain us by taking us by the hand. In so far as they are there to shake our complacency, we need them in order that the beginning of our assurance may remain, grounded not on ourselves but on Christ. These warnings are addressed to true believers, whilst putting the reality of their faith to the test : hence their extreme solemnity for lifeless professors. They stimulate our feelings of responsibility so that, recognising ourselves incapable of coping with them alone, we would cling firmly to the hand which upholds us and which we are ever in danger of forgetting.

ROMANS: A SIMPLE THREEFOLD KEY _____ J. STODDART

SO much has already been written and said about the Epistle to the Romans that it might well be considered an impertinence to attempt any further comment on this fundamental book of Christian truth. There may be some younger Christians, however, who have neither the time nor, as yet, the ability to plough through the many great expositions of the epistle and to whom a simple and brief treatment might appeal. It is specifically for such that the following elementary threefold key is intended. More mature students of Scripture will readily understand the obvious paucity of detail in what must necessarily be a very sketchy outline.

The well-authenticated divisions of Romans occur in chapters 5, 8 and 12, the intervening chapters progressively leading up to the conclusions of their subjects in these chapters. This may be easily grasped by the significant use of the word "therefore" in the first verse of each of these chapters. It may thus be said that the message

of the whole epistle is poised on three cardinal "therefores" (occurring in the A.V.). Let us consider then the first of these in ch. 5 : 1, "THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It would seem that from the opening of the epistle up to this point a detailed examination of the question raised by Job (cf. ch. 9 : 2), "How should a man be just (or justified) before God ?" is under consideration. No matter how the history of man is viewed, (a) as having only the knowledge of God as Creator, or (b) the moral discernment of good and evil, or (c) the enlightenment, as a Jew, of the requirements of the law of God, a right ground for his justification before God cannot be found. The Divine sentence upon the whole human race is then pronounced in ch. 3 : 23, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Could anything be more final than this ?

However, it cannot be overlooked that one man at least was said to be justified before God on an entirely different principle from either (a), (b), or (c). This is examined in detail and proved to be the result of **faith** on Abraham's part, not because he was sinless or less a sinner than others. But of him it was said that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (ch. 4 : 3). So too did David prove this to be the only ground of standing before God (ch. 4 : 6/8) and many another of O.T. days discovered the truth that, "the just (or justified person) shall live by his faith (cf. Habakkuk 2 : 4) Thus the first section of our epistle reviews man's responsible **STANDING** and undeniable **GUILT** before God, the conclusion to which is reached in ch. 5 : 1—"THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Let us call this the **THEREFORE** of Justification.

The next cardinal "therefore" is found in ch. 8 : 1—"There is **THEREFORE** now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is the grand conclusion of the subject contained in chs. 6, 7 & 8. The great question considered here is how practical sanctification is to be maintained in the person justified by faith. While unquestionably right with God, he is still conscious of a sinful nature within which conflicts with his new standing before God. The Law still accuses him of sinful practice, making his State a contradiction to his Standing. But if it is true (and thank God it is true) that Christ's death was ours and we died in Him (cf. 7 : 4) then the Law has nothing to say to a dead person ; its condemnation is null and void. Experience may try hard to repudiate this, as we undergo the introspection so aptly described in ch. 7 and cause us to cry out for deliverance (ch. 7 : 24). "Who shall deliver me ?" we exclaim. But the eye is turned from within to One Who alone can answer. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So our next chapter leads us into new territory, as it were, with the triumphal, climactic declaration, "There is **THEREFORE** now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Throughout this chapter this victorious theme is sustained by insistent and repeated teaching on the delivering power of the indwelling Spirit of God (mentioned about some fourteen times) and ending with the most inspiring and inspired answer to the challenge, "Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (v. 35) in the boldest assertion "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Here the epistle to the Romans truly reaches its doctrinal climax, and our hearts are stirred as the Spirit carries us along on the crest of this triumphal tide. We suggest that the second "therefore" should be called the **THEREFORE** of Sanctification since only such truth can effectively set us apart from sin within and engross our hearts and lives with Him Who loves us eternally.

A brief note only can be given here with regard to chapters 9, 10 and 11 which are quite evidently parenthetical in character, interposed to show the righteousness of God's dealings with the nation of Israel, His ancient people, in the light of His grace and salvation indiscriminately offered to Jew and Gentile alike, thus setting aside national privileges and distinctions. Key verses in this section are suggestively ch. 10: 12/13, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek (other nations): for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The section ends with the most beautiful doxological verse 36 of ch. 11, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

We now come to our third and last significant "therefore". "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 (or intelligent) service." (ch. 12: 1). From this verse to the end of the epistle we are confronted with the intensely practical obligations of Christian living. If the implications of **justification** and **sanctification** have been truly learned in the heart (not merely in the head) then (and only then) are we prepared to face the challenge of **consecration** to the service of God and His will. All too little is this a meaningful word in our lives because of its seemingly total demand upon our every motive and movement. But is this too penal a condition to require of those so richly blessed as we are assured to be in the earlier chapters of the epistle? Surely nothing less than a total commitment could be termed "your **intelligent** service." At this point it is instructive to recall the ceremony of the consecration of the priests in Exodus 29: 20/21, "Then shalt thou kill the ram (of consecration) and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the right ear of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about." Here was the symbolic token of their bodily commitment to God's service. The ear, the hand and the foot were to come under the power of the blood shed, the blood that related them to the altar and all it stood for. It is clearly this that is envisaged in the appeal to "present your bodies a living sacrifice (not necessarily martyrdom), holy, acceptable unto God." **Our ears, our hands, our feet** are to be consecrated, in the power of the blood of Christ, to the service of the "good,

and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” What are the particulars of the will of God for us? These are comprehensively detailed for us in this and the succeeding chapters, covering the entire gamut and area of our responsible lives, in the circle of Christian privilege, in relation to the powers that be and with regard to our fellow men in general.

It would surely not be inept thus to call this third “therefore” the **THEREFORE** of consecration. Would that its meaning and implications were better understood by every Christian and more sacrificial service rendered to our God Who alone is worthy of our utter devotion.

The Epistle to the Romans cannot be regarded as a complete statement of the Pauline doctrine, as other epistles, e.g. Ephesians and Colossians were necessary to expound the special revelation given to the apostle with regard to the eternal counsels of God and the relation of the Church to these. But undeniably the position of Romans as laying the basic foundation for this further truth, is eminently wise and appropriate.

Let us briefly recap on our suggested threefold key to this wonderful epistle :—

- (I) The **THEREFORE** of Justification (ch. 5 : 1).
Chs. 1 to 5 speak of Christ’s death **FOR** us and deal with our **GUILT**, and **STANDING** before God.
- (II) The **THEREFORE** of Sanctification (ch. 8 : 1).
Chs. 6 to 8 speak of His work **IN** us and deal with the defilement of the old nature in believers. Thus our **STATE** in the Christian life is in view.
- (III) The **THEREFORE** of Consecration (ch. 12 : 1).
Chs. 9 to 11 are parenthetical. But ch. 12 onwards speak of His work **THROUGH** us in serving God’s will, and therefore deal with our **SERVICE** and **ACTIVITIES**. Our bodies a living sacrifice.

May these all too meagre details whet the appetite of us all—and young Christians in particular—to discover with God’s help the deeper lessons of the truly fundamental Epistle to the Romans.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES _____ **COLIN CURRY**

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold”.
(Psalm 19 : 10)

IN the second section of this Psalm (verses 7–14) the Psalmist expresses his sense of the attractiveness and the value of God’s written revelation as he knew it. Gold is among the most precious of earthly commodities. “Much fine gold” suggests (in both quantity and quality) the highest imaginable wealth on the material plane. And yet the psalmist is aware of a higher order of values than the earthly

one ; he knows that in the Scriptures there are riches of a totally different kind, more durable, more desirable, more accessible too, safer and more profitable to pursue. Our aim here is to enlarge on the theme of the **value** of the Holy Scriptures, so that we may capture the spirit of the psalmist and learn to approach the Scriptures with similar zeal and respect.

First, we draw attention to the account Scripture gives of itself. Secondly, we consider Christ's testimony to the Scriptures. Finally, we outline what Scripture is discovered to be, when a proper and humble approach to it is made. In this third section we look particularly at Psalm 19. Under the earlier headings, however, we pick out a few relevant verses here and there throughout the Scriptures, and simply underline what they say.

Scripture : its Account of Itself

In brief, Scripture claims to be the pure word of God, containing no human admixture within it whatever. It is a divine product, a divine communication, a living and active word, a complete and perfect whole, with every detail in place and valuable.

A selection of verses which say this, will be given. First, consider 2 Timothy 3 : 16. The main point here is that the **Scriptures owe their value to their divine origin**. All Scripture (including every Scripture), seeing that it is God-breathed, is as well profitable for the various kinds of help for Christian people mentioned later in the verse. The words "inspired of God" can be misunderstood ; what they really say is that Scripture is **breathed out** by God. It is wholly and in every part from God.

Another important passage is 2 Peter 1 : 19-21. We **have** the prophetic word, writes Peter. We do well to pay heed to it too. Especially since we know that prophecy never came about by the will of man, but it was as borne (along) by the Holy Spirit that men spoke from God. The word of prophecy came not from man but from God, through the Holy Spirit. And clearly it will be right and valuable to heed it.

"Men spoke from God". This links closely with Deuteronomy 18 : 18. In the same way that God spoke through Moses, so He would speak through later spokesmen, one by one. Foreseeing His later communications to His people, God says of each spokesman in turn "I will put **my** words in **his** mouth". The prophet would be the mouth, the channel, the instrument ; but the words were to be God's. What came through the channel would be wholly divine, in substance and in origin. It was to be **His** (the Spirit's) product **through** them. The prophets were in no sense joint authors with God of their messages.

Two further N.T. verses will suffice. 1 Corinthians 2 : 13, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth". Extracting the main point from this verse, Paul and others like him spoke **in words which the Spirit taught**. Their messages came not from man, but from God by the Holy Spirit ; the point recurs in all these verses. Note also the

emphasis on the very **words** in this and the previous quotation. Verbal inspiration is claimed by the Scriptures. Finally, 1 Corinthians 14 : 37 may be quoted to show that the written Scriptures are in mind. Paul **writes** the commandments of the Lord, and spiritual persons acknowledge it. The inspired **writings** come from God and carry all the weight and authority of the Lord with them.

Christ's Testimony to Scripture

For a proper sense of the value of Scripture, our Lord's own attitude to it will clearly provide the best guidance. In brief, He confirmed its divine origin and authority, not only by making plain statements to that effect, but also in His **use** of it. He lived by it, He was steeped in it, He fed on it, He fulfilled it, He settled issues by it, He authenticated it, placing His own great stamp of authority upon it in a wonderful way.

First let us take one or two of His plain statements about Scripture. In prayer with His Father (in John 17 : 17), within 24 hours of the cross, He alludes to Scripture as something which would strengthen and sanctify His disciples after His departure. "Thy word is truth" is His simple but profound statement. Secondly (in John 10 : 34-36) in a very different situation, facing people with stones in their hands to stone Him, He rebuts their charge of blasphemy, and silences them, by quoting a small detail from a relatively obscure place. "Is it not written in your law", He asks, showing His far deeper knowledge of the writings of which they were so proud. But, additionally, He confirms the high value of those writings with the words "the Scripture **cannot** be broken". This, let us note, is Christ's view of Scripture.

Again, at the start of His public career, after 40 days of tempting and testing in the wilderness, confronted in a more direct way by the great adversary at the close of those days, He answers him every time, surely and forthrightly, with an apposite quotation from the O.T. The first of these replies is particularly significant for the present subject. "It stands written", He says, "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God" (Luke 4 : 4). Thus He indicated His own firm intention to abide by the word of God, to feed upon it, and to **live** by it. It was the very principle of His life. In life and deed He upheld and honoured that Word. In death too, as well as in life, that word was held high and fulfilled. From start to finish it was so. Looking back, on the day of the resurrection, He explained it all to His disciples in terms of the Scriptures. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24 : 46). It all had to be ; it all had been fulfilled in Him. His whole course had followed the written word. In life and in death He had demonstrated the utmost respect and devotion to that word.

Again and again we find Him **using** the Scriptures, meeting situations and queries with them, non-plussing His critics, always ready with a quotation which is completely on the mark. "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer" ; "Have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise ? "

“Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner ? ” “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God”. These quotations come from Matthew 21 and 22 and there are numerous others in the gospels.

A further point to notice is that our Lord not only looked back to the O.T., He looked forward too. He anticipated the N.T., and set His seal of authority upon it in advance. Those who would be His agents in producing it were foreseen by Him (and some of them chosen) in His lifetime on earth. Later, they were empowered and fitted for the purpose by the Holy Spirit, sent by Him from above. He spoke about all this in prospect. The substance of what He had revealed by His coming would be recalled to them, and its meaning and implications made clear, and expanded, by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. They were to bear witness to Him in writings as well as in other ways. (See, as sample passages on these lines, John 14 : 26 ; 15 : 26, 27 ; 16 : 13 ; 1 John 1 : 3-5). No less than **the whole** of our bible has the authority of our Lord behind it.

A final quotation from our Lord seems apposite at this point. “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ? ” (Luke 6 : 46). A professed faith in Christ without acceptance of what He says and without a spirit of obedience to it, is a questionable faith in Him. This applies to His words about Holy Scripture quite as much as other things. If we trust Him, if we call Him Lord, we must go by what He says : we must follow the pattern He laid down in this matter of respect for Holy Scripture. **Faith in Christ without faith in the bible is a contradiction in terms.** (Note that the converse is also true, though that is another matter).

What the Scriptures Prove Themselves to be

We now return to Psalm 19, to observe what the psalmist’s findings within the field of Scripture were. He makes concise and magnificent statements (in verses 7-9 especially) as he expresses his own appreciation of the Scriptures. There is a wealth of detail in these verses about the **content** and **value** of the Scriptures as discovered by one who approaches them aright.

First, notice the nouns used to describe the Scriptures in these verses. Law, testimony, precepts, commandment, fear, and judgments. These are **aspects** of Scripture. It is the **law** of Jehovah ; the revealed will of God. It is **testimony**, too ; God witnesses to Himself in its pages. It contains **precepts**, detailed instruction and guidance for all kinds of situations, adding up to a perfect whole. It is the **commandment** of Jehovah too ; it has authority from God and speaks to us in that manner. It is spoken of as **fear** ; it has power to evoke reverence and respect, and needs to be handled in that way. Finally, God’s **judgments** are shown to us in Scripture : it provides us with His view of things, supplying divine discernment (about all kinds of trends and situations) for our guidance.

Secondly, **qualities** of Scripture are indicated by the adjectives.

It is **perfect** ; that is to say it is flawless, excellent, complete and whole. It is **sure** ; rocklike, impregnable, unequivocal, standing firm whether it is accepted or not. It is **right** ; straight and straightforward, just and fair, free from all duplicity. It is **pure** too ; it is all of the same kind, undiluted, unmixed with other things which would spoil it and confuse us. It is **clean** ; totally unlike most other things today which are polluted, tainted and degraded ; it is the incorruptible word. It is **true**, and **righteous altogether** ; dependable, genuine, right and good, through and through.

Effects of Scripture are pointed out by the verbs. It **converts** the soul ; spiritual renewal begins there. It **makes wise** the simple ; it is the beginning of wisdom. It **rejoices** the heart ; satisfaction and true pleasure are found there. It **enlightens** the eyes ; it casts light on things and lets us see where we are going ; "a light to my path and a lamp to my feet". It **endures** for ever, and **establishes** the person who receives it, making him stand on his own feet firm and sure. The later verses speak about other effects of Scriptures of an important kind. They **warn** and correct the reader ; "Moreover by them is thy servant warned". There is **cleansing** there ; "Cleanse thou me from secret faults". They protect and **guard** the person who will be guided by them, restraining him from his sinful tendencies. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins". They put him on guard about his own weaknesses.

Finally, **reactions** (of a right kind) to Scripture seem to be highlighted in the closing stages of the Psalm (verses 10-14). Note how the psalmist at first delights in the Scripture without referring to himself, but expresses his own personal reactions to it later. It brings him into the presence of the Author of Scripture, it makes him take the position of "Thy servant". It gives him a sense of the treasures that are open to him. He has access to a vast area of opportunity, and he finds it all rewarding, desirable and sweet. He asks for help to enter into it humbly and suitably. He is aware that it calls for a proper response from himself. He asks that his approach (in meditation and active appreciation) may be acceptable and pleasing to the One Who has made it all accessible to him. We may well ask whether we find ourselves at all in line with him in our own reactions to Scripture.

Conclusion : a Fact and a Question

The word Scripture means "what is written", and it is a fact that we **have** the written Holy Scriptures in our homes and in our hands. "It is written" (so often repeated by our Lord) is unquestionably true. But, do we read it ? "Have ye never read that which was spoken by God ?" He asked His contemporaries that kind of question many times. He asked whether they were reading their written Scriptures. It would be well to allow Him to ask us that question too, so that we may allow the written word of God to find its true place within us, in our minds and in our hearts. Only thus will its true fruits be produced, in lives responsive to God and worthy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL SUBJECTS IN PHILIPPIANS _____ **DAVID ANDERSON****1. The Person of the Gospel.** 1 : 27 (1 : 15, 16, 18)

The "Gospel of Christ" indicates that the essential subject of the Gospel is the Person preached—CHRIST. As God's appointed and anointed Man He has fully expressed all His thoughts for blessing man. We are introduced to Him in Chapter 2 as the One Who, though He was so great, in His grace came down into death. This has resulted in His being highly exalted by God and it is these glories of His Person, work and position which give character to the Good News. However, He is also LORD to Whom all will be subject so that there is also authority and warning in the message. Note how the Apostles preached the Person in Acts (e.g. Acts 10 : 36-43).

2. The Word of the Gospel. 1 : 14, 2 : 16.

This is the substance, the content, the matter of the preaching and is used extensively in Acts to describe it (e.g. Acts 8 : 4). We do not present our own ideas but the plain facts of the Gospel, "according to the Scriptures" (I Corinthians 15 : 1-4, 1 Peter 1 : 25). We hold out "the Word of life" to the world (2 : 16) and in our speaking we make many allusions to it and draw many quotations from it so that it is available to be received by faith (Romans 10 : 8, 17). It is also God's instrument, to be used by the Holy Spirit, for regeneration (1 Peter 1 : 23).

3. The Faith of the Gospel. 1 : 27.

A comprehensive statement referring to the whole truth of the Gospel, embracing in it the expositions of the Gospel given in the Epistles (e.g. Romans) and also truths such as the inspiration and authority of the Word of God. These foundational truths lead us into "the faith" (Jude 3), which is the whole body of truth revealed in Christianity, of which Christ is the central theme.

4. The Beginning of the Gospel. 4 : 15.

The Gospel commenced with the Lord's ministry (Hebrews 2 : 3, Acts 10 : 36) although the seed of it was there in the promises and types of the O.T. Scriptures. Here it is spoken of as being those initial days of the Apostles' preachings and missionary activity. We can learn a great deal about the Gospel by studying the four Gospels and the Acts. In doing so, we discover that the Lord Jesus is the supreme example of how to convey God's love to people in both word and deed (Acts 1 : 1). For instance, in Luke 15 His actions of grace gave opportunity for that wonderful parable to be spoken. To crowds or individuals He was the same, but His compassions did not prevent Him from being straight on matters of sin, self-righteousness and certain judgment. Truly "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1 : 17).

Also, we are impressed with His zeal for seeking the lost (John 4 : 4, 32-38), and this led Him eventually to the Cross (John 10 : 11, 16-18), praise His Name !

5. **The Furtherance of the Gospel.** 1 : 12.

Since the first days, the Gospel has advanced, according to our Lord's command (Acts 1 : 8, Mark 16 : 15). The early Christians struck forward, first Jerusalem (Acts 2-7) then Judea, Samaria and Ethiopia (Acts 8). Peter introduced the Gentiles (Acts 10), Paul took it to Asia Minor (Acts 13-14) and then into Europe (Acts 16-18). The good Roman communication system enabled the News to spread rapidly. Numbers also increased, 120 (Acts 1 : 15) to 3,000 (Acts 2 : 41) in one day alone. Then "the Lord added. . . daily" (Acts 2 : 47) so that soon there were 5,000 men (Acts 4 : 4) and that number multiplied (Acts 6 : 7). Within a few years numerous churches were established.

By various means (Columba, Aidan and others) the Gospel was brought to Britain. Godly men have preserved it through the centuries so that it has reached us. Now spreading the Gospel is a world-wide activity. Ours is the privilege of taking part in furthering this glorious message !

6. **The Service and the Servants of the Gospel.** 2 : 22, 4 : 3.

Timothy, Epaphroditus ("true yokefellow"), Euodias, Syntyche, Clement and "others" are stated as having enslaved themselves to the work of the Gospel. They were subject to the Master's will and dedicated to this difficult task.

7. **Fellowship in the Gospel.** 1 : 5, 4 : 3, 1 : 27.

These servants did not work in isolation but they shared in Paul's service, together with all the Philippians. Paul indicates their participation in advancing the Gospel in various ways :—

- a) **by Prayer** 1 : 5, 19. They were able to pray for his success at spreading the Gospel wherever he was or whatever situation he was in.
- b) **by Giving** 4 : 18, 15. The Philippian assembly had sent a gift to Paul, one of his reasons for writing this letter to them.
- c) **by working with** 2 : 22, 4 : 3. These servants help Paul in his Gospel work, they were joint-workers.
- d) **by standing alongside** 4 : 3. They also supported Paul in what he was doing.
- e) **by striving together** 4 : 3. There was opposition to the message, and so joint-effort in contending for the Gospel was vital.
- f) **by their lives** 1 : 27. Their very lives and their fellowship with each other in assembly was a witness to the Gospel.

8. **The Confirmation of the Gospel** 1 : 7.

Paul was living proof that the Gospel was true—it was firmly established by him (1 Timothy 1 : 14-17). He desired that this evidence

might be clearly seen in the Philippians both as individuals and as an assembly (1 : 27).

9. The Defence of the Gospel 1 : 7, 17.

Paul was always ready to defend the Gospel. He frequently used the Scriptures to justify its message (e.g. Acts 17 : 1-3). Even at risk of his own life he stood out for and fought for the Way he had himself once sought to destroy. His object was to glorify the Lord always (1 : 20).

10. Our Lives and the Gospel. 1 : 27.

“ Let your manner of life be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ ” are very challenging words ! How much do we know about the Person, the Word, or the Faith of the Gospel ? Such knowledge is essential before we attempt to further it. By studying the Beginning of and the Furtherance of the Gospel we place ourselves in a strong position of knowing how to do it (and we follow the example of these Servants of the Gospel). Fellowship in the Gospel is vital. There are no limits to prayer and giving but how much do we experience of working together with fellow believers (in assembly) in spreading the word in the ways indicated ? Finally, what proof is there in our own lives of the Confirmation and the Defence of the Gospel ?

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

(continued from previous issue)

Question 4. The “grafting” chapter, Romans 11, seems, of course, the strongest argument on the Calvinistic side, especially verse 18. I think I would answer that the olive tree is the ‘faithful’ of both dispensations, but that this does not mean that faith has the same object or reward in both dispensations. Is this correct ?

Answer. I must beg leave to answer this question at some length, for it is not only thought by the a-millennialists to be their stronghold, but presents a most extraordinary example of the parrot-like repetition of a ground for interpretation which will not hold a drop of water !

For ourselves, we must repeat that this is the clearest case of the need to keep in mind 2 Peter 1 : 20. We **must not** look at the parable of the olive tree in isolation. We must lay down some **prior** Bible facts, that is, the Bible facts relative to the separate calling and destiny of the Church from those of Israel. Some of these facts will come out in our treatment of the question.

The point of parrot-like repetition is the omission in Romans 11 of any reference to the restoration of Israel to Palestine. The belief that there is no such reference depends on their own **prior** under-

standing of what the name 'Sion' means, as we shall see. If Sion means Sion, then there **is** a reference to the future restoration of Israel to salvation in their own land.

This repetition must be illustrated by quotations. The first are from two papers in "The Christian Graduate" in September 1959: "the only passage in the New Testament which could possibly refer to a future for the Jews is Romans 11. This, however, is not political, but (the re-grafting) has been understood by Protestant theologians to indicate a large-scale conversion of Jews before the end, when in large numbers they will enter into the blessings of the gospel alongside their Gentile fellow-believers". The next article reads: "in Romans 11 Paul utters not a word concerning their separate position, their local habitation, their distinctive worship, as if in such respects they were to differ, when converted, from other members of God's Kingdom. On the contrary, he represents their return simply as a reconciliation with the one spiritual body, from which for a time they are cut off". Again, "St. Paul, giving no hint that Israel is to be separate or apart, (excluding even the idea), declares that the Redeemer shall come 'out of Zion' with a view to turning ungodliness 'from' those in Jacob. The only Zion the New Testament knows is the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the New Testament".

F. F. Bruce in the Tyndale Commentary on Romans, (1963): "in all that Paul says about the restoration of Israel to God, he says **nothing about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom, nothing about national reinstatement in the land of Israel. What he envisaged for his people was something infinitely better**".

So, Romans 11 is to be interpreted by what it omits! Can such blindness exist! Just stop and think what else is omitted from Romans 11: the descent of the Holy Ghost, union with Christ in heaven, the Rapture of the saints, etc., etc. What are we to think of the indisputable fact that there is no reference to the first coming of the Saviour in Romans 11? (It is, of course mentioned in ch. 9:5) No, we do not refuse to believe clearly revealed truth because it is popular to believe it is not found in Romans 11. Are we right in cleaving with unshakable tenacity to these elements of revelation regarding the Church? If we are thus determined not to interpret Romans 11 in isolation, then it is clear that the parable of the olive tree represents a view of Bible history purged of any reference to the essentials of Christianity.

We are now equipped to recognise that there is a continuity between the O.T. Israel and the N.T. believers. While it is clear beyond doubt that the continuity is not that all God's people are one family in the sense that we can call the Church Zion and believe that the only future for a saved Israel is re-incorporation into the N.T. Church, I feel I have something more to learn about what is the nature of the continuity. I suggest the answer that the parable presents the answer to a question, Who are the people of God on earth during the different dispensations? Who at any time is enjoying the root and fatness of the promises from Abraham to the future restored and believing Israel? Wherever what belongs to a heavenly calling belongs to the

whole truth, the parable omits it, for example, the Rapture. The purpose of the parable is clear beyond doubt, to lay down with terrific force that God's promises to Abraham relating to the faith and salvation of the future Israel are going to be fulfilled, for if one word of God can fail of its fulfilment we have no ground for the faith of Romans 5 : 1.

Let us see where the parable touches the full light on Christianity given elsewhere in the N.T.

v. 17. "some of the branches. . . broken off". = the staggering fact of the unbelief of the majority of the Jews in the Gospels and the Acts.

v. 17. "thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them" = (in the different parable used in John 10), the "other (Gentile) sheep" brought to join the disciples, already outside the Jewish fold to form one flock under one Shepherd, that is, the Church.

v. 22. "thou also shalt be cut off" = Revelation 3 : 16, after the Rapture, the Laodicean Church spued out of Christ's mouth = Matthew 25 : 10, the foolish virgins shut out after the wise virgins have gone in with the Bridegroom.

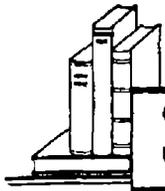
vv. 23 and 24. "they shall be grafted in. . . again. . . grafted into their own olive tree" = the full restoration of all Israel, converted when Christ comes "out of Sion". Psalms 14 : 7, 110 : 1-3, and others. Sion is the literal Sion in Palestine, David's city.

Finally, it is instructive to note the immense contrast between God's "purpose" in Romans 8 : 28 and in 9 : 11. In ch. 8, God's purpose is explained as originating in eternity. (Election and predestination are 'dated' "before the foundation of the world" in Ephesians 1 : 3.) And its end is in heavenly glory (Romans 8 : 18). In chs. 9-11, the purpose dates back to the promises to Abraham, and ends with all Israel turned from iniquity in their land by Christ coming out of Sion.

Question 5. The Jewish reference in the vision of the Bride as the Holy Jerusalem in Revelation 21, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates ?

Answer. These references are closely connected with Question 2 and the answer given. Amongst so much appearing in the chapter of heavenly glory, we read also of "the nations of them which are saved" and "the kings of the earth" set under the city, walking in its light, set also in direct relation to the gates, that is to the authority of the city. (vv. 24, 25 and 26). It is not surprising that in this vision which so clearly includes the administration of the nations in the Millennium, Israel in all its twelve tribes should have a topmost place. The twelve apostles form the foundation as in Ephesians 2 : 20.

(to be continued)



THE FATHER'S LOVE _____ J. S. BLACKBURN

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee : but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it : that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

(John 17 : 24-26)

IN heaven above there is nothing higher than the love of the Father to the Son. Few who read the title of this paper will not, at least for a moment, entertain the thought that here is something far above me. Yet before turning the pages or putting down the paper altogether, let us recall the addresses by the same apostle John, to the babes in the faith—especially for them ! “I am writing to you, the little children in the faith, because ye have known the Father”. I have a feeling that this means that the newest convert, the youngest saint, instinctively, that is without reflecting on the magnificent greatness of the fact that it is so, addresses God in prayer as “Father”. In most families the following conversation is more or less often experienced. The five-year-old little son comes home after his first day at school, and since he, with all the indifference in the world, offers no information about what has happened that day, mother can wait no longer and asks what he has been doing at school today—his first day at school. To which question he replies, with superior nonchalance, “Oh, we’ve been doing maths and languages”. There is probably no conscious intent to deceive. He knows from older brothers and sisters that what one does at school is maths and languages. Therefore, in his mind, what he has been doing at school is just that—maths and languages : and he has no consciousness of the immense vista which has opened up before him that day when he has first been occupied with maths and languages ! The newest convert, if he reads the section of John’s letter addressed specifically to himself (1 John 2 : 18-27), will dimly perceive that, though there are many dangers, if he continues in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, there will be growth into the fuller knowledge and deeper experience as he becomes a young man and then a father in the faith.

And so I repeat, in heaven above there is nothing higher than the love of the Father to the Son. This is manifested by the fact that the

Lord Jesus in this chapter looks for nothing further than to be restored to that glorious home to which eternally belonged the Father's love for Him. In that eternity, where all that is truly abiding finds its home, the world in all its striving and tumult, always seeking and never finding, with all its massive achievements and frightful evil and suffering, that world is but an episode. That love existed before the foundation of the world (v. 24); in all its course the world has not known the Father (v. 25), and the home of the Father and Son with all the saints in visible and perfect unity is forever beyond the world. All glory and honour on this earth will soon adorn the head of Jesus, but more to Him than crowns and kingdoms, than all the glory of this earth, is His Father's love.

But here is something wonderful for us—something wonderful to begin with as babes, better to go on with as young men and fathers in the faith, but only the Christian can say "the best is yet to be". The wonderful thing is that the Lord Jesus, the ever blessed Son, shares that love—the Father's love—with us who are His own. We cannot in this life fully grasp it: we could not have believed it, unless the Son Himself had said it. But He did say to the Father "in order that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (v. 26). His prayer and this provision was and is, not only that the Father's love might be with them, but in them, known and enjoyed by them, to be their joy as it was His joy.

The Lord Jesus has done everything that was necessary to our entering into real possession of this priceless treasure, the Father's love. He has loved His own to the end: He has revealed the Father's Name. He has given the indwelling Spirit. In the prayer we have read, He, so to speak, puts in a claim with His Father that we should enter into such real possession. If we receive and keep His words, have them in our hearts by meditation, and dwell in them, then the Father will indeed become the real object of our affections also.

A very natural question can arise. Surely (we might think) this love must be something different in us than it was in the Son. The answer from this exchange of home-confidence between the Father and the Son is clear; the love which He asks for His own is the same love as the Father's love. Our capacity to contain it is, of course, restricted: it has limits. Jesus receives His Father's love in full measure, and responds to it in equal fulness. We are limited. Our measure is small but the love is the same. The wording employed by the Lord Jesus in v. 26 might well be thought of as specifically designed to correct such a question as that with which this paragraph begins. It is "the love wherewith thou hast loved me", no less.

It is a most fruitful meditation to trace this love in John's gospel. Indeed it is a central part of the content of the gospel to develop this most transcendent theme. We start at 5:20, in which chapter we have the first great opening up of the revelation of the Father, "The Father loveth the Son". This statement is an eternal present, and in it the Son speaks out for the first time the blessedness of the love of the Father to the Son from all eternity. To merely human thought, such love might be considered self-sufficient, with no need to reach outside. But such was that love that it had to seek the sons of men. This in-

volved not only incarnation but death. And here is the second amazing statement (10 : 17) "therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life". How can our finite thought cope with the fact that a love perfectly satisfied with its object, yet finds, in Calvary, a new occasion for its outflow ? The circle is completed (is remaining only to be amplified and confirmed in the prayer of chapter 17), with 16 : 27 "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me".

FREE-FLOWING PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE _____ COLIN CURRY

2. "TO WRITE. . . IS NOT IRKSOME

(Philippians 3)

TO repeat old themes with you is not irksome to me, and indeed your safety requires it". So the latter part of verse 1 may be paraphrased. Paul is not overstating the facts here, for in reality he has a deep enthusiasm for his theme, however often he refers to it. "Rejoice in the Lord" is safe advice indeed, vigorously and well demonstrated by Paul (see also 4 : 4). Here we are allowed to see what a Christian can be, and ought to be, in his outlook and in his experience. May we catch something of his spirit as we consider this chapter.

A Total Reversal of Values

The excellence of Christ grips his own soul with a wonderful freshness as he writes. The words come easily as his great object dominates his thoughts. The opening warning (verse 2), spoken in such strong and jealous terms, against influences and persons who would side-track his readers, indicates the intensity of his feelings on the matter. He wishes earnestly to protect them from tendencies which could usurp the place of Christ in their lives. The flesh (i.e. self, with its interests and its performances) easily slips into the saddle again. Cultivated self, and legally-minded self, falsely esteemed as something valuable (perhaps even thought of as specially suited to the Christian), is a great snare against which constant watchfulness is needed. Needless to say other aspects of self-indulgence apart from self-approval are quite undesirable too (see verses 18, 19). In contrast, verse 3 describes what truly characterises the Christian : approach to God through Christ, to worship Him by the Spirit ; boasting and delighting in Christ Jesus ; in a realm where there is no room for self (nor confidence in self) in any degree. Here is a one-verse outline of the underlying nature of genuine Christianity.

Paul now shows (verses 4 to 9) how the sight of the living Christ has commanded this great change in his own judgments. His whole

scale of values has been reversed. The orientation of his life and thinking is a new one altogether. What things were gain to him (and it is an impressive list) he saw as valueless from the very day when the light from heaven shone into his being. He is more sure of it still as he writes : he has a deeper sense of the worth of Christ and the worthlessness of all else. The losses are now thought of as "dung"; and, at the opposite pole, what has replaced them is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". The Person he knows far outbalances and outshines every other thing (and all of them put together) as an object of importance in his estimation. Any knowledge he possessed earlier cannot even be mentioned in the presence of such knowledge as this. His righteousness under the law is less than zero in the light of this standard. A new and perfect righteousness replaces it, for which all the glory goes to Christ.

Christianity is Non-Static

The succeeding verses (8-14) show the tremendous forward urge felt by Paul in this new life which is totally dominated by his Lord. The freedom with which he bares his own soul and its desires is impressive. The true Christian experience, while having already a deep sense of the fulness of Christ, is not one of satisfaction with present attainment. There is progression in the Christian life. A person truly involved therein presses ahead, pushing forward, driven onwards by the sense that there is more to be realised. He pursues with zeal a single-minded course which has Christ as its Companion and its Objective, known already (perhaps well known) and yet still to be known a great deal more. To win Christ, to know Him, to be found in Him, to be conformed, to attain, to apprehend, to reach forward, pressing towards the ultimate high goal to which he has been called, in resurrection and likeness to Christ ; these are his desires. Thus he describes the one purpose in life which embraces and colours all his other activities.

To move onwards in this way, with thoughts and actions controlled by an appreciation of Christ, is inevitably to be moving away from other things. Paul forgets the things that are behind, not only those that have become vile and worthless alongside Christ, but more recent things too. He does not dwell on past experiences as a Christian, not even on the highly acceptable ones. His substance is in the present, and in the future. He has a very dim view of the motions of mere "religion" ; formal Christianity not only has no appeal to him, but he is intolerant of it. Material things mean little to him ; the whole epistle demonstrates this plainly. Gross forms of self-indulgence are spoken of in the severest terms ; more refined forms, such as setting the mind on "earthly things", are classed in the same category. To be engrossed in these areas is to be aligned with the "enemies of the cross of Christ". We are surely intended to be guided by Paul's assessment of these various lines of activity.

Looking for the Saviour

Instead of allowing earthly interests to have an undue claim upon him, a person true to the spirit of this chapter has his loyalties in heaven, in the realm where Christ is supreme (verses 20, 21). His centre of control is there. His expectation and prospects are there too. The coming of the Saviour from heaven is awaited with alertness and confidence ; it will crown all our Lord's saving activities on behalf of his people. As we have seen, a great transforming effect is going on today : the result of occupation with Christ, rejoicing in the Lord, knowing Him and pressing on in that knowledge. His people are constantly being refined, in spirit, in attitude, and in outlook. Beholding (as in a glass) the glory of the Lord, a change towards His likeness takes place (2 Corinthians 3 : 18). Such is the power of the Glory of Christ as we admire and assimilate it by the Spirit of God. We see this working out in this chapter : Paul reflects the greatness of Christ as he speaks about it. But there is to be a great climax to this wonderful process. Our Lord will finish perfectly all His work for us, completing the whole operation of salvation, by a further and different display of His power. Our very **bodies** are to be changed into His likeness ; bodies of humiliation to be fashioned like unto His body of glory. It will be done by a mighty act of His irresistible power, and it is to happen soon. Truly there are no real losses for the Christian, and the gains are beyond telling.

We need not be surprised that, after such a chapter, the apostle moves over (in chapter 4) to speak of that peace and quiet restfulness which can be known, almost apart from circumstances. Certainly he demonstrates this himself, and shows the way to his readers. Open to the person in touch with Christ, and recommended here, are the following possibilities : rejoicing in the Lord ; unburdening of all anxieties in prayer, the peace of God calming and protecting the spirit ; thinking on profitable lines without distraction ; activity along constructive lines too ; and the sense in all situations of the presence of the God of peace. Such a person is rarely perturbed and is not found murmuring nor complaining ; he is never in a flap about anything, though always energetic in channels pleasing to his Lord. His strength and supply are in Christ, with Whom he can face anything.

Let us be Thus Minded

All this is clearly intended as a guide and pattern for us (see 3 : 15, and again 4 : 9). Let us therefore be thus minded. Presented with this model of the Christian life, its pattern of thinking, its values and its aims, how (we may ask) do we measure up to it ? Is this an ideal only, or is it in some degree a reality in our own experience ? That it is a **possibility** seems beyond doubt, since we have such a real example of it. And that Christ (appreciated and drawn upon) is more than able to put this stamp upon our lives must also be beyond question. Let us move more urgently in this direction, in obedience to this teaching, and in tune with the evident zeal shown by Paul as he focusses on Christ and writes such magnificent words about Him.

FRUITFUL OR FRAUDULENT ? _____ **JOHN BARNES**

Mark 11 : 12-14

THE fig tree in this passage is clearly a picture of Israel, and if we consider the cluster of expressions, Jerusalem, city, temple, house, mountain and fig tree, all occurring in this context, this impression cannot but be deepened. The Lord Jesus had a profound lesson to teach His disciples and us. We are either what we claim to be (perhaps rather poor examples, sometimes) or we are frauds. The fig tree in this scripture was a fraud. Although the incident described is properly speaking a miracle, it is also a parable of a practical nature. There are examples somewhat akin in the Old Testament. Compare, for example, the book of Ezekiel, chapters 4 and 5 where we have the acted parables of the tile, the iron pan, the prophet's sleeping posture, his polluted food, his beard and so on. Hosea's marriage complications provide another example of this type of teaching. The Lord Jesus used this event to bring before His disciples and us a most striking picture of fraudulent religion.

The chapter opens with a reference to Bethphage, which means "The house of figs." It was from this locality that the Lord sent two of His disciples to procure the colt for His public entry into Jerusalem. Having effected His triumphal entry and having "looked about upon all things," he went out of the city to Bethany. It was in the morning, returning to Jerusalem, that He saw the fig tree. Several points about the tree are of great significance. When the Lord had looked about upon everything in the city He noted the absence of certain features and the prevalence of others. The things which were lacking were mercy, sympathy, lovingkindness, truth, selflessness. The things which prevailed were pride, greed, cruelty, selfishness but there was nothing to satisfy His heart. He saw Profession, Prominence, Promise, Pretension, Position and Privilege subsisting alongside total barrenness of true fruit for God. Each of these features may be seen in this incident and it may be a not unprofitable exercise to consider them simply.

1. Profession. When the Lord Jesus came to the tree He was hungry. (v. 12) A fig tree would surely provide Him with the means of satisfying that hunger, but there was no fruit there. The expression in verse 13, "for the time of figs was not yet," has led some to assert that the Lord Jesus was unreasonable to expect fruit when it was too early in the year for figs, and that, in fact, He gave way to a fit of pique when He cursed the tree. But this is an unworthy conclusion and no true lover of Christ would give it a moment's credence. We must look elsewhere for an explanation and this has been given by many writers. The fig tree has this peculiarity that the fruit appears before the leaves. This tree had leaves and nothing but leaves (v. 13) Therefore the tree, if we may personalise it, was fraudulently advertising itself as a fruitbearing fig tree. If there had been no foliage, the

fruit bearing season not having arrived, there would have been no deceit. But the tree was dressed in a profusion of leaves and therefore **should** have been bearing some figs.

Israel was making a great profession. Jerusalem was the holy city ; the temple was the house of the Lord ; they claimed a unique relationship with God. The leaves of their profession were profuse but the barren branches offered no satisfaction to the hungry seeker. It is worthy of note that fig leaves occur very early in Bible history and were used by our fallen parents in an attempt to cover their nakedness. The leaves professed to cover them, but, as we know, they were still naked before the Lord. His searching eye sees the reality of a situation whatever may be the pretence. The Jews' profession was loudly vocal. This idea is implied here. The Lord Jesus **answered** the tree ; He answered its mute boast. See Mark 11 : 14.

2. Prominence. The fig tree occupied a conspicuous position. The Lord saw it **afar off**. (v. 13) An object which is visible from a distance cannot be said to be in an obscure place. On one occasion the Lord said, " A city which is set on a hill cannot be hid," Jerusalem occupies a site which exposes it to view. The temple stood on an elevated site in the city and could be seen from a distance. The mountain, another of the figures used here, also underlines the idea of conspicuity. Judaism had a prominent rôle in the world as a religion and the Jews made a great boast of their religious significance among the nations, while sects like the Pharisees seized every opportunity to bring themselves to public notice as religious men.

3. Promise. The rich foliage of the tree gave **promise of sustainment** to the hungry traveller. According to Hebrew law it was permissible to help oneself to fruit or crops in this casual way. (Deuteronomy 23 : 24, 25.) But in vain did any hungry visitor search in Israel for such refreshment at that time. The people's energies were dissipated in lifeless ceremonies and barren philosophies. Even divinely ordained ceremonies, dissociated from true Godly living, are emasculated of value. (cf. Isaiah 1 : 10-15) The Eunuch of Ethiopia had travelled a long way to worship at Jerusalem but was returning to his distant home as empty as he had come. He had, somehow, acquired a priceless document, but the system itself was a derelict hulk, sunk in apostasy. There was plenty of promise but no fulfilment, and hungry seekers turned away with bitter disappointment from Jerusalem's vacuity.

4. Pretension. The claims of Judaism were immense. The tree was not simply a fig tree, one amongst others, but **THE** fig tree, the **ONE** fig tree in the world. (cf. Matthew 21 : 19 N.Tr.) This was how the Judaic party saw their religious significance. They considered themselves to be one nation on earth who were right with God. The Pharisee who prayed in the temple represents, no doubt, religious Israel. He is considered as saying to God, "I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men." (Luke 18 : 11 N.Tr.) He preened himself on his own righteousness and despised all others. (v. 9) Here is an example of the nauseating conceit which the Lord Jesus heartily detested. It was true that Israel had favoured relationships with Jehovah. They boasted in their connections ; "We have Abraham to our father." But they did not do the works of Abraham so their vaunted claims were

not valid in the sphere of reality before God. Reality does not indulge in pretension. It does not need to ; it is what it is, necessarily.

5. Position. Israel had not been located in Palestine for nothing. The land is situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, ideally placed to be an international testimony. For a brief period this was true. The David-Solomon era provided a few years of this witness and surrounding nations came to know something of Israel's God through Israel. Hiram and the queen of Sheba are two examples of the impact of this witness on the outside world and, after her visit to Solomon, the queen of the south returned to her land full, not empty like the Eunuch of queen Candace. She had heard and seen marvels of wisdom and instruction in Jehovah's land and among His people. Her testimony is weighty ; "The half was not told me." What a confirmation of the happy conditions in the land at that time.

The fig tree was "in the way." (Matthew 21) It did not need to be searched for in some remote corner. This was the position which the Lord had secured for Israel and in this place He elected to establish His name and to have His house. It was to be a house of prayer for all nations and a witness to mankind, where He could be enquired after. Instead, Israel's squalid behaviour had caused His name to be blasphemed among those very nations. (Romans 2 : 24)

6. Privilege. Finally we may think of the favour Israel enjoyed as God's people. We read of the fig tree that it was on the way from Bethany to the city ; near to Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. (Mark 11 : 1) It was in a favoured place of nearness ; a place of privilege and of power. People sometimes question the value of being a Jew since true blessing is available to all alike by faith in Christ. Paul anticipates this difficulty in his comprehensive letter to the Romans and indicates that the advantages are great, not the least being that to them were committed God's oracles. This privilege is incalculable. It is true that the mass of them did not value these writings as they ought to have done, nor did they avail themselves of the real blessings enfolded in them, **but the blessings were there.** There was real wealth there though largely unused.

There would be little value, other than academic, if we thought of these things as referring only to Israel. They do, primarily, but were surely written for our learning also. Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, considers the possibility of a stranger drifting into a meeting of the assembly and discovering the startling fact that, "God is in you of a truth." (Corinthians 14 : 25) This is a serious challenge. Is there true worship, real teaching, earnest prayer in the gatherings of His saints ? If there is only the foliage of profession ; if like the Jews of the Lord's days on earth, we lean on our historical connections and claim moral descent from the fathers of the brethren movement, and if we have all the traditions and trappings but not the fruit, will those who come seeking be satisfied ? Will the Lord, who searches us for reality commend us when true fruit is not to be found ? We should, in that case, be condemned before Him.

The Lord Jesus made a further reference to the fig tree which, it seems to me, is not always clearly understood. In Matthew 24 :32 He speaks of the fig tree putting forth leaves. This is sometimes said to

concern the spiritual revival of Israel but the expression cannot so be understood for this would be at variance with the Lord's words in Mark 11 : 14, "Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever." This seems to be a strong negative. Mark tells us that the tree dried up from the roots. That system of profession was rooted in man, fleshly man ; in what he could be. This cannot please God. It is to be noted that the Lord's prediction relates to leaves only. Luke, in his record, refers to other trees besides the fig tree. (Luke 21 : 30) The fig tree and all the trees are mentioned. As we have seen, leaf is not fruit and there can be no fruit for God in man in nature. The Jews thought of themselves as the exclusive tree ; they and no one else. The Lord Jesus, however, lumps them unceremoniously together with the other trees. All flesh is as grass, Jewish or Gentile. There is no difference. He has looked round about upon it all and it is all unfruitful. Only that which is born of Him will satisfy His heart. "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

The Lord yearns for this satisfaction. We may notice how He came, looked carefully and returned the next day. Not satisfied with one visit, He came again and again. In this chapter He seems to come about four times. He came in the morning. He had sought fruit for years on this tree but He kept coming, and came early. Jeremiah stresses the earliness and the earnestness of the Lord. He speaks a number of times of "rising up early and sending." (25 : 4 etc.) The Lord hungers for fruit from His own. May we be exercised to promote fruitful conditions in our gatherings and in our lives so that when He looks He may find that which will bring pleasure to His heart.

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975 ——— GRAEME W. FAIRBAIRN

1. WHAT WILT THOU THAT I SHOULD DO UNTO THEE ?

Mark 10 : 46-52

THE Lord was returning to Jerusalem from Galilee and passed through Jericho for the last time. As He passed by, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the wayside. To Bartimaeus it was no doubt a very ordinary day. Someone would lead him out to the roadside, and there he would sit all day with his bowl, begging for food and for money, and relying on others to lead him about. However, during this particular day there was a great commotion : there were crowds of people about and a great deal of noise. He asked what was happening, and someone told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Now somehow or other Bartimaeus must have heard of Jesus, and of His power to help, and to heal the sick ; he may even have heard of other people whose sight had been restored to them. Suddenly he realised that there was someone passing by who might be able to help him in his desperate need, and so he began to shout for someone to bring him to Jesus. The crowd tried to hold him back—the "crowd"

always try to prevent us from coming face to face with Christ—but Jesus knew he was there, and stopped and called him. And then in a few moments, no doubt much to his surprise, he found himself right beside Jesus, the One whom he had heard about, and heard Jesus saying these remarkable words to him, “What do you want me to do for you ?” On the one hand we have Jesus, the One who is the Lord of glory, and who someday will fill the universe ; and on the other we have Bartimaeus, without hope and begging for a mere existence ; and we find that Jesus is asking Bartimaeus to tell Him what He can do to help him.

Don't we find in these words an insight into the very heart of God, and into the very centre of the gospel ? The heart of the gospel, and indeed of all our Christian experience, is that God has done something for us. God has in fact done the very greatest He could possibly do for us : He gave His only Son. What is more, He is doing great things for us and in us now, because we read that the One who began a good work in us will bring it to completion (Philippians 1 : 6). Man's “natural religion” is quite different from this : he accepts that there is a God and that there is a heaven to be reached ; he goes on to assume that if he does his best and works his hardest, then God might accept him. How very different from the gospel ! To come into the favour we have to do—nothing ! Jesus has done it all and we come and accept what He offers. This comes up time and time again throughout the Bible. Remember the Lord's words to the woman at the well : “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘give me a drink’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (John 4 : 10). We read in Philippians 4 : 19 that “My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”. James tells us that “Every good gift and every perfect gift. . . comes down from the Father” (James 1 : 17). Everything we have is from God. “What do you want me to do for you ?” If anyone else had asked Bartimaeus this question no doubt he would have asked for food, or for money, or for someone to lead him about. But when he met Jesus he brought his deepest need to Him. For his deep need was not that he was poor, not that he was hungry, but that he was blind, and the very moment that he brought this need to the Lord, the Lord acted. “Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.”

The love and the power of the Lord have not changed, and as we come before Him today He asks us, “What do you want me to do for you ?” He is Lord, He is the One whom we serve, and yet He says that He is among us as one who serves, (Luke 22 : 27) and He delights to meet us in our deepest need. Indeed, to come in our need is the only way we can approach Him. What do we want from Jesus ? As He comes to you and says “What do you want me to do for you ?” How will you answer Him ? The day on which Bartimaeus met Jesus had begun as an ordinary day for him, but that didn't matter. What did matter was that on that day he came face to face with the Lord, and the Lord met him in his deepest need. Sometimes it is almost by surprise that the Lord meets us, but He does meet us and says lovingly, “What do you want me to do for you ?” How do we answer Him ?

As we come before the Lord our needs are very different. There are some who don't know Christ as Saviour at all. It may be that you are not a Christian. You may be interested, you may have Christian friends, you may pass as a Christian, but do you know Christ as **your** Saviour ? If not, then think what it means : you may be intelligent, you may be rich, you may be good-looking and you may have a lot of friends, but if you don't have Christ then **you have nothing !** What a wonderful thing to come to Jesus in all your need and all your doubts and all your fears, and say "Lord, I want to be a real Christian ; I want to be forgiven ; I want You to take over my life." It is the greatest thing in the world to be a Christian. Immediately Bartimaeus received his sight, and immediately the Lord can save you, and bring you from darkness into His marvellous light.

There are some who are Christians and yet who have fallen back from following the Lord. The apostle Paul had to write to the Galatians and say "Foolish Galatians. . . you were running well" (Galatians 3 : 1 ; 5 : 7). What went wrong ? Are you a believer who was "running well" but something has come in to hinder you and hold you back and stop you from living wholly for God ? Has the Lord to tell you that you are foolish like the Galatians ? What have you done with your life—has some little thing come in to prevent you from living it for God ? In the case of the Galatians the false teaching which was hindering them apparently came in in a small way at first (a little leaven) but it spread and affected all (Galatians 5 : 9). It may be that it's only a small thing which has come into your life, but it is sufficient to spoil a life of obedience to God. Maybe there is something which you are clinging to in your life which has to go ; maybe something which needs to be confessed ; or something which has to be put right with another person. "What do you want me to do for you ?" "Lord, I want my life to be sorted out, I want that thing that is wrong in my life to go, so that I may live for God." The Lord will answer you so that like Bartimaeus you can go on following Jesus in the way.

There are many who know the Lord and follow Him daily, and are rejoicing continually in close fellowship with Him. To the Lord's question, "What do you want me to do for you?" the reply is simple, "That I may know more about Jesus !" A verse of a gospel hymn says,

"I love to tell the story, for those who know it best,
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest"

How true it is ! If this is our desire then we will not be disappointed. We can have as much of the blessing of God as we want. Jesus says "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Unfortunately we don't usually "hunger" and "thirst". A man who is in the desert without water knows what thirst is ; he knows that if he doesn't get water quickly then he will die, and so finding water quickly becomes the only thing of real importance to him. Is seeking the Lord and His kingdom and His righteousness the thing of supreme importance to you ?

"What do you want me to do for you ?" The Lord is always the same, He loves us, and He loves to give us those things which we need. As He so graciously asks us this question, what is our answer to be ?

2. TYPICAL TEACHING IN SCRIPTURE

L. WALLER

TYPOLOGY has been widely used among us for many years, acceptably and with great profit. When the risen Saviour conversed with the two on the road to Emmaus, He spoke of 'the things concerning Himself in all the Scripture'; here indeed is divine approval for a typical use of the Old Testament.

Sadly, it is necessary to issue a word of caution before proceeding, to the end that we do not make our studies an exercise in ingenuity or contrived interpretations. This sad abuse is counter-productive and partially responsible for large numbers of evangelicals rejecting the whole concept of typical teaching today. Many neglect this rich vein of truth and the loss to Christians to whom the Old Testament has little or no voice is incalculable in terms of a heart-stirring appreciation of Christ in all His loveliness and perfection as is seen in the life of Joseph for example; or guidance for the people of God in every age represented in His dealings with the Children of Israel.

A straightforward and profitable line of study is to follow through some of the major themes of Scripture as they arise. The adversary of God and His people is presented to us in Genesis 3 as the serpent in all his guile and subtlety, and subsequent types of him in Pharaoh and Goliath reveal his tenacity, imitative power, and open rebellion—the inveterate enemy of the servants of God! What a wonderful preview too of his ultimate defeat at the hands of great David's greater Son. The shout of victory from the valley of Elah has been surpassed in that triumphant cry from the Cross of Calvary, when Satan's head was truly bruised. In Revelation 12 : 9 and 20 : 2 where the collective titles of Satan are found, that age-old enemy is seen to be finally overthrown by the Lamb.

When John the Baptist exclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God' he was bringing into focus One who had been portrayed from the earliest pages of the Book of God. Abel's sacrifice at the very dawn of human history established the right approach to God by sinful man. The shedding of blood in sacrifice from that moment of time was the principle of acceptance with God. Genesis 22 movingly describes the father and the son going 'both of them together' to the place of sacrifice—'God will provide Himself a Lamb'. Truth profound! Exodus 12 and the Passover lamb is a yet further voice, pointing on to when 'in the fulness of time' God's Lamb would appear and 'Christ our Passover would be sacrificed for us'. How inextricably linked are the Old and New Testaments in presenting God's plan of salvation and the Saviour himself.

A further step would be to note the specific use made by New Testament writers of Old Testament material. A simple division could be People, Places, Events and Things. e.g. :

People	Isaac	Gen. 22 : 1-18	Hebrews 11 : 17-19
		Type of Christ crucified and raised from the dead.	
	Melchisedec and Aaron	Gen. 14 : 18, Exodus 28	Heb. 7
		These two combine to show the order and pattern of our glorious High Priest.	
Places	Egypt	Ex. 2 : 23	2 Corinthians 4 : 4
		Type of the world ; i.e. where men are held in bondage to Satan, its god.	
Events	The Flood	Gen. 7 : 17	Luke 17 : 27
		Type of God's judgement, impartial and universal in its scope.	
Things	Manna	Ex. 16 : 15	John 6 : 31-33
		Type of Christ the True Bread come down from heaven.	

Additionally there are many passages which allude indirectly, yet equally helpfully to New Testament subjects. In Genesis 24 the story of Abraham sending Eliezer his servant to find a bride for his son Isaac has many fine overtones of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The life of Joseph however must stand supreme as the most comprehensive of all types of the Saviour. Not only in the faultless record of his life, his place in his father's affections, his humiliation and eventual exaltation, but also in the rich prophetic words uttered by Jacob in Genesis 49. ' . . . a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall'. What a wealth of appreciation of Christ there is to be found in meditation of these words. Finally, the Tabernacle and the offerings (Burnt, Meat, Peace, Sin, etc.) found in Leviticus shed immense light on the work of Christ in His devotion and perfection. All such themes as we have mentioned, and many more besides, are to found in embryo in the Old Testament, shadows of the real substance and totally eclipsed in the reality and finality of the perfect Son of God Himself and His heavenly kingdom.

The motivation behind such studies is not to the end of having superior knowledge, much less an encyclopaedic performance at Bible Readings, but rather that 'the man of God may be thoroughly furnished' and equipped to 'rightly divide the Word of Truth'. A sure way of testing our use of typology will be in the results it produces. If our response is similar to that of Cleopas and his companion who exclaimed after their 'guest' had vanished out of their sight 'did not our hearts burn within us !' then a right appreciation of the Word will be ours.

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

(continued from p. 176 and concluded)

Question 6. Hebrews 11, vv. 10 and 16 refer to a heavenly city and country built and prepared for the Jewish O.T. believers by God. Will the fulfilment of this be the geographical Jerusalem of the Millennium—and presumably an earthly blessing in perfection in eternity, if one can look that far forward?

Answer. It will be worth while here to glance again at the answer to Question 1 on p. 158. The earthly promises to Abram concerning an elaborately defined Palestine are to be fulfilled in the Millennium in the geographical Palestine and Jerusalem. But Hebrews 11:10 tells us something about Abraham we would not have known from the Old Testament, that he personally had a hope in heaven, and this is confirmed for the other patriarchs by v. 16 which you quote.

The later chapters of Hebrews are much preoccupied with a city. It is referred to not only in the two passages quoted in the question, and in 13:14, but also with much more detail in 12:22, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”. It seems fair to take all these references to a city, occurring so close together in Hebrews, as referring to the same city. If this be so, we can confine our enquiry to 12:22 since it gives most detail.

I have not yet a clear conviction about the meaning of the details of this system to which the Jewish Christians are said to have come, especially as concerns the order in which the distinct elements appear. Nevertheless, some suggestions are offered. If we take the word ‘and’ as having a punctuating force in 12:22–24, then the elements of the system of Christian fulfilment, probably during the Millennium, are:—

Mount Sion

The City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem

The innumerable company of angels, the general assembly

The Church of the firstborn, whose names are. . . in heaven

God, the Judge of all

The spirits of just men made perfect

Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant

The blood of sprinkling

This city is distinct from the earthly Mount Sion, as well as from the Church, which we know from Paul’s epistles is the body and bride of Christ: but it is also distinct from “the spirits of just men made perfect”. Perhaps this city bears a close relation to the city of Revelation 21, and is the home of both the Church and the O.T. saints in resurrection, which two families still preserve their distinctness from each other.

Perhaps in this respect you are right in raising the question whether Scripture gives us clear light. Scripture is however clear on

two points, first, that the heavenly hope of the O.T. saints is quite a separate thing from the earthly future for Israel, on which latter point Scripture, and therefore our faith, is clear and firm. Second, the O.T. saints, even in resurrection, have an identity distinct from the Church.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

THE ASSYRIAN

(continued from p. 160)

THE thought of the Assyrian is, before all, to lay hands on the immense wealth accumulated in Palestine by the return of the Jews, from the time when they dwelt in safety, before the last half-week of Daniel, in open cities under the domination of Antichrist (Ezekiel 38 : 11-12). It appears that the Assyrian, adversary of the Antichrist and of the Roman Beast, deceives the people who are living outside Jerusalem, by assuring them of his alliance. This alliance he breaks afterwards in order to accomplish his purpose (Isaiah 33 : 8), as he did formerly in the history of Hezekiah (2 Kings 18 : 14-17). The aim of Edom is different from that of the Assyrian. Driven on by his unchanging hatred against Israel, a hatred shown in former times at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Psalm 137 : 7), he has once again the thought of possessing himself of Judah and Israel, of establishing his own Kingdom in Palestine (Ezekiel 35 : 10).*

These designs are thwarted by the people inhabiting Jerusalem. The wicked men who are there in control, and also have made a pact with the Antichrist, contract an alliance with the Roman Beast in opposition to the Assyrian, called at different times "the overflowing scourge", "the river" (Isaiah 8 : 7) "the consumption decreed" (Isaiah 10 : 22 ; 28 : 2, 15, 17, 18 ; Daniel 9 : 27)†, but their plan is reduced to nothing (Isaiah 28 : 14-22). The Lord, coming out of heaven with the army of His saints, will destroy by His appearing the two supports of Jerusalem, the Roman Emperor with his army, and the Antichrist. After this, the Assyrian will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel (Daniel 11 : 45), by the manifestation of the Messiah on the earth, when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14 : 4). During the same period, the armies of the nations will be destroyed in

*It is scarcely necessary to insist on the fact that these nationalities, apparently disappeared, will resume their existence in the last days. Already, for long years, there is being traced out, almost unnoticed in Europe, the nationalistic movement which has for its aim the re-establishment of Assyria.

†In Isaiah 8 : 8 it is the Assyrian of history ; in Daniel 11 : 22, the King of the North or Antiochus Epiphanes ; in Jeremiah 47 : 2, Babylon.

the territory of Edom (Isaiah 34 : 1-8 ; 63 : 1-6).

The end in view of all this conflict is the **Lord Himself** (Psalm 2 : 1-3). It is against Him that Satan, cast down from heaven on to the earth, rouses the whole world, knowing that he has only a short time. His instruments will not have a very clear knowledge of his aim, their minds being blinded by their own political considerations. Satan alone, who is leading them on, will have a perfect understanding of what he is about (Revelation 16 : 13-14 ; 19 : 19).

Jerusalem is the hub of this formidable movement of the peoples. During the end times, when the land of Israel is still trampled under-foot by the nations, Jerusalem forms a rampart, apparently firm against their encroachments. Jerusalem is governed at that moment by the tools of the Antichrist, similar to the princes of Judah under Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38), wicked men, mockers and hypocrites who defy the power of the North, counting on the support of the West. The apostate population of Jerusalem trusts in them. But, in their midst, a collective witness has been formed from the commencement, the fruit of the teaching of the "wise" (Daniel 11 : 33, 35 ; 12 : 3, 10) a **Remnant,*** *oppressed and suffering*, awaiting the Messiah and trusting in Him, the sure foundation laid in Zion. This testimony is extended to all the land of Judah. The circumstances of this Remnant of Judah, at each instant are mentioned in the Psalms and developed in the Prophets. At first, fleeing en masse, not only outside Jerusalem but also outside of Judea, from the persecution of the Beast and the Antichrist, and taking refuge, protected by divine providence, amongst the nations in the desert.‡ Matthew 24 : 15-21 ; Revelation 12 : 14-16 ; a portion of them remaining in Jerusalem, in order to serve as a testimony amongst the apostasy, and suffering in its leaders, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 : 1-13, as martyrs for its faith. The exiles from Judah will re-enter their land, at the end of three and a half years, at the time when the Beast and the false prophet will be destroyed, but only to find the Assyrian still in occupation. That portion of the Remnant of Judah which has not left Jerusalem is thus found in that city at the time of the events which immediately precede the destruction of the Assyrian. These faithful ones are there to await the Messiah when already their brethren, in the land of promise, lift their eyes to the hills from whence shall come their help.

*Readers unfamiliar with prophecy could be astonished to find, ever and again, this term "the Remnant" coming from our pen. The fact is that it fills the whole of O.T. prophecy. The Remnant is the believing remainder of the people, the nucleus of the future Israel, the saved ones, the escaped. The Hebrew words Shear and also Shaar, Sheerith, Sarid, Yether, are constantly applied to it.

‡Which are these nations ? It would be difficult to define them exactly. It seems that they are not the ones mentioned in Psalm 83. Nevertheless, in Isaiah 16 : 3-4 Moab becomes the refuge of the fugitives from Judah against the destroyer and the oppressor. I tend to believe that Meshech and Kedar (Psalm 120 : 5) within the confines of Palestine, will form part of them. The exiles would thus find in their precipitate flight a near at hand shelter to the north, to the east and to the south of their country. Further on, other details on Meshech and Kedar.

ENCOURAGEMENT _____ J. STODDART

A Pressing Need for this Day

IT is possible that the need for encouragement is greater to-day than it has ever been in the past. If experience itself did not make us sufficiently conscious of this we should be convinced by the forceful words of Hebrews 10 : 25, “. . . but **encouraging** (A.V.= exhorting) one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.” If we may take ‘the day’ referred to as the terminus of Christian testimony in this world, then surely that day is fast approaching ! A new day will then dawn when the need for encouragement as we know it now will have passed into glorious fulfilment and ultimate rest to the people of God.

While we await the day of final rest and fulfilment of God’s purpose, the ever-increasing pressures of **this** day make the heart cry for encouragement. Therefore it falls upon each one of us to encourage the other in the fashion so attractively described in Isaiah 41 : 6/7, “They helped every one his neighbour ; and every one said to his brother, ‘Be of good courage’. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, ‘It is ready for the sodering’ and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.” We could almost say that this was a ‘chain reaction’, but in the context of these verses it is seen to be the result of the LORD’s voice being heard by “the isles” (the nations) whose response and salvation is always in view in this great prophecy.

Thus, appreciating the encouragement we receive from each other, capable of producing its own results, it is to God and His Word we must ever turn if encouragement is to result in action in line with His will. (cf. James 1 : 22/25) When David was driven to distraction and great distress at the burning of Ziklag, we are told in 1 Samuel 30 : 6 that “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” The result was that he achieved an outstanding victory over his enemies and “recovered all” that had been lost. Hebrew Christians of the second or third generation were doubtless experiencing much discouragement, yielding to pressures impeding their progress and almost repeating the history of their forebears in the wilderness. (cf. Numbers 21 : 4) At this juncture the Epistle to the Hebrews was written precisely to make them hear “the word of encouragement” (ch. 13 : 22) from God Himself (ch. 1 : 1). The twelfth chapter could be regarded as the grand climax or peroration of its encouraging teaching, and

both they and we could gain much help and uplift from a prayerful study of its contents. So may we do just this ?

Throughout Hebrews it is inescapable to notice the insistence with which Christianity is contrasted with Judaism, even though the latter was divinely instituted. This contrast is underlined by the frequent use of the word "better" as applied to Christianity. Christ is "better than the angels" (ch. 1 : 4) ; a "better hope" (ch. 7 : 19) ; "a better covenant" (ch. 7 : 22) ; "better sacrifices" (ch. 9 : 23) ; "in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (ch. 10 : 34) ; "a better country" (ch. 11 : 16) ; "a better resurrection" (ch. 11 : 35). These are a few of the uses of the expression "better" intended as rich encouragement to leave their superseded, visible, temporal, and earthly religion behind, and to embrace the substance of which it was but a shadow. In ch. 12, therefore, we have a summary of specific encouragements to help us "run with endurance the race that lies before us." Firstly, there is "the great cloud of witnesses" (v. 1) exemplified in the faithful lives of enduring fame cited in ch. 11. Not the spectators in a mighty stadium, but those who erstwhile ran their earthly race in the energy of faith leaving encouragement to others who would follow. Doubtless the august company of Hebrews 11 has been augmented by every other life completed down here bearing the bright evidence of faith, some of whom it has been our privilege to know and whose guidance and example we have valued. Such are referred to in ch. 13 : 7 and 17.

But that which engages our hearts and minds supremely is One Who is the central theme of this epistle (and of all Scripture). Far beyond the record of every other witness, Jesus is the "leader and completer of faith." No facet of faith is missing in the record of **that** Life which endured every testing and even the death of the cross, despising the shame, "and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (v. 2) What encouragement is ours in knowing Him and considering well our Leader in the difficult pathway through this world. Are we wearied and faint in our minds because of testings and trials ? Then let us "consider Him Who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself" and we shall find our faith strengthened and encouraged in the complete record of His life, His death, His resurrection and His victorious ascension to God's right hand. He is surely "enough the heart and mind to fill."

Another, if less obvious, element of encouragement in this chapter is the chastening of the Father's hand. (vv. 5/11). How strange this may seem to us until we realise that if our lives were without chastening we would not be His sons. An earthly father chastens his son, as seems right to him, to ensure that his son learns to discern right from wrong and good from evil. Afterwards his son appreciates what his father has done for him and honours him for it. But, as the sons of Him, who is the Father of Spirits, He intends that we shall be partakers of His holiness. Motivated only by His love, He seeks only our profit and blessing, and "a Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear." Not immediately do we appreciate this purpose in His discipline and often find it more grievous than joyful. It is "afterward", after heart searching and much humbling, "it

yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." What gain, what substantial encouragement this brings! Of course, it is alas possible to despise His corrections or faint under them, (v. 5) and become discouraged through self-pity or self-will. May we be preserved from this through a healthy exercise which encourages us to endure everything His loving hand and His wisdom permits.

Further encouragement is brought to us in realising that there is a vast contrast between being under the law and under grace. (cf. vv 18/24) Mount Sinai where the law was given through Moses afforded no encouragement to anyone but struck fear and terror into the hearts of God's people who had come to it. Even Moses, the man of God, had to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake." To be under the law, which is "holy, just and good", must have been a discouraging experience, since none could meet its requirements. But we are not come to such a terrifying system of things, and thank God this is true! The truth is that we are come to scenes of grace, for such is the uniform thought connected with Mount Sion (or Zion) throughout Scripture. "But ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enregistered in heaven; and to God, Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel." (J.N..D. trans.) Let us be clear that this does not mean we are come to any geographical location (as was so with Israel of old) but rather to a great new regime of grace and blessing.

Not only is it made abundantly clear that we, under grace, are far removed from Mount Sinai with all it stands for of fear and bondage, condemnation and the impossibility of approach to God (cf. Galatians 4: 24/27), but positively we are come to Mount Zion, with all that is spiritually true of that place so dearly loved by God and His people as His chosen centre of blessing for both heaven and earth. It is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the very dwelling place of God Himself, as welcoming and accessible to faith as Sinai was forbidding and inaccessible. Zion and Jerusalem are identified with each other in the Old Testament, Zion being one of the four hills on which the city was built. Geographically they will yet be the administrative centre of the millennial scene as so many O.T. passages show, e.g. Psalm 87: 2/3, "The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." and, again, Psalm 48: 2, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion. . . the city of the great King." So it will be in that magnificent day of millennial splendour and glory. But at this present moment the **spiritual** blessings of the **heavenly** city and its associations are ours. Hence angels in their myriads are in attendance here, for "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1: 14) Discouraged, downcast saint of God is this not real encouragement for thee?

Nearer still, in this vast system of blessing we come to well known territory, "to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enregistered in heaven." Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 10 : 20, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you ; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Our names may be little known or remembered on earth, but we have a great high priest in Heaven, Jesus, Who bears our names on the shoulders of His power and upon the breastplate of His love as did the high priest of old (cf. Exodus 28 : 12 and 21.). "His love is as great as His power, and knows neither measure nor end." (L.F. 23). Coming next to the very centre of this great concourse of blessing, we come to "God, the Judge of all". It may surprise us, this title of God as Judge of all, in a context of grace and blessing, but we shall remember that Abraham, interceding before God for mercy upon Sodom, could say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?" (Genesis 18 : 25) Does it not encourage us to know that He has given us a place so near to Himself without relinquishing an iota of His justice and judgment which can never be abrogated ? He can and will only do that which is right, whether in highest blessing or unremitting judgment. His holy eye scrutinises everything in the wide universe and to Him alone belongs the right to judge. "The spirits of just men made perfect", may be a difficult expression to understand, but at least we can see that such persons are at home in the very presence of God having been "made perfect", which we may feel right to relate to Ephesians 1 : 6 "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

How this has all been effected for God and for His own is in the next phrase, "And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Hallelujah, what a Saviour ! "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all." (1 Timothy 2 : 4/5) The new covenant is the Magna Charta of God's terms of blessing for all and its administration or mediation is in the hands of Him alone Whose precious blood was shed to vindicate "God the Judge of all", to cleanse our sins beneath its flow and bring us back to God in righteousness divine. Thus the absolute and eternal security of all that we have come to has been achieved for God's glory.

The final word of encouragement comes to us at the end of the chapter. The solemn quotation from Haggai 2 : 6, "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven," is invoked to remind us that in the final analysis only the **unshakeable** things will remain in the universe. The cause of much discouragement and depression today is that we live in a completely unstable world and events of every new day add their testimony to the fact. It is against this background the question arises, What can survive a universal shaking ; what can be relied upon as permanently abiding and secure beyond question ? Comes the answer, not from the highest human intellect, but from God Himself. The **kingdom** to which he brings us is one which **cannot** be shaken (v. 28) Note well, not one that **shall** not be shaken, but **cannot**, because God Himself has laid its foundation in Christ. Again, we quote Psalm 87 : 1/2, "His foundation is in the holy mountains

(Zion). The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Said Jesus to Peter, "Upon this Rock I will build My church ; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16 : 18) An unshakeable kingdom (as another has called it) is the heritage of every believer in the Lord Jesus.

Fellow Christians, have we any right to be discouraged when encouragement of so substantial a nature is ours? Are we disappointed that so few give that heart warming handshake or clap on the back when we think we deserve it? Let us find our unshakeable encouragement in the Lord Himself and in "the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20 : 32).

FREE-FLOWING PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE _____ COLIN CURRY

3. "BEHOLD YOUR GOD"

Isaiah 40 to 66.

THERE are many moving passages of various kinds throughout the Scriptures. For sheer freedom of expression, however, there are few that can match the latter part of Isaiah. There is a soaring excellence about the language used, which bursts out again and again in these chapters, as the prophet is absorbed and deeply moved by the greatness of the living God, and sees in vision the open demonstration of His glory in events to come. He sees Him as the sovereign and mighty Deliverer of His people, the sole Ruler and Disposer of history, and the Spirit of God gives him words suited to this great theme.

Alongside this exultant strain, however, other themes also run through these chapters. There are scathing words about false gods, their impotence and their unreality, and the folly of those that rely on them. There are solemn words too, about their need to face realities (especially about themselves) in the light of His high and right standards. Pure grace alone can place them in His favour, redeeming and reclaiming them for Himself according to His own intention. To appreciate this will involve much humbling for themselves, though He has His unfailing methods of bringing it about ; it will also involve unbelievably great discoveries about their God, which will promote the power to respond and to witness to Him.

Also within these chapters, of course, is that quiet solo theme which comes to the surface now and again in the so-called Servant passages (42 : 1-17 ; 49 : 1-13 ; 50 : 4-9 ; 52 : 13 to 53 : 12 ; 61 : 1-4). As we move forward through these particular passages it becomes increasingly clear that the key to all this marvellous action of God for His people lies in the utter devotion and faithfulness of One Person alone. This is the base on which it is founded, and (in a sense) it is

also the high point of its glory. The sequence of passages about the Servant of Jehovah reaches its climax in chapter 53, and their meaning comes into sharp focus there. But it is no accident that this chapter is also right at the centre of the whole 27 chapters of this second part of the prophecy. At the root of all the display of the glory of God, soon to take place widely and openly in an overwhelming way, is found that one event of history which surpasses all others—the cross of our Lord Jesus, and the glory of the Person who died there. The central place, the highest place of all, goes to the lone Individual who took the place of others, bearing the sins of many. The pleasure of the Lord rests on Him who took the form of a servant, the Man of sorrows, whose devotion and obedience took Him to the cross. Its realisation is in His capable hands too. With **this** as the foundation of all that He foresees, it is not surprising that Isaiah sustains a high note of zealous response to God, and summons all observers (in heaven and in earth, great and small, nations and peoples) to participate in it.

The background to the whole prophecy of Isaiah is the captivity (of Judah) in Babylon. That captivity is **impending** in chapters 1 to 39. It is seen to be well-deserved, and right in the sight of God, because of their sin and unfaithfulness despite His forbearance with them. But chapters 40 to 66 see **beyond** the captivity to the time of their release, to the great exodus from bondage under Babylon, and to the joy of their home-coming to their beloved Jerusalem. The end and outcome of the captivity is seen before it begins; such is the sovereignty and the grace of God which overrules the whole course of events. The very name of Cyrus the Persian, under whom the grip of their Babylonian captors was broken, is found in the prophecy more than a century before the event. Isaiah's exuberance, so characteristic of this second part of his prophecy, is connected in the first place with this vision of the liberation of his people, and his joy and confidence in the God who will bring it into reality.

Nevertheless, a close look at these chapters soon reveals that there is a much more extensive vista ahead than the immediate one of the return from exile in Babylon. Deliverance and reinstatement of God's people in a more distant day, and out of a far greater tribulation, is also being envisaged and celebrated. Also, as we have indicated, there is much about their deeper inward bondage; about their guilt, both personal and national, and their release in that area which was the most basic need of all.

To make a connected outline of these chapters is beyond the scope of one or two short papers. It will not even be possible to mention all the outstanding passages. Our plan for the rest of this paper is restricted to the selection of a few magnificent excerpts from chapters 40 to 48, making brief comments on them with only a few connecting words. In doing this we are conscious that the problem of selection is a difficult one, and other splendid passages have simply been passed by. In a second paper, we hope to follow the same plan in chapters 49 to 66.

“Comfort ye, my people”

On every count chapter 40 is one of the most magnificent chapters of all. The new start which comes with this chapter has been likened to the change which comes as we move from the Old Testament to the New. The dominant theme which breaks out at this stage is the mighty incoming of God in **grace**, to redeem and deliver His people ; not altering or lowering His standards in any way, setting His face against their sins with the utmost justice, yet bringing them out of their bondage and recovering them for Himself.

The chapter is primarily a message that speaks to the heart. Comfort is its first word. Its closing stages direct us to the unfailing Source of new life and strength for flagging faith. If God is relied on, with all His unfailing greatness as the chapter presents it, this will certainly be the outcome. One of the most attractive features of the chapter is its reference to God's deep understanding of His people, and His tender and detailed concern for them. Great and incomparable though He is, God is not too great to care for details and for individuals ; He is in fact too great to fail to care for them. Alongside verses which speak of His vast omnipotence, His total otherness from His creation, dwarfing it to almost nothing, there are also thoughts of His care for His own ; feeding His flock like a shepherd, carrying the lambs in His bosom, gently providing for each and all. Small wonder that the question is asked (not once, but in many forms in the ensuing chapters) “To whom will ye liken God ?” The prophet's vision is gripped with the sense of His absolute supremacy and incomparable majesty, combined so perfectly with the marvels of His initiative in grace. He is entranced, and his spirit soars as he thinks of God, all-powerful and omniscient, but also **active** in salvation, whose will cannot be gainsaid, who calls and redeems and rescues His people, bringing them to know Himself, though on their side it is all unmerited and unasked.

The marvels of the chapter are too many for detailed consideration, but the special grandeur of its opening section can at least be mentioned. Comfort and hope for the people of God is well founded in the light of what follows the opening sentences. It rests on the fact that God will soon intervene on their behalf in an overwhelming way. We have noted that it is a word first of all for a generation of exiles yet to be born ; and it has a still longer term view as well. The prophet takes his stance at a point of time on the threshold of their release. Their sentence is almost served. Their captors are to be routed. God will display His irresistible power on their behalf. A herald's voice proclaims that it is imminent, Isaiah takes up the theme, and soon Zion herself, re-established, will demonstrate the invincibility and the wonder of God's sovereign control of all events. All flesh is like grass, insignificant and transient. But all flesh will see the glory of the Lord revealed, “for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” ; and His word stands and cannot fail. In a world where strong-arm tactics have often prevailed, and the weak have gone to the wall, the strongest arm of all will at last intervene in a totally

right way. "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him". Where pride, arrogance and self-assertion have often been in view, and humble godliness little respected, there is to be a great levelling of disparities, the valleys exalted and the mountains made low. This human scene, well described as a wilderness, is to be filled with the glory of the Lord, its crookedness "made straight", its chaos sorted out, its rough places made smooth. This desert is to become "a highway for our God". Indeed there is great comfort to know and to wait upon such a God as this !

"I am God, and there is none else"

The amazing grace of God with His people Israel comes out very strikingly in chapters 43 to 46. His words of assurance given at the opening of chapter 43, and again in chapter 44, are impressive in their quality and tone. The way in which He returns to the initiative again and again, despite rebuffs and coldness on their part, is also remarkable. He has to face lack of co-operation on their part ; their persistent failure in response to Him is only surpassed by the tenacity of His intention to recreate and renew them. These chapters are shot through with the firmness of His purpose to recover them. It is as sure as God Himself is sure. All the absolutes in God Himself guarantee what He will do ; His will, His sole power and authority, His unique capability to undertake for them in living gracious activity which none can prevent ; all this is celebrated in these chapters. Yet these chapters also show repeatedly that His grace involves no softening of His righteousness, nor of His wrath against sin. Their God is a just God and a Saviour". Salvation can only come through judgment, and is not for the impenitent.

The passage 44 : 21 to 45 : 8 may perhaps be chosen as a short sample from this part of the prophecy. Here the prophet focusses on the deliverer in the short term, Cyrus, though this in itself was a few generations ahead. That deliverance, however, though a remarkable event, (and a marvel that it should be foretold in such detail), was a comparatively mild happening in history alongside the full redemption for Israel of which these verses also speak. The description clearly exceeds what took place under Cyrus. It envisages something much more fundamental and complete, and broader in scale. The world-wide self-revelation of God is in view in 45 : 6, for instance. The glorious end in view for Israel will have its effects to the ends of the earth ; the close of chapter 45 speaks of this, and later chapters take up the theme again.

Characteristic of these chapters is that joy in God which bursts out in wonderful song-like expressions as the prophet foresees all this in fulfilment. In the present passage verses 44 : 23 and 45 : 8 are good examples (elsewhere, see 42 : 10-12 ; 49 : 13 ; 52 : 9 etc.).

It may be noted that the view the passage gives of the great majesty of God (in His person and in His acts), is highlighted strongly by the context. The preceding verses, and the later ones, pour scorn on false gods and those who respect them. It is quite as relevant to

modern sophisticated gods as to ancient ones, and their devotees. Gods of human making are gods that cannot see, cannot hear, cannot save, cannot deliver. They are incapable, immobile, unable to act in any sense, a burden to those who trust them. Service to such gods is a weariness: it is folly, and yet it is widespread! How different altogether is the true God, who sees, and knows, and carries His own; the living God, intervening and acting resolutely on their behalf. With what confidence can **He** be depended upon! "Even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry you, and will deliver you". What a contrast to the false gods, dragged off into captivity themselves, a burden to the weary beasts, no help whatever to those who rely on them.

(to continue)

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975

3. THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA _____ J. N. SHEPHERD

(Exodus 14)

IN the consideration of this story, it is wonderful to see that God has done some absolutely new thing. The centuries of Israel's bondage and hopelessness were over: what they had seen even of the plagues God had brought on the Egyptians was finished and God said to them, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you". This statement of God's opened the story of redemption and redemption has two parts:

1. The blood on the lintel and two sideposts of the door,
2. Deliverance from the power of the enemy.

The redemption by blood, the Passover, is the subject of Exodus 12, when, in obedience to the word of God, the Israelites splashed the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. By this blood they were protected when the destroying angel passed over. This new beginning has only become effective for us if we are under the shelter of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. The lambs slain in Egypt were to tell all down the ages the story of the Lord Jesus coming here as the Lamb of God who died to put away sin. He bore the judgment of a holy God against sin. And just as, in Egypt, God said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you", so, if our trust is in Him, we are under the protection, not of a lamb slain in Egypt, but of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

God's redemption of His people by power in Exodus 14 is a picture for us, because God does not intend that we should be defeated by the enemy of our souls. God's blessed Son came from the heights of glory to do battle with him in order that we might be freed

and there is absolute, complete deliverance available for every one of His own.

It would have been possible for God to have opened the Red sea as the children of Israel streamed out of Rameses and for them to have gone straight across, but the divine strategy of battle involved their camping on the way at Pi-hahiroth, because God intended to destroy Pharaoh and his hosts for ever. Pi-hahiroth was an inextricable position with the sea in front of them, the mountains on either side, and the might of Egypt behind them and they might well have been considered a rabble company of a million slaves. And so Pharaoh thought. But God's presence was with them in the cloud and for Pharaoh to have reached God's people, he would have had to go through the cloud.

And we have God's presence with us too and we may know this too—just as any Israelite on his journey could know it at any time by looking at the cloud—and we have nothing to fear. God's desire is that we shall live in the sense of victory.

Next, there were two commands from God to His people and the whole secret of victory lies in obedience to these.

1. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you today : for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you".

As David recognised in 1 Samuel 17, "the battle is the Lord's". If we try to fight it ourselves we shall be defeated but we are not called upon to do so. The Lord Jesus went into the darkness of Calvary to do battle with the enemy and He fought that battle alone.

"The mighty work was all His own
Though we shall share His glorious throne".

He is infinitely greater than all God's enemies and the victory is complete.

2. "Wherefore criest thou unto me ? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward".

These two commands are not contrary to one another ; we are now told to go forward by faith in the One who won the victory. We read "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land" (Hebrews 11 : 29). Each step was a step of faith : they were unable to see the other bank. And so with us, if we really want to engage in and enjoy the victory which the Lord has won, it is a question of going step by step across the sea. Without faith it is impossible to please God and this faith in Him honours His name and trusts Him in every set of circumstances we meet.

God has His purpose in all our difficulties ; the way through sorrows and problems of every sort only brings to Him glory and to ourselves untold blessing if we take it by faith. All the nations around spoke of this great God, e.g. Moab in Numbers 24, who brought His people through the sea out of Egypt. We may have the privilege of carrying the name and honour of this same great God in lives of victory over Satan in all the difficulties of our circumstances as well.

He will carry us through everything and the joy of victorious lives will be ours.

The complete judgment of Egypt was involved in what God was doing : a blood-bought people—and only a blood-bought people—was able to pass safely and triumphantly through death itself, because of what the Lord had done.

And so they had come,

1. **from bondage to freedom.** “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”.

Billy Graham told a story recently of a young man of twenty-two, arraigned in an African country to be shot for his faith in Christ. Before his sentence was carried out he was given leave by the commander of the firing squad to do three things in accordance with his request. He said, “The first thing I would like to do is to tell you that I love you, the second thing is to tell you that I love my country and the third is that I would like to sing something to you”. They all stood and waited as he sang, “Out of my bondage, sorrow and night, Jesus I come to Thee”. After that he fell dead.

Freedom is belonging to Christ, both here and throughout eternal ages ; bondage is being in the enemy’s power.

2. **from Satan’s land to God’s world.** Romans 6 tells us that “Sin shall not have dominion over you”. Probably many of us have sung, sometimes without much conviction as to its truth,

“Sin shall not have dominion over you,
O ! What a glorious message and it’s true.
God has said it ; it must stand,
Pass it on, it’s simply grand,
Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

The children of Israel looked back from the opposite bank of the Red sea and saw their enemies dead on the seashore and, although they made terrible mistakes and committed grievous sins against God afterwards, the fact was that they were never back in Pharaoh’s land again. As a result of the Lord’s great work at Calvary—the most marvellous rescue-operation in history—we have been brought out from under the rule of Satan on our way to glory and we shall never be under his rule any more.

3. **from hopelessness to joy.** The recurring theme in John 14-17 is that “Your joy may be full”. A state of misery is abnormal in a Christian. The mighty Victor of Calvary is exalted and is coming soon and we are His and we are going to be with Him.

4. **from misery to glory.** We are going to a habitation prepared for us by God—they were going to God’s own land and He Himself would bring them there. All the nations of the world are soon going to realise that the land of Israel is God’s land.

5. **from defeat to victory.** We are no longer to be defeated. We may go through this world with our heads held high and in the company of that blessed One whose glory is soon going to fill the universe. What a joy to belong to Him ! And we are going to be with Him in the day of His glory. No power in earth or hell can stop it. It is

a surpassing privilege to be able now, when His name is still "the song of the drunkard" and He is still not wanted here, to confess that we belong to Him. The Lord Jesus is coming back very soon ; how wonderful to have the opportunity of being faithful to Him until He does come.

The opposite bank of the Red sea demanded a song of praise and worship to the God of Israel, and from us today is that worship due to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The other thing which God's word requires from us in answer to it all is to "Yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead". Defeated Christians are an anachronism and none of us need ever go on in the way of defeat.

THE FATHER'S BOSOM _____ J. S. BLACKBURN

John 1 : 18.

IT is in introducing thoughts on this verse that J. G. Bellett warns his readers of the danger of the mind going before the heart, of the reason displacing the affections, when we enter on the privilege of reflecting on such a theme as this verse presents to us. "I dread reasonings where affections should animate us, and withdrawing from the place of living power into anything like a region of notions or theories. But the mysteries of God are all of the highest practical value, in either strengthening for service, comforting under trial, or enlarging the soul's communion". John himself, in his first Epistle, reminds us that "He that loveth not knoweth not". A just working together of both mind and heart is thus the condition we should aim for and pray for, and this will be possible by the power of the indwelling Spirit. The themes we consider, and the ground under our feet are holy ; yet the words of the Only Begotten Son, regarding His dwelling in the bosom of the Father are "Come and see".

A central theme of John's Gospel is the revelation by the Son of the Father's Name. "I have manifested thy name to the men which thou gavest me out of the world". A mere inspection of the contents of John's Gospel compared with the Synoptics confirms that the revelation of the Father occupies a unique position in John. How could it be otherwise concerning the distinctive New Testament part of the progressive self-revelation of God which occupies the whole of Scripture ? In this verse 18, taken together with v. 14, we meet the opening note of this transcendent theme, the knowledge of the Father. Christendom appears largely to ignore the immensity of step forward immediately apparent in John's opening page, when compared with the in themselves tremendous steps by which God made Himself known in the Old Testament. This opening note struck with such majestic sweetness presents to us, not God's power, as in the name El Shaddai, (Almighty God), not the foundation elements of God's character as in Jehovah, but His affection seen at first as embracing the everlasting object of His delight, the Only Begotten Son. Beloved,

is your heart stirred by the unearthly sweetness of this opening note, the Father's Bosom? Those who come and see where He dwells, and abide with Him, will surely have spiritual sensibilities awakened to hear it, the celestial music.

"It was once asked me," says J.G.B. again, "Had the Father no bosom till the Babe was born in Bethlehem? Indeed, fully sure I am, as that inquiry suggests, He had from all eternity. The bosom of the Father was an eternal habitation, enjoyed by the Son, in the ineffable delight of the Father—the hiding-place of love,' as one has called it, of inexpressible love which is beyond glory; for glory can be revealed, this cannot."

This quality of eternity which belongs to the Father's bosom is indeed connected here with the Person who 'is' there. It is the Only Begotten Son. "Matthew and Mark first notice His Sonship of God at His baptism. Luke goes further back, and notices it at His birth. But John goes farther back still, even to the immeasurable, unspeakable distance of eternity, and declares His Sonship "in the bosom of the Father". The Lord Jesus is the Firstborn Son, and in this He has companions; He is the Firstborn among many brethren. But as the Only Begotten Son He is alone from eternity. The first is Sonship in manhood, the second is Sonship in deity. At this point the phrase "which is" must be taken account of. These two small words might with sufficient accuracy be translated "the One who is". In such a context only the most exalted meaning is to be considered, and there is no doubt what that meaning is. This is the Name used in the Greek Bible in Exodus 3: 14, when the Presence is so solemn that Moses is commanded to "put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". (v. 5). God commissions Moses to be His messenger to Pharaoh, Moses asks for God's Name. "And God said unto Moses, I am 'THE ONE WHO IS': and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, THE ONE WHO IS hath sent me unto you". The phrase THE ONE WHO IS thus appears as the Name under which, (for the special purpose of God's meeting with Moses in Exodus 3, and for the frightening commission he received,) the eternal God declared Himself. Here is the divine mystery. The One who lay in the bosom of the Father was Himself the eternal God: the Person and the Place, the Only-Begotten Son and the bosom of the Father, are co-eternal.

The image suggested by the use of the word 'bosom' is that of the closest and tenderest of human relationships, as we may see from its occurrence in Scripture. "Carry them in thy bosom", Moses imagines the Lord saying to him, "as a nursing father beareth the sucking child". Several times we have "the wife of thy bosom". In this Gospel John is described at the Supper, "leaning on Jesus' bosom", the position fitting for the "disciple whom Jesus loved". In all these quotations there is suggested the most intimate pictures of the fellowship of love that human relations afford. It is thus, raised to the region of divine relations, the infinite capacity for the expression of a relationship of divine love, which is brought so movingly to our own hearts by this expression, the Father's bosom.

In the endeavour to seize the true import of John 1: 18 it has

been found helpful to enquire whether it is scriptural to speak of the Son 'coming forth from the bosom of the Father'. J. N. Darby, in a letter, deals with a questioner in these words: "I do not think coming forth from the bosom of the Father scriptural. . . because the words are used to express a present apprehension of His love and favour which depends on His being in that place. To come forth from it would convey at best the thought of memory, and "Who is in the bosom of the Father" is evidently much stronger; it is the present being in, and in the enjoyment of, what the phrase expresses. He came forth from the Father and into the world, and left the world and went to the Father, but never, I think, is it said from His bosom. . . some, in expressing the joy and love He left for us, may have said it harmlessly, that is, with right affections, though not quite accurately seizing the force of the expression in John 1:18. I may have done it myself, for aught I know. . . the force of the expression is lost if we speak of coming forth from—that is, leaving it. . . Christ's being in the bosom of the Father is of so much the more importance, that He declares the Father's character as He thus knows Him.

It is when this precious mystery has been assailed and denied, that the most delightful expression has been given to affirming it. From the same source as has been quoted earlier we have: "We must not, beloved, touch this precious mystery. We should fear to dim the light of that love in which our souls are invited to walk on the way to heaven. And—what is a deeper and tenderer thought, if I may be bold to utter it—we should fear to admit of any confession of faith (rather, indeed of unbelief) that would defraud the divine bosom of its eternal, ineffable delights, and which would tell our God that He knew not a Father's joy in that bosom, as He opened it; and which would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom as He lay there from all eternity. . . Deprive Him of the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and ask your soul if it has lost nothing in its apprehension and joy of this precious mystery, thus unfolded from everlasting to everlasting."

Note. The English word 'bosom' is perhaps the element in this verse which puts off the modern reader. It is used by the versions which aim to be translations in the strict sense due to Holy Scripture. (AV, RV, RSV, New Trsln). In the popular modern speech versions the position is quite different. They first decide what **they think** a sentence means and then put that meaning into modern speech. This method was explicit in the case of the New English Bible. On p. vii of the "Introduction to the New Testament" we find the method stated in these words. "We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the original as precisely as we could (using all available aids), and then saying it again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his". This method the NEB translators quite clearly understood to be a new and radical departure. On this basis the modern speech English versions produce our verse as follows. "He

who is nearest to the Father's heart" (NEB). "Who lives in closest intimacy with the Father". (Phillips). "Who. . . is at the Father's side". (TEV). "He is the companion of the Father" (Living Bible). By contrast, AV and the other versions mentioned with it above, uniformly translate the original *kolpos* by 'bosom', a word with a touch of mystery about it, of which the derivation is unknown, and above all, which **does not limit the meaning in Scripture, and in particular of John 1 : 18 to the present understanding of the translator.** All this is not to say that some of these versions may not possess usefulness in other ways.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

The Assyrian (continued)

AT this point we meet one of the most difficult parts of prophecy, that of the **siege of Jerusalem** by the nations acting with the Assyrian, then by the Assyrian in person.

Let us state at once that the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrian must not, in any way, be confounded with the capture and destruction of this city by Nebuchadnezzar, followed by the captivity of Judah. The prophet Micah instructs us on this point. There we find **first** the captivity of Judah in Babyon and its restoration (Micah 4 : 9-13), then the Messiah smitten with a rod upon the cheek (5 : 1-2), and finally, the invasion by the Assyrian and its accompanying circumstances (5 : 5-9). In Isaiah 13, and 14 : 22, we find **first** the destruction of Babylon, then in chapter 14 : 24-27, that of the Assyrian in the land of Israel. These passages furnish us at the same time with the proof that the Assyrian of the close is not the same personage as the Assyrian of history. This last, after having invaded Israel, then Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem before Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army invested and destroyed the city. Now at that time Jerusalem has not been taken or sacked by Sennacherib, as by Nebuchadnezzar, and Sennacherib has not erected forts against her (Isaiah 37 : 33), as will happen at the time of the siege by the future Assyrian (Isaiah 29 : 3).

As to the future, final siege of Jerusalem, prophecy mentions incontestably two sieges and distinguishes them clearly.

It is at first the nations supported by the Assyrian who besieged Jerusalem. This first siege in which the nations play the principal rôle ends by the capture and the sack of the city exactly the opposite to what happened on to the reign of Hezekiah. Half of the population was led away captive, the remainder of the people is not cut off from the city (Zechariah 14 : 1-2). The blood of the saints is shed like water round Jerusalem (Psalm 79 : 3).

This event is mentioned in several passages.

In Isaiah 28, Ephraim and Judah are invaded by the Assyrian, just as took place in history, then Jerusalem is besieged. The governors of Jerusalem have made a treaty with death and a pact with hell, (that is the Beast, the false prophet) against the overflowing scourge (the

Assyrian). Those who have made lies a refuge will have no refuge. The Lord will place a precious stone (the Messiah) as a foundation in Zion and he who puts trust in Him will not be confounded.

Before the Beast and his armies have been able to bring help to the city, the refuge of lies will be swept away and the hiding-place overflowed; the ungodly people of Jerusalem will be trodden underfoot and taken. The agreement of the nation with death will be abolished, and the pact with hell will not stand. This is the first siege. One can easily see that this is not a question of an attack on Jerusalem by Sennacherib, since the city is taken and trodden underfoot.

Other passages have already been mentioned above. In Joel 2, the Assyrian, that is the king of the North, with all the nations, raises itself against Jerusalem. The city is taken and her enemies spread themselves over her. In Zechariah 14:1-2, all the nations are assembled against Jerusalem for the combat. It is in consequence of this that judgments must overtake them, but at first, the city is taken and ravaged. Half of the population goes away into captivity and "the residue of the people", a term which appears to mean the Remnant of Jerusalem which is not cut off.

This first siege is also mentioned in the Psalms. In Psalm 74, the enemy is entered into Jerusalem, and ravaged the temple, as well as all the places marked out for the service of God in the country. In Psalm 79, which describes the same circumstances, it is the nations who are this enemy. They have taken Jerusalem and made it a heap of stones and have poured out the blood of the saints all round the city. In Psalm 83, we find these same nations supported against the people of God by the Assyrians. The Lord will reply to the cry of His people and destroy them.

The approximate date of the first siege is perhaps furnished by Daniel 9:27. This passage tells us that the prince who will come (the Roman emperor) will confirm a treaty with the majority in Jerusalem for seven years (one week), that, after the half week he will abolish the worship of the true God and will set up the idolatrous worship in the temple. On account of this, a desolator (the Assyrian) will be raised up until the end of the judgments on Jerusalem. Thus the first siege will take place towards the end of the last half week of Daniel which will be a time of desolations and of nameless overturnings.

On the second siege of Jerusalem, the word of God is not less explicit. At the time of this siege, this passage tells us, Jerusalem, with the Remnant that is found there, is not taken but delivered as it was with Hezekiah. The Assyrian is the direct instrument of this siege. He is returning from Egypt which he has invaded when the news of events which have taken place in his absence reaches his ears. This news "out of the east and the north" (Daniel 11:44), which will frighten him and fill him with fury, appears to us to be a great part, at least, in the invasion of the Assyrian by the governors of Judah (Micah 5:5, 6; Zechariah 12:6). But already the Roman Beast and the anti-christ will have been destroyed. For the rest, all the events to the end follow very quickly.



ABRAHAM AS A STRANGER

ANDRE GIBERT

THE first thing narrated for us concerning Abraham's life of faith is that "he went out", with his people, from the land of his birth, Ur of the Chaldees. "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred", the Lord had said to him. And "he went out, not knowing whither he went". Henceforward he no longer possessed an earthly fatherland. If he had been mindful of that from which he had come out, he would have had opportunity to return, but he did not return, and when the question arose of finding a wife for Isaac, he had her brought out in her turn from that country of origin, expressly forbidding that Isaac should return there. His life saw many incidents, testings, and failures, but through them all it bore witness that he desired a better country, that is, a heavenly. He went "to the place which he should after receive for an inheritance"; he received the promise of it for his seed; he lived, spiritually, on this promise; and he "died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them afar off. . . and embraced them".

He continued in this way, an example for all ages, "faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3 : 9), and he could be called "the friend of God" (2 Chronicles 20 : 7, Isaiah 41 : 8, James 2 : 23). We, Christians, "are blessed with" him, although we have received more than he: we possess the Spirit of adoption, we know God as Father; the object of our faith is the Person of Christ, and we are "complete in Him". But, however rich the portion of Christians may be, no more can be said of them after all than that they "walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham" (Romans 4 : 12). He lived as a stranger on the earth which in fact belonged to him by the promise; as for us, we are strangers and pilgrims on an earth which however belongs as an inheritance to Him with whom we are coheirs, an inheritance into the possession of which He has not yet entered and where "we suffer with Him" (Romans 8 : 17). It is necessary to have grasped this in order to understand how the Christian ought to live in the world. But, having grasped it, we are failing in our calling if we are conformed to this world. Like Abraham, we must first "go out", then live "as in a strange country" and there to live no more as naturalised than as native citizens, but as "strangers".

"The Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (Genesis 13 : 7), and other peoples with them (15 : 20). They were still to dwell there for a certain time, "for the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full"; Abraham's seed, he knew because God had told him,

were only four hundred years later to enter into possession of this land. Abraham acknowledged this situation, and ordered his life in accordance with it. God enriched him abundantly with material goods, but a thing worthy of notice, his riches did not take control of his heart, they did not lead him to establish himself here below, nor to search out the most desirable situations; he relinquished the fertile plain to Lot, remaining himself the wanderer of the plateaux and of the mountain. When the time came for Sarah's burial, he insisted on paying for the place at full price, in this land which was his own! He would possess nothing of his own, and his seed up to Joshua possessed nothing of their own in the land of Canaan, except "the field and the cave" acquired "as a burying place", place of the transitory triumph of death, but which their faith marked as the place of the eternal triumph of life through resurrection. In the meantime he could say to the children of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you" (23:4).

The land was running its course. It had its kings, its cities, its customs, its judges. It had its times of prosperity and its famines, its periods of peace and its wars, it had its commerce, "current money with the merchant". Good things were found there, and evil things. There a Melchizedec was priest of the Most High God; an Abimelech, king of Gerar, showed more fear of God than Abraham thought, and he could even address reproaches to the erring patriarch. This did not extenuate the general iniquity. "The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," and in Canaan itself "the iniquity of the Amorites" was approaching its culmination. Thus the judgment was to reach all, the highland peoples after the peoples of the plain. God had His time, fixed with patience, for intervening when the situation would be manifestly beyond remedy. (18:20, 21) But Abraham, in the midst of this state of affairs, lived as a stranger. The Lord was his portion, his shield and his exceeding great reward. How could "the friend of God" involve himself in the conduct of such a world? He allowed Lot to establish himself towards sitting in the gate of Sodom. His own eyes were turned towards "the city which hath foundations".

All these things are well known, in principle, among us. But often, when one insists on the calling of the Christian, a stranger here below because he already belongs to heaven, one meets the reproach of egoism. "You set yourself apart," it is said, "to enjoy your blessings, and you are indifferent to the fate of mankind toiling on the earth; you would be able to play an important and beneficent rôle in the business of society, and you renounce it!" Such appeals are often accompanied by flattery: "You are wise, enlightened, you, a moral élite, would exert so beneficial an influence! For people of your worth to turn away from public business is treason!"

It is worth the trouble of examining this point of view more closely.

The rôle allotted to the children of God in this world is in reality much greater than they themselves generally realize. That God has children here below, could it be of small importance? On the contrary, Jesus said to His disciples "Ye are the salt of the earth".

The very fact of their presence is of capital importance as regards even the history of this world ; it is like a hidden spring. So long as Lot was in Sodom, the angels could do nothing against the city, the destroying judgment had to wait until this man, who was righteous, however inconsistent he had shown himself, had been put in safety (19 : 22). Today, "what withholdeth" the forces of evil and hinders the full development of the mystery of iniquity is certainly connected with the continuance on earth of the Church, the dwellingplace of God by the Spirit, and "he who now withholds will do so until he be taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2 : 6, 7), in fact until the removal of the Church. If organized society still exists, government under one form or another, it is because there is in this scene the Church of God, to which, day by day, He is adding new stones. "Ye are the salt of the earth"—a principle of preservation which retards an otherwise fatal corruption.

Is that to say that we have only this negative, static rôle ? God forbid. He does not leave His children here below to be pure contemplatives. From the closed room where the resurrected Jesus met with His own for their peace and joy, He sent them into the world, as His Father had sent Him (John 20 : 21 and 17 : 18).

It is clear that in the world they have to do good and practise righteousness. "Let your light shine before men" entails "that they may see your good works" (Matthew 5 : 14-16), those good works in which "they which have believed in God" should endeavour to be foremost. (Titus 3 : 8). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6 : 10). A Christian who, alleging that he has the privilege of serving God by worship in Spirit and in truth, would refuse to alleviate the distresses which throng him, or to treat with fairness his employees, and would let himself be outstripped in this and other analogous contexts by unconverted men, such a Christian would be showing himself culpably distant from his Master and His teachings.

But in what capacity should we perform such a service ? As still belonging to the world, or as having been snatched from it ? As associated with this world, or as united to a Christ who has "sanctified" Himself for the sake of His own ? (John 17 : 18, 19). Between Him and the world there will always be His cross, "by which," said the apostle, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world". "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" is an imperious obligation, but "to keep oneself unspotted from the world" constitutes the other aspect of "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" (James 1 : 27). The steps which we have to follow are those of Him who, as the divine Stranger, "went about doing good." They will lead us unfailingly to find ourselves in opposition to a world which has rejected Him. His kingdom does not belong here below. People would like Christians to use their Christianity as a moral force at the service of an enterprise directed to the improvement of this earth : this is to forget that the world is ruled by principles quite different from those of Christ. To say that here and there one meets some fear of God, that the Lord has His own in the world, known to Him, in all sorts of circles, this does not take away in any degree its general condition ;

no more than a Melchizedek or an Abimelech changed anything in the guilt of Canaan. "The course of this world" is that of "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2 : 2). To be conformed to it, is to disobey the Lord.

"All right, precisely," they reply, "we want you to work for the modification of these principles of the world, to give it different drives, to inject something of Christian charity and to make it, thanks to the Christian ethic, more just." But this is to ask for the impossible. The world would be no longer the world if it accepted Christ, and the fact is that it does not accept Him. Souls who accept Him are drawn out of it, by the grace of God, but all the aspirations and all the programs will in no respect alter this fact that the prince of this world is Satan, even though he disguise himself as an angel of light. The world has more or less profoundly come under Christian influence, it is true, but rather in spite of itself, and in return it has corrupted and does corrupt Christian truth, in such a way as to integrate it with its own (the world's) principles, and thus separating it from Christ, a form without reality. The world will only be changed by the judgment which will introduce the reign of Christ. Until then the walk of the faithful will be a continuous rebuke for the world (Philippians 2 : 15, Ephesians 5 : 13). It sends a beam of the light of Christ across the darkness, but it will not be able to turn this world from darkness to light. The light cuts across the darkness ; if they mingle with each other, the light would cease to be light.

In writing this, we are in no way despising the high intentions of those who believe it their duty to throw their activity as Christians into the mêlée of earthly causes and to lay claim to an authoritative function here below. But they are deluding themselves. Either they will not be tolerated, or they will have to accept such compromises that their Christianity will no longer contain much of Christ, and further, the moment will not be far off when this salt-without-savour will be "cast out and trodden under foot of men".

The Lord has defined, without the possibility of misunderstanding, the position of His own here below, and it is not for us to modify it : "These are **in the world** ; . . . they are **not of the world**, as I am not of the world" (John 17 : 11, 14, 16).

Such a position in no way means that we can be uninterested in the world's fate. But, and we fail too often to appreciate it, the function of the children of God as regards the world depends on their character as heavenly strangers, it even shares in the grandeur of this character, and their rôle is effective to the extent that they preserve practically this character which grace has conferred upon them. The good they can do to this world depends on the fact that they are outside it.

The life of Abraham is an illustration of this truth. How can we fail to be struck, in reading it, by the positive and active side, of benefit to the world, of such a life ?

He "declared plainly" that he sought a country. We are not told that this witness, however living and eloquent, led the contemporaries of Abraham to share his hope and his faith. True, Mamre, Eshcol, Aner, near whom he dwelt, were his "confederates". The children of

Heth had to recognise him as "a prince of God" among them. Abimelech had to say: "God is with thee in all that thou doest" (Genesis 21 : 22), and in consequence made a covenant with him. But, transcending the framework of his epoch and of his country, has not the life of Abraham become, for the earth in its entirety and for all generations, one of the mightiest sermons? The Lord, the apostles, the evangelists, ceaselessly draw from it lessons in salvation, and in truth he is the "father of a multitude" of believers, for their eternal blessing. Now, and it cannot be emphasised too strongly, he was all this because he loved as a stranger. If he had mingled with his world, his witness would have been without value, his example without power, his story without force. Such was the existence of Lot in Sodom: "This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge!" say those whom he tries to reprove. Let us take on our consciences, Christians, the immensity of the field of labour which is open before each of us, for the good of those around, their true good; to witness for Christ, the Saviour of all men, and to tell everyone the good news, is more beneficial to men than to devote ourselves to some temporary improvement of the present world: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me. . . unto the uttermost part of the earth. . . Go ye, and preach the Gospel to all nations". But if the salt has lost its savour, it is no longer of any use; believers will no longer contribute to the good of the world if they become worldly. To make the Gospel suit the tastes of the day, as is the present practice, is, alas, a sad non-sense. We cannot preach that the world is lost and needs a Saviour, and at the same time that it is capable of transforming itself,—to offer heaven and claim to improve the earth.

But there is yet another thing in the life of Abraham. No action was, in fact, more effective than his in the very temporal affairs of the lands in whose midst he lived without belonging to them. This was true precisely and uniquely because he was there as a stranger. When the kings of the plain were overcome by the coalition of those of the East, deliverance came from "Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre"; the deliverance was obtained because Lot his nephew was involved, but they all profited from it; it came about thanks to Abram's "trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen", and his allies, Mamre, Eshol, Aner, brought with him. But his victory was not for him the means or the occasion of strengthening his own position, nor of getting his own way in the country he had just saved. He speaks to the king of Sodom as to someone who owes him nothing, and to whom he owes nothing. It is not for the king of Sodom to enrich Abram. For the latter everything takes place with "the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth". To His priest Melchizedec he gives tithes of all, and is blest by him: it is this which permits him to say afterwards to the king of Sodom: "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God. . ." He brought the grandeur of that name before the head of a kingdom of "sinners before the Lord exceedingly". He could do it because he was neither his subject nor his associate. Let us give great attention to the deep lessons of Genesis chapter 14.

A little later, when Sodom and Gomorrah are on the point of being destroyed, who is it then, without the guilty cities' suspecting it, who wrestles with the Lord in their favour, who delays to the last moment the inevitable judgment, even wrests from God the undertaking to spare them if—a condition not fulfilled—a few righteous are found there, who then, except Abraham? Why? Because he was not dwelling in the plain; if he had been with Lot he could not have intervened, and, moreover, he would not have been visited by God and made aware of the fate determined for Sodom. The believer is little qualified to unravel the hidden threads of man's politics, but he is in a position to know the future of this world and to act accordingly.

Lastly, we see that even at a time of failure for Abraham, at Gerar, (chapter 20), he, and he alone, is named as the intercessor whom Abimelech needs.

Have these things no word for us? To be witnesses, messengers of the good news, benefactors and intercessors, are not such functions of the highest bearing as regards this world? None can fulfil them except believers, taught of God, and animated by the very love of the God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. But we will only fulfil them if we are separated morally from such a world. It is not for us to enquire into or lay claim to some rights there may be, civil or political; that would be to say that we belong here below; it would also be to refuse to recognise that before God the state of this world is without resource, and that it is already judged, together with its prince, since the death of Christ. But we do have our **duties**, as sojourners in this **strange country**, duties which can be fulfilled only in prayer and communion with God, as **strangers**.

THE DEATH OF SARAH

JOHN BARNES

Genesis 23

EVEN for the christian, the death of a loved one is not easy to face. While it is true that believers do not sorrow in the hopeless, despairing way of the unconverted, the fact is that they do sorrow, as we all know from personal experience. Abraham was no exception; he mourned the death of his beloved wife. They had left Ur of the Chaldees, together, many years before, in response to the call of the Lord and had journeyed up the Euphrates as far as to Haran, where their pilgrimage was interrupted by the sickness and death of Terah, Abraham's father. Later, they continued their migration into Canaan, slowly advancing with their flocks and herds across the intervening country, probably often meeting with suspicion and even hostility, until they reached the land of promise. Subsequently, driven by local famine, they travelled, temporarily, into Egypt, later returning to Canaan, always on the move in search of pasture and water for their animals, and always living in tents. Faithfully, Sarah had journeyed with her husband, sharing with him the discomforts, privations,

worries as well as the joys of their wandering kind of life. But now she was dead.

Sarah was dead. There is something terribly decisive about death. So many other crises of life and experience can be modified or adjusted in some way or other, but not death. There is a termination to a journey, and nothing can be done to alter the finality and solemnity of this solid fact. A human life has reached its earthly conclusion and those who moved within the orbit of that life feel the loss. Loved ones feel it keenly and sorrow fills their hearts. The ancient patriarch experienced the shock and sorrow of such a moment. It is probable that Sarah's death was not altogether unexpected ; in the case of older people we do expect death, and Sarah was very old. But even when death is anticipated, as after a long illness, for example, it still comes with an undeniable shock. A moment ago the life was there, the person was breathing, the heart was beating now the life is gone and every normal reaction, every physical function has ceased, and we sorrow.

There is, however, a word of great encouragement in this chapter. "Abraham stood up from before his dead." We may notice the close and intimate way in which Sarah is referred to : "**His dead.**" There is no attempt to mask or minimise the blow in any way ; it is referred to in all its severity. But he **rose up** from before his dead. Power was ministered to him in his need. We observe no prostration here, none of the shocked numbness which so often ensues. The strength, the dignity, the composure of this aged saint command respect. The power he so much needed in this emergency was divinely supplied. He rose up from before his dead to arrange the matter of Sarah's burial, calmly, carefully considering the matter with attention to the necessary details. A stranger in a foreign land, he could not leave the disposal of his beloved wife's body to alien and pagan hands. This final service for his life-long companion and fellow-servant of Jehovah must be performed by himself. It is an interesting New Testament confirmation that "devout men carried Stephen to his burial."

Our God is called the God of all encouragement. (2 Corinthians 1) Evidently Abraham experienced the truth of this great fact that the Lord can support in times of great sorrow. He was sorrowing but supported.

In v.4 a further thought is brought before our minds ; the thought of separation. Someone has written, "Nothing separates like death." Death inevitably divides, and Abraham made a request of the local residents that someone would sell him the possession of a burying place, that, as he said, "I may bury my dead out of my sight." Again, the acute reality is not glossed over. The separation was not from a comparative stranger or a mere acquaintance ; he says, "**My dead.**" Nevertheless he must bury her out of his sight. While she was alive she was his well loved wife, fair to look at and the joy of his heart, completely committed, with him, to the service of the Lord ; but the corruption of death had brought the living relationship to an abrupt end and separation ensued. The surviving partner, however, lives on in life's responsibilities. Life has to go on, its demands are uninter-

rupted, its problems continue to arise ; but the former relationship has been broken and cannot be resumed. Many things in life tend to separate, such as distance and other circumstances. Occasionally these difficulties can be overcome in one way or another, but the separation which death imposes is conclusive so far as earthly relationships are concerned.

We see here a further step. A negotiation was entered into, with all the interesting ritual of the east, for the purchase of a field, in which was a cave suitable for use as a place of burial ; the famous cave of Machpelah. The Hebrew word can evidently be understood in a number of ways one of which is "Open at each end." If we accept this rendering as valid, there springs immediately to the mind the concept of resurrection. Recently, in order to conform to the requirements of a new one-way traffic system, the superintendent of a cemetery was obliged to paint a notice on the inside of one of the gates ; "No Exit." This notice caused many visitors to think. But Machpelah bears no such notice ; there is an entrance at this end but there is an exit at the other side. The separation of death is, therefore, of a temporary nature, because there will be a resurrection ; for the believer, a resurrection of life, an exit from the grave and an entrance into the rich blessing of a fuller life beyond the grave and all the wonders of its "pleasures for evermore."

Sarah died in Kirjath Arba. Kirjath means "city", and Arba was evidently the name of its founder, one of the race of giants who formerly inhabited Canaan. But the word meant also, four, fourth and other derivatives, as it still does in modern Arabic. It can, apparently mean "foursquare". This is where Sarah died ; in man's great four-square city. The end of man's earthly career is in man's foursquare city, and its terminus, in spite of the renown of its founder, is death. Kirjath Arba, now called Hebron, perhaps earth's oldest city with a continuous history, may be taken to represent institutions which look permanent and abiding, yet there is nothing truly enduring here and death marks the end of it all. But God has a foursquare city of His own, designed by Himself, its Architect and Artificer, and it has measurements lacking in earth's most pretentious Kirjath Arbas. It has an upward dimension : "Its length and its breadth and its height are equal". Here is a measurement no earthly city can emulate. Man has tried it and failed, as Babel testifies. The city of God is the one Abraham was looking for and, surely, he had it in his mind on this occasion. Mamre is a name associated with the idea of "vision". What vision Abraham had ! "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day." He was able to look down the mists of time yet to be and to see Christ's day. Again, in connexion with the proposed sacrifice of Isaac on Moriah, we read, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen". The pious old saint, about to lay the body of his beloved companion to rest in the tomb with an exit, looked right through the long, dark tunnel to the daylight beyond, to Christ's day. Perhaps he saw something of the vision which John was to see centuries later, the unveiling of the city of God. This city has a fourth dimension which no earthly city, however old and important, could possibly copy—it is eternal. His earthly pilgrimage over, Abraham would rest in the dazzling splendour

of a truly eternal city from which death is for ever banished and where the tears and heartaches of earthly Kirjath Arbas will be remembered no more. He was separated from Sarah. Her journey was over but he must move on. However, the bitterness of that wrench was mitigated by the sublime truth on which his faith rested. Salvation would soon be completed, when the Lord will call His own loved ones out of the silent tombs to be with Him in "yonder bright regions of joy". This has been faith's bright prospect for thousands of years and will soon be realised by the millions of the redeemed.

Should this simple paper be read by anyone who has not definitely trusted the Saviour may I be permitted to point out that the eternal city lies foursquare, its blessed gates facing every point of the compass, and that all are welcome within its holy walls who come in repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975

THE MANNA AND THE BREAD OF LIFE _____ T. TYSON

Exodus 16.

IN Exodus 16 we find the Israelites a company of people redeemed by blood, taken out of Egypt and by the power of God at the Red Sea completely delivered from the hand and dominion of Pharaoh. Egypt is behind them, Canaan a long way ahead, and all around is the sand of the desert. In such circumstances only God can provide the food necessary to maintain life. God's provision is always Christ. For the sinner in bondage, for the saint needing deliverance from the power of sin, for the pilgrim believer hungry in the wilderness, God's answer is always Christ. God has an abundant supply in Christ—"I will rain bread from heaven", but He waits to hear us cry that we are hungry.

Before considering in detail the application of this type, a simple definition of the manna in spiritual terms might help. The manna is the food that God provides to sustain His pilgrim people in a world which is a spiritual wilderness. It speaks of Christ as the Man from heaven sent down from God to do the will of God right on to death so that He can bring life to those who believe on Him.

Firstly let us consider the **Message** of the manna as it portrays the Lord Jesus—later we will consider the **Management** of the manna and the **Murmurings** about the manna.

Each detail of the description in Exodus 16 has an answer in the holy perfections of the Man Christ Jesus. It was a small round thing depicting for us the insignificant Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter in whom was "no beauty that we should desire him". This small round thing on the desert, unappreciated by the world, unknown in Egypt, is the food of the people of God. It was round, reminding us of the wonderful perfection, the perfect humility and meekness of Christ.

There were no corners on Jesus, nothing obtrusive, nothing out of place, nothing superfluous. He was the One in whom the Father could find all His delight. Yet it was 'manna' "which neither you nor your fathers knew" for we can never fathom the inscrutable mystery of God manifest in the flesh. Here was "the mighty God" on earth as a Man, who could be weary, hungry, disappointed, sad—a real Man, nevertheless God. His love is passing knowledge, His riches unsearchable, His person unknowable; "No man knoweth the Son but the Father", yet the wonder is we can eat and be nourished by this food.

It was white, a reminder of the spotless holiness of the One who knew no sin, did no sin and in whom was no sin. On the Mount of Transfiguration "His garments were exceeding white as snow, glistening as the light, as no fuller on earth can whiten them". Like the One it typified, the Manna was from heaven and its "taste was like wafers made with honey". Oh! how sweet is the Lord Jesus, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds". God wants us to feed on the sweetness, the preciousness, the loveliness, the perfection of His beloved Son as He moved here on earth. He is to be our food throughout the length of our pilgrim journey. They fed on the manna 40 years till they came to a land inhabited, till they came to Canaan. Whether we are the youngest believer, or one who has been many years on the pathway, God has only one food with which to sustain us, and that is Christ.

The last few verses of Exodus 16 take us even beyond our life on earth. Moses was told to store up a pot of manna in the sanctuary so that later generations could see how their fathers had been fed. How necessary it is for those who have tasted the preciousness of Christ, to take a younger generation into the sanctuary and show them the treasures of Christ that have sustained them in the wilderness. When we get to glory it is still Christ—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna". Rev. 2:17.

The manna is a picture of Jesus but a portrait is more than a piece of canvas covered with paint. It is the image of a person. In John 6, Jesus declares that the manna was not the real thing that God had in mind, but that He Himself was the true bread of God. He is the One in whom is all God's delight, who fills and satisfies God's heart, yet the One sent by God from heaven to satisfy the spiritual hunger of His people, (in John 6:29-71 the word 'sent' comes seven times, and the phrase 'down from heaven' ten times). He came that we might have life initially by believing on Him, "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". The bread of God here in John 6 is the Lord Jesus sacrificing Himself in obedience right into death, in order that He can give life to those whom the Father has given Him. But not only in the initial sense for verses 56 and 57 speak of a continuous eating, enabling us to live by Him. J. N. Darby puts it very well, "Having trusted the Lord Jesus now I can follow Jesus through the whole of His life as a man down here. I can feed upon all His patience, His grace, His gentleness, His love, His purity, His obedience, His humility, upon all that perfection of everyday, and all the day which culminated only at the cross."

Our second consideration is the **Management** of the manna and I would draw attention to two short phrases in Exodus 16—Every man and Every day.

Feeding on Christ is a personal, individual responsibility which each one of us must do for himself. While we may be helped by others in our understanding of divine things, the real assimilation of the truth is a personal matter. "Every man according to his eating." Some had big appetites, and some small, but we must ask ourselves, how big is my appetite for Christ? We can have just as much of Christ as we can assimilate by faith, as we are willing to go in for, but we can never have too much of Christ. However much manna they collected there was none over.

"Every man according to the persons in his tent". It would seem that the heads of families went out and gathered according to the number of mouths they had to feed. If we are to take responsibility in Christian things it will mean that we dig into the word of God, not only for our own satisfaction, but also that there may be sufficient for others. If we are full of Christ, then it is Christ that will spill out to those who come into contact with us.

Then it had to be collected, **every day**. Perpetual perseverance was essential to a healthy life. It is not enough to rely on an annual conference, or a Bible week-end, nor even on the weekly Bible study meeting. Daily feeding on Christ is what is necessary. 12,520 trips were required by each one in those 40 years, though only two lived the total period. What a wonderful store of spiritual wealth we would accumulate if we persevered in this daily gathering. It had to be 'every morning', because it was too late once the sun rose. It is all too easy to miss our daily feeding on Christ because we allow the sun to get up. We go out to work, and we have not read, we have not prayed, we have not meditated on Christ, and the sun gets up, the pressures come and we have lost the opportunity. Let us rather follow in the steps of the One who "rising up a great while before day went out, and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." Mark 1 : 35. On the day before the Sabbath they gathered twice as much, to leave the Sabbath free for God. How do we use the day before the Lord's Day when most of us have a little more leisure? Do we use it to gather a little more spiritual substance for worship and service on the Lord's Day? How much of our Saturday does God get?

Our final consideration for which we turn to Numbers 11 is '**Murmuring** because of the Manna'. Numbers 10 gives a beautiful picture of the glorious, triumphant order of Israel as God purposed it. Immediately, however, we begin to read Numbers 11 we find murmuring. Murmurs of unbelief. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psalm 78. How often we look at our poor, feeble resources instead of to the mighty ability of God whose arm is not shortened. For power and strength to live the Christian life individually or company-wise we must get back to a simple reliance on the absolute ability of God to do the impossible.

Then we find—Murmurs of dissatisfaction with Christ. “There is nothing but this manna before our eyes”. Why God, you have given me nothing but Christ! It must break the heart of God to hear His people utter such thoughts. C.H.M. in his book on this passage says, “When once the heart loses its freshness in the divine life, when heavenly things begin to lose their savour, when first love declines, when Christ ceases to be a satisfying and altogether precious portion to the soul, and when the word of God and prayer lose their charm and become heavy, dull and mechanical, then the eye wanders back to the world, and the heart follows the eye, and the feet follow the heart.” It was the mixed multitude that murmured. So will it always be with those who are hangers on, with no real life in, nor commitment to Christ. Against this dissatisfaction with Christ we find an inordinate greed for earthly pleasures typified by the quails. As a merciful Creator, God knows we, as human creatures have bodily and mental needs, and He richly supplies these. So in Exodus 16 the quails are given without any judgement following. But if the hunger for earthly satisfaction supplants the hunger for Christ, then judgement and death must follow. “To be carnally minded is death.” To the Philip-pians Paul warns of those “who are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly. . . who mind earthly things.” Notice the unbelievable energy displayed in gathering these quails. They worked 36 hours non-stop and gathered about a ton each (860 gallons). When we compare the amount of money, time, energy that the man of the world is prepared to expend on his pleasures, with the zeal and appetite we have for Christ, we must often hang our heads in shame.

Lastly we have—Murmurings of hankering after the past—of thoughts back into the world. Their awful time of slavery was forgotten and they wished for the fish, the melons, garlic, leeks and onions. The fish that had come under God’s judgement as the river was turned into blood, all the spicy nothingness that the world can offer, instead of the bread of God sent down from heaven.

In Numbers we read that God gave them the manna to test them, to find out what was in their heart. May we examine ourselves before God in relation to this all important matter—our appetite for Christ. The question is not so much “When were you converted?”, nor “When did you first trust Christ?”, but rather “How much does Christ mean to you NOW?”. The worldling’s motto is “For me to live is me”, but may we in our measure be able to say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ”.

Profound Mysteries

Paul’s declarations of profound mysteries in his Epistle to the Romans were not the cold intellectual conclusions of a dogmatist, but flames from the soul of a Christian missionary consumed with zeal for the salvation of men.

Donald MacLean.

CHRISTIAN maturity is manifestly the constant aim of all New Testament teaching and apostolic labour. It is, therefore, a healthy, if salutary, exercise to discern how far this objective has been reached in our experience. It would surely be trivial to protest that the word 'maturity' does not occur in Scripture when so many passages abound with what the word essentially means. Perhaps some diffidence in relating the word to ourselves is due to its use as a euphemism for 'ripe old age'; but to one who has arrived at that stage of life there is no embarrassment for it is evident that the two expressions are not necessarily synonymous and that advancing years do not always denote maturity. As one takes a retrospective look it is not difficult to recall "the years which the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2 : 25) when the passage of time left little or no mark of spiritual advance. But surely this is a desirable and important goal for every Christian, young and old.

What then can we consider as the Scriptural meaning of 'maturity'? If we remember the words of Elihu the son of Barachel it will help us to see that something more than hoary hairs is in the definition. In Job 32 we have this **young** man putting to silence the three crafty old friends of Job. He courteously waited until they had exhausted their words of counsel and then he said, "I am young and you are very old. . . and I said, 'Days **should** speak and multitude of years **should** teach wisdom. . . . but great men are not always wise : neither do the aged understand judgment'." He then proceeded in his ministrations to Job to show how very much more mature he was than the aged counsellors, resulting in Job's recovery and restoration to God's favour. Here is encouragement to every young Christian to become mature without waiting for the passage of time, before "the evil years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." (Ecclesiastes 12 : 1) Do we covet to attain such maturity?

Dictionary definitions of the word give 'perfection' or 'full development' as the prominent meaning. Here it becomes possible to associate the word with many Scriptures where the idea of maturity is clearly intended. We may readily think, for instance, of 1 Corinthians 2 : 6, "How be it, we speak wisdom among them that are **perfect** (or mature)." From the context of this verse we gather that the apostle was not able to impart such wisdom to the Corinthians because of their immaturity. They were as yet "babes in Christ" (ch. 3 : 1/2), not fully developed Christians, which by that time they ought to have been. Still engrossed with charismatic gifts and giving undue prominence to those who possessed them, he exhorts them to "grow up" in ch. 14 : 20 (J.N.D. trans.), "Brethren, be not children in your minds. . . but in your minds be grown men (mature)." Thus we see that the word 'perfect' in v. 6 suggests a state of full growth—not sinless perfection, but in developed apprehension of the truth.

Similar impressions are gained from Hebrews 5 : 12/14 where the reference is to Jewish Christians who for different reasons had not advanced in the faith, content to embrace the fundamental truths of

Christianity and not "going on to perfection." They had "become such as had need of milk and not of solid food. . . . but solid food belongs to full-grown (mature) men, who on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil." (J.N.D.Trans.) Sometimes it is occupation with traditional religion—not necessarily Jewish—which impedes spiritual growth and progress. Never more than in our day is this so, when ritualism on the one hand and rationalism on the other distort and corrupt "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude v. 3).

The life and writings of the apostle Paul eminently set before us the example of Christian maturity. His energetic pursuit and progress towards this goal are readily seen from Philippians 3:7/17. The ultimate **perfection** for this man was "to attain unto the resurrection of (or from among) the dead". (v. 11) But short of this future event, he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already **perfect**, but I follow after, I press towards the mark (or goal) for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Indeed with Christ as his only object in life (cf. ch. 1:21) he had in a certain sense reached maturity, for, including others in his thoughts, we read in ch. 3:15, "Let us, therefore, **as many as be perfect**, be thus minded." Was this a contradiction of terms or was it not rather being "perfect" exactly in the sense of mature or being full-grown? Surely it was the latter, for he enjoins the brethren to be "followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." May such perfection or maturity be our goal, too.

There are some who aver that Christian maturity is unattainable because the standards are so high. They suggest that it would be more realistic if slightly lower standards were adopted so that these could be reached. But surely this is a counsel of despair, for the word 'slightly' could be interpreted as generously as one felt inclined, with consequently declining results! An illustration from the old pretractor days of farming may be helpful at this point, when the ploughman guided his picturesque shire horse and plough across the fields. How evenly his expert eye distributed the furrows from one side to the other. Competitions were held betimes among the ploughmen, the trophy being awarded to the man who produced the straightest furrow. The successful competitor, it is said, was the man who kept his eye on a distant object at the other side of the field. Had he chosen a nearer target the result would have been an imperfect furrow. Thus if we set our sights only upon that which is attainable or practicable we, too, shall fall short of real progress and maturity in our lives.

Perhaps the young Christian is discouraged at the apparent slowness of his or her advance in spiritual life, and may feel that only the slow passage of years will bring about maturity. But this is not necessarily so for the accumulation of years does not in itself achieve that end. On the other hand a young believer may, and often does, outstrip the older in years if attention is paid to the wise counsel given to his son in the faith by the apostle. It will be remembered that Timothy was a young man of quiet and sensitive disposition who needed great encouragement to press on in the things of God and was given the

real secret of growth and maturity in 2 Timothy 3 : 15/17. "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be **perfect**, (mature or complete), throughly furnished unto all good works." Here it is evident that maturity, completeness and proficiency in the spiritual realm is within the reach of the young believer in Jesus. But surely we, too, who are older in years need to be reminded that true maturity is not merely the product of our greater age but the result of patient, prayerful application of the Word of God, "the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up. . . ." (Acts 20 : 32)

One unmistakable mark of spiritual maturity is the ability and desire to grasp, not only the greatness of our blessings but the greatness of the Blessor Himself and what is suited to such greatness and glory. We may spend years greedily absorbing the wonderful mercies of God to us without arriving at the point reached by the Psalmist in Psalm 116 : 12, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me ?" Although not yet in the light of Christianity, he has the answer in v. 17, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the LORD." He grasped that which was suitable to God, to give and not only to receive ; to "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His Name ; (to) worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." (Psalm 29 : 2) How slow we are to arrive at this mature outlook ! David, the king, had reigned for forty years over Israel, and only towards the age of three-score years and ten, the year of his death, did he set his heart to build the house of God, although the divine decree had to be disclosed to him that, since he had been a man of war, it would be Solomon, his son, who would build God's house. We, too, may be satisfied to spend our years "fighting the battles of the Lord" before reaching the thought that "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." Why wait until life is almost over before thinking of this ?

It would seem to be that in our day there is a considerable preponderance of service over worship, although it could be said that **worship** itself is the highest form of **service**, and indeed the original word can bear both meanings. (see "The True Worship" ch. 2 by J.S.B.) Here then is real maturity in practice, not only (and rightly) to devote our time and energies to service in ministry to the saints or in preaching the gospel (needful as that is !) but to "render to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22 : 21 etc.). Such an exercise should not be exclusively left to those advanced in years, but every encouragement should be given to the younger men to engage in this supreme service of worship to the Father and the Son. Time and space would prevent reference here to the many Scriptures which richly encourage such mature activity, but examples would be such as Hebrews 13 : 15/16, "By Him, therefore, let us offer 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." Also 1 Peter 2 : 4/5, "To Whom coming as unto a Living Stone. . . ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

May the Lord Himself lead all our hearts, old and young alike, to a deeper desire for spiritual maturity, so that our concern will be for "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" and for the worship, praise and glory which is due to His Holy Name.

FRAGMENTS

Means to Conversion

One means, and indeed the greatest and most effectual. . . is the preaching of the gospel. This is the method which the Saviour of sinners appointed for the propagation of His religion : "Go ye", says He to His apostles, Mark 16 : 15, "into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And why was this method appointed, but because it appeared the fittest and the best ? and this appointment by so high authority, guided in all its acts by infinite wisdom, gives it an unquestionable superiority to every other. Were we unable to perceive any reason for this preference, that ought not to create a shadow of doubt in our mind : God has said it ; and this surely is sufficient to make us receive it as an absolute truth. . . . For general utility and extensive efficacy, what other method can be compared to this ? The history of the. . . Church, for nearly eighteen hundred years, can be adduced to display in the most luminous manner, from page to page, its superiority over every other. Let it be remembered that whenever the sacred Scripture speaks of conversion. . . . and specifies the means by which it is to be accomplished—that means is always the preaching of the gospel.

David Bogue. 1750—1825.

There is a great aptness to trust in other means and let out our hearts to them. An arm of flesh signifies a great deal, when the power of an almighty Spirit is reckoned as nothing. And persons are apt to be very contriving, and prone to forecast how such and such external forms would do our business and make the Church and the Christian interest hugely prosperous. . . . It is a very vain thing to think that anything that is merely external can reach this end, or do this business. For it cannot be done in any other way, by any might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God.

John Howe. 1678.

FREE-FLOWING PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE ——— COLIN CURRY

4. "LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES!"

(Isaiah 49 to 66)

AS in chapters 40 to 48 of Isaiah, so again in these later chapters there are many choice sections, and the exhilarant strain is often to the fore. Continuing the style of treatment of the previous paper brings more acute problems here, however. Making a selection from such a range of outstanding passages is very much a matter of preference ; and there is difficulty (while doing this) in even sketching the general pattern of the whole sequence of chapters. We shall simply accept these limitations.

The pattern of the group of chapters surrounding chapter 53 ought, however, to be pointed out, and it may be right to focus on chapters 52 and 54 as highlights in this area. At the same time we must see how central and vital chapter 53 is ; calling attention to the force of all the good tidings and jubilation, so sure and so uninhibited as a result. In the later chapters, passages full of promise and joyous hope tend to alternate with sombre sections where God's present displeasure with His people, and the reasons for it, are underlined. It seems fairly clear that chapters 60 to 62, speaking of the glory and the bridal beauty of Zion, form the centre piece of these later chapters. If we focus on these chapters we shall need to realise the dark background against which they are set, and may well appreciate them more on this account.

We shall restrict our considerations therefore to the two sets of three chapters (52 to 54 and 60 to 62), with occasional brief references to their setting in the whole prophecy.

Publishing the Good Tidings

The fourth Servant song (52:13 to 53:12), and especially chapter 53, has a unique place in the respect of every Christian : and it clearly deserves this special esteem. The theme of the solitary Sufferer, standing alone in the place of others, and the Glory due to Him because of that suffering, never ceases to amaze and call for response from those who have been won by it. The frequency of the N.T. references to the chapter confirms that it is a crucial passage as well as a moving one.

The very prominence of these verses in our thoughts, however, tends to mean that we are less aware of their context than is perhaps

desirable. Directing our attention to the adjacent chapters, we find that the setting of the chapter is magnificent indeed. The mounting themes (in chapters 52 and 54) of expectancy, confidence, joy and exuberance, peace and security, and of grace abounding to the needy (in chapter 55) are marvellously alive and real. The prophet enters into it and presses it all in a wonderfully fresh and vigorous way. The rightness and readiness of all that he expresses is self-evident. By their very distinctness from the profound story of dereliction and agony upon which it all hinges, these words of the prophet add to our sense of the wonder and the holiness of that central theme of all.

Chapter 52 (before the Servant theme emerges in verse 13) builds up to expressions of joy at the great news of the coming release of the captives from their oppressors (verse 9). The prophet seems to stand on the threshold of the event. The clean break with Babylon to take place on their departure for Jerusalem is on the verge of fulfilment (verses 11, 12); and it is all a consequence of God's mighty activity on their behalf (verse 10). The earlier verses mount up to this in a remarkable way. The captive daughter of Zion is urged to awake, and to hear the unbelievable news of freedom and re-instatement. It is the gift of God's pure grace, brought to them in an unexpected and totally magnanimous way. Their Redeemer has intervened; His great Name is being revealed; to them, and on a wider scale too, through them.

In verses 7 and 8, the prophet stands aside to view the process of conveying the good news. What a wonderful service the carrying of good news from God is, whether today or in the days (past and future) to which these verses relate! And how true it is that messengers are nothing apart from their message. It is the **content** of their news which makes their service admirable. Then the passage speaks of watchmen on the alert for the tidings, receiving them with a joy hard to express, being **together** in their reception of the true grace of God and in response to it. How true to experience it is that the people of God "see eye to eye" when His rich grace engulfs them with its magnitude; and how perfect will that unanimity be in a day shortly to arrive!

We must bear in mind, of course, that beyond the short term return from Babylon to Jerusalem, the ultimate breaking of the Gentile adversaries of the people of God, the overthrow of Gentile domination, the establishment of God's glorious centre on earth in Zion, is in mind in all these sections. What is depicted here far surpasses the limited fulfilment in O.T. history. Christians, too, can enter into the spirit of these chapters, since they also know (after the N.T. fashion) about the limitless grace of God, the routing of all the adverse powers, the clothing anew with the beautiful garments, the unstinted provision of grace, the glory yet to be. They know something about the key to it all, too, and wish to know it more; the wonders of the love of Christ, and of that dark hour of death when that love was demonstrated to the uttermost. May we reflect something of the zeal of the prophet as from his own angle he caught the vision of these matters.

Immediately before the great passage which picks out the astonishing theme of the sufferings of Christ, the thought in the

prophet's mind was the imminent **departure** from Babylon. Afterwards, we have the great **arrival** in view, Jerusalem re-instated, the mother-city founded, rebuilt and established, glorious and beautiful, fruitful and expansive, breaking forth on the right hand and on the left, loved tenderly (and now recovered) by her Husband, her Maker, Jehovah her Redeemer. No weapon formed against her will prosper, peace and real security are her lot. One can see the continuity of the thought which is cut across by chapter 53. This (chapter 54) is indeed a wonderful chapter. As with chapter 53, cold analysis would not be a suitable approach. The expressions are so excellent that comment could easily detract from them. It is clear, however, that what God rescues His people **from**, and His irresistible power to do it, righteously and effectively, is a subject for endless gratitude. But what He introduces His people **into**, starting afresh from nothing, giving them a new status and a high place of favour, beautifying them with that which He Himself provides, is a matter for high praise and celebration too. **This** is the aspect of this chapter. It is also clear that God's favour, received and appreciated, overflows. It is in the nature of grace, accepted and welcomed, to be spoken about and to multiply. Chapter 54 moves into chapter 55, where the vast stores of grace are opened to all comers, and all who will are pressed to partake of His bounty, though with due humility and repentance as the tokens of real response.

By His Stripes we are Healed

We have said little about chapter 53 itself. To recognise that it has depths and sorrows far beyond our puny comments is perhaps the best justice we can accord to it. We make a few general points only, without going into detail. First, it is not in itself one of the free-flowing passages, though it provides the basis for all the fluent words which surround it. The atmosphere in this passage is rather one of bated breath, astonishment at the sight and memory of such suffering, equalled only by amazement at the revelation of the glory bestowed upon the one-time Sufferer. There are overtones of repentance and confession here ; former despisers of our Lord are overcome by His grace to them, which took Him down, alone, and in their stead, to the place of abandonment and bearing of sin. It has a clear relevance to a repentant Israel when at last they "look on Him whom they pierced". The quiet and repentant spirit, which is wholly amazed at the Saviour's love and grace, and never ceases to be impelled and staggered by it, is quite as appropriate for every present-day believer. It would be to our shame if we grew familiar with such marvels as these.

Secondly, the build-up to this chapter through the earlier Servant-passages may be mentioned briefly. The clear emergence of the true Servant, alongside the present unfitness of Israel for that rôle, becomes sharper as these passages succeed one another. Focussing only on the features of Christ presented in these sections, the first (42 : 1-9) has a wonderful opening, speaking of God's delight in Him. What follows depicts with the patient gentleness of His contacts with

men (2, 3), yet also the unfailing outcome of His mission (4). The second Servant-section picks out His sense of the toil involved, spending His strength for naught, feeling the non-response to His service ; and yet accepting all, leaving the true assessment to the One He served (49 : 1-13). In the third of these passages the active animosity of the opposition breaks out (50 : 4-9). The Servant faces it all, calmly and faithfully. His total dedication to His task is wonderfully portrayed. We draw near to the cross here, and turning the page to the fourth passage we are there. Though only a short step further, however, it is a tremendous one. Still the hatred and hardness of men are there, described still more vividly, despising Him, rejecting Him, conducting Him away unresisting, "as a Lamb to the slaughter". But also there is the wrath of God against sin, absolutely centrally in the passage (53 : 4-6). Despised of men, but "smitten of God", too, "and afflicted". A profound further step indeed !

This leads to a few final words on the structure of this fourth passage. Centrally placed is that abyss of suffering for sin, far beyond our fathoming, into which our Lord entered alone. Flanking it, on either side, are words about men's estimations of Him, men's handling of Him. Further out, at the start and at the end, are marvellous words about God's approval of His Servant, about recompense and high glory rightly given to Him ; glory which will dumbfound kings and nations soon, and is the cause of endless joy and gratitude to those who know their debt to Him.

Arise, Shine ; for thy Light is come

The three chapters, 60, 61 and 62 again form an impressive section, hard to equal for the splendour of its subject and its language. The theme of the glory and beauty of the renewed Zion, a centre and witness to the whole earth, and a magnet to attract and draw in the nations, is a great theme indeed ; and the Spirit of God has the choicest of words to describe it.

This glowing passage is set in dark surroundings, however. The vision of the future magnificence of Zion contrasts sharply with the recounting of its present shame, corruption and desolation. In each of the preceding chapters the dark facts are uncovered with all plainness of speech by the prophet, though some light pierces the gloom towards the end of each chapter. In the succeeding chapters, one feature is the prophet's own sensitive reaction to the grossness of the present departure from God. He records all the past demonstrations of God's lovingkindness and mercy to His people, and passes into an urgent and eloquent prayer of confession and intercession for them (63 : 7 to 64 : 12). Here, and for the same reasons, Isaiah is much in line with his fellow-prophets (Jeremiah, Daniel and others). Isaiah's reaction again underlines the shamefulness of their present state, and shows how necessary sorrow and contrition are, on their part, if release is to be found. A prominent theme here, too, is the inevitability of judgment from God, searching out and visiting His own people, dealing severely with the wickedness amongst them, as well as quelling their adversaries in due course.

Returning to the central chapters, here we read about Zion as God will remake her. The words cannot fail to impress us. Zion in all her splendour and beauty will make a great impact on a nationwide scale in that day as the verses say. Her glory is not her own, it is the glory of the LORD. Her light is a derived light, a bestowed light, it is the light of her great Messiah, her Redeemer, come to her, shining upon her and shining out through her. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee". What a total transformation the light of the grace of God in Christ can make! Alongside the marvellous description of the full display of glory in that day, there are words (in chapter 62) which speak of urgent onward-looking to that day. Zealous moving towards it, no real rest until it arrives! Principally it may speak of Jehovah's desire for the great day here envisaged when His intentions for the earth will be realised, when His love for His people will be satisfied. But also there are clear indications of others entering into this spirit, moved by the prospect ahead, watching day and night, their whole way is governed by the anticipation of that bright day (verses 6, 7). Though our prospects as Christians are in a different area from those envisaged in these wonderful O.T. passages, let us not be less zealously affected towards the bright future in all its aspects. Let the glory of Christ be at the centre of all our aspirations, and let us not weaken in our love for the prospect of His appearing.

Finally, since Christ and His great service for God have been the key to everything we have discussed, it seems absolutely right that here again at the centre of the present passage comes a set of verses which focus upon Him once more. Chapter 61: 1 ff. is a passage which He made peculiarly His own in the days of His flesh, though with a notable omission (verse 2b.) (See Luke 4:16-21). Anointed of Jehovah, with the Holy Spirit upon Him in a unique way, bringing the good news of grace and deliverance to the undeserving (not only to preach it but to substantiate it by His devotion to the very limit), how rightly this Scripture describes Him and enhances our thoughts about Him. In all things He has the pre-eminence! As we enter a little into the prophet's vision of His glory and greatness, may we also share a little of his enthusiasm in response to it.

FRAGMENT**The Ministry of Epaphras****Letters of J.N.D.**

EPAPHRAS, perhaps lying on his face all day—no great zeal it might be said, but having the muster-roll of God's saints before him; feeling wearied perhaps—but no, there's another and another of God's saints I must pray for. This was the particular path of Epaphras (perhaps Epaphroditus the same). We do not find him standing in any other place of service but this; labouring that the saints might be perfect and complete in all the will of God. It may be that in which we are most lacking—no eye but God's—courts no public praise—no bustle—is like the fibre to the root of the plant. (Colossians 4:12)

THE FATHER'S COMMANDMENT J. S. BLACKBURN

"JESUS cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. . . . For I have not spoken of myself ; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting : whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

John 12 : 44-50

THESSE verses occupy a special place in the structure of the Gospel. They are found at the end, the very last words, of John's account of the public ministry of the Lord Jesus. What follows to chapter 17 records what was spoken by the Lord in the inner circle of His own disciples, the doors being shut, and what was addressed to the Father in their hearing.

The history of the public ministry evidently closes in 12 : 37. What follows to the end at verse 50 is the Spirit's summary, explanation, commentary on the narrative and especially on the **results** of the ministry recorded. The two aspects to which this commentary draws attention are, first, the staggering fact that so few believed, but second, the real quality of the result in those who believed. In short, this immense blessing was that they had been brought into touch with the Father. They had believed in the Father, seen the Father, heard the Father, and this was eternal life.

To revert for a moment to the former section (vv37-41) the explanation dwells on two quotations from Isaiah. These are Isaiah 53 : 1 and then 6 : 10. The prophet, putting words into the mouth of the repenting remnant of the future, foretells very clearly that few would believe. This is clearly the meaning of the question "Who believed the report which reached us ?" By the time this juncture in the narrative has been reached the answer has become manifest to all—very few indeed had believed. "To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?" The prophet is here quoting his own words in Isaiah 51 : 9, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord : awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab (Egypt), and wounded the dragon ? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep ; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over ?" Who could think that under the lowly form of the Nazarene, was in truth Him who had given the very greatest display in the ancient records of the might of the presence of Jehovah ? This is just what a few had been doing from John's opening narratives, from John the Baptist, Andrew and Simon—and even the woman of Samaria and her hearers : "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world".

But the majority of the people had not believed and v. 39 introduces the second quotation from Isaiah, "This is the reason for which they did not believe". "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12: 40—See Isaiah 6: 10). This is a "hard saying". Who can hear it? But its hardness arises from the slowness with which we see things from God's point of view. It was God who sent Jesus, foreshadowed by Jehovah's sending Isaiah. He was the initiating actor. If God sends light to those who (in hearts open to Him thoroughly and completely) are firmly set against receiving it, then the coming of that light is the occasion of hardening them, as in the case of Pharaoh (Exodus 4: 21, 8: 15 and 32, 9: 34) so applied in Romans 9: 18. The rulers in Jerusalem, against all miraculous signs, against all Scripture, against the full evidence outlined in John 5: 32-47, had indeed manifested hearts incorrigibly set against believing: and thus the coming of the light hardened hearts set to refuse the Sent One. The process can be traced. Every fresh sign produced, not conviction and faith, but a hardening intention to silence in death the voice of the Sent One. In 5: 16 the Jews sought to slay Him because He had broken the Sabbath. The blinding flash of divine light in the miracle of healing, they saw not: they saw only the breaking of their tradition. Further light, in the Lord showing that God was His Father and how He was one with God, simply hardened their line—v. 18 "they sought **the more** to kill Him". Thus the process of hardening can be traced, until His hour was come (12: 23, 13: 1, 17: 1).

The word believe—'believe' or 'believe not'—dominates the passage (vv. 36, 37, 38, 42, 44, 46, 47), and thus the whole of the narrative of the public ministry is brought to this clear point of separation. Those who 'believed not' manifested a previously set refusal of the Father's Sent One, the "waters of Shiloah that flowed softly" were hardened in darkness and death. Those who 'believed' became 'children of light'; were converted and healed, but above all, in and through believing, they had been put in touch with the Father. This is so clearly the great result of believing, in this context. Believing on the Sent One, they were believing on the One who sent Him, the Father. Seeing the Sent One, they saw the Father who sent Him. The speaking of the Sent One was the speaking of the Father who sent Him, and His commandment is life eternal.

This small paragraph (vv. 44-50) therefore, above all, draws attention to the immense fact that, great as this would be, the Divine intention would not have reached its real fulfilment if those who believed thought themselves satisfied with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, even as the Son. The Divine intention was that the oneness of the Son with the Father should come to this specific end, beyond which there is nothing, that those who believed should come to know the Father. In other words, they did not really know the Son, unless such knowledge brought them to know the Father. Such knowledge is eternal life.

If we try, with unshod feet, to gather up this truth, especially in John from the Divine side, then we can only start with John 17: 3—

“thee (the Father) the only true God”. And this accords with Paul in 1 Corinthians 8 : 6 “to us there is one God, the Father”. In the same Divine thought, the Divine light, the Divine love, is ever that the Son is one with the Father (John 10 : 30). (The Spirit is also one with the Father and the Son, but we are at present meditating on John 12 : 44-50). Ever and eternally abiding in that oneness, the Father has sent the Son, and this is an absolutely dominant thought in John’s gospel, from 5 : 36 to its repetition six times in chapter 17. In this small paragraph—John 12 : 44-50, the phrase occurs three times, “Him (the Father) that sent me”.

In John’s gospel there are three statements of the action of the Son in making the Father known. 1 : 18 “the only begotten Son. . . he hath **declared** him”. Here it is not quite explicit whether it is God or the Father who is declared. 17 : 6 “I have **manifested** thy name unto the men which thou gavest me”. v. 26 “I have declared. . . and will declare”. It is interesting to add from Matthew 11 : 27, “neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will **reveal** him”. It is in speech commanded by the Father that the Son has made Him known and it is in this way that the Father’s commandment is eternal life.

On the surface we can perceive that in the period of the public ministry, amid strife and opposition, the Lord Jesus made known that the Name under which He had been sent to speak of God was the Father. Nowhere here is the name Jehovah stated to be superseded. But its complete absence from the sacred record from the beginning of the gospel story can only be explained by the fact that the name Jehovah is superseded by the name “the Father.” Many important facts regarding the worship of the Father in place of Jehovah, and the work of the Father, are dealt with during His public ministry. But the inner and most blessed realisation of what it means to know the Father, the Father’s house, the Father’s counsel, the Father’s heart, the Father’s love, these are the themes with which, in the upper room, the doors being shut, the Lord Jesus occupies the hearts of His own.

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975

5. THE BRAZEN SERPENT _____ C. D. BLAKEBOROUGH

The Enemy Within

Numbers 21 : 4-11, John 3 : 1-17, Romans 7 : 14-25

THIS week we are serialising the most dramatic of adventure stories. The theme began with the nation of Israel in abject slavery to the cruelest of task masters, the Pharaoh of Egypt. God however looked in mercy at the plight of His special people, and through His servant Moses brought a series of plagues upon the

Egyptians culminating in the most drastic—the death of the eldest son in every family. God made an escape route for those who acted in faith and obeyed his instruction to kill a lamb and daub its blood upon the door posts of their homes. This final blow to the nation caused Pharaoh to acknowledge that God was Lord of all, and let His people go free.

Whilst they were still in Egypt, the land in which Pharaoh's rule was absolute, their enemy changed his mind sending well equipped troops after the fleeing Israelis. Trapped between the Red Sea and the foe they turned in desperation to Moses. Once again God met their need, making a way through the sea, and then causing the water to return, drowning the pursuing Egyptians, their dead bodies being found the next morning on the sea shore. The God of Israel was indeed GOD.

God's plan for His people was well known. 300 miles away was a land to settle in "flowing with milk and honey". Within 3 months they reach Mt. Sinai where, during the following year, they received from God the guide lines for life and worship, a plumb line against which they could measure their own actions and motives. After 10 days spent putting themselves into God's appointed order, they travelled rapidly and in 11 days reached the borders of the Promised Land.

The spies were dispatched, but on their return their collective nerve failed, the task of conquest was too great, and they turned back into the trackless desert, there to wander aimlessly for 40 years. The tragic story of those wasted years is spelled out for us in the book of Numbers :— despising God's provision of food ; rejecting and grumbling about God's appointed and well qualified leader ; losing all sense of direction and loyalty ; dreaming of the past ; and in a twisted way enjoying their misery in the moonlike landscape of the Sinai desert.

Immediately preceding this evening's incident, things looked to be changing for the better, vows were made to God and a minor victory gained, but despair returned and they plunged southward grumbling as they went. Now the final blow fell, poisonous serpents glided silently through the camp dealing out pain, paralysis and death. Things could get no worse and suddenly the nation realised its folly and turned to God with the first demonstration of genuine repentance for 40 years.

Once again God's response was immediate and effective. Moses was commanded to make a replica of the serpents in bronze and those who looked in faith to God's remedy lived. The effect of this act of faith was immediate. In this new mood of genuine awareness of their own powerlessness and sin, they moved forward, and in 3 months were on the banks of the Jordan River about to enter the Promised Land.

Now let us retrace the story this time transposing the events into New Testament, Christian terms. Each of us lived the early part of our lives under the domination of Satan and slaves to sin, even though for most of the time we may have been unaware of our slavery, thinking that we ourselves were the masters of our fate, but to every Christian there came a moment when he became aware of his position,

realised that the end of such a life was the death penalty, and looked in faith to God's way of escape,—“Behold, the Lamb of God, the taker away of the sin of the world”. Our eyes were opened to see the tremendous significance to us of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing Him as our Passover Lamb whose blood would cause the destroying angel death to pass over us. In His death he had paid the penalty for our sins, the Cross of the Lord Jesus had wiped our conscience clear of guilt.

However, we continued to live in a world in which the majority of the inhabitants were still under Satan's domination, his ideas of power and meaning of life were accepted without question, but there came a time in our lives when we realised that our Great Enemy was a broken force. At the cross, the Lord Jesus had conquered Satan and we had been translated into the Kingdom of God's Son, this translation occurring when we realised in a practical way what was meant by the act of baptism—as our Saviour had died for sin, so we had to reckon ourselves dead to sin, and risen in newness of life into God's kingdom where Satan had no power, whilst we were trusting our Saviour.

Coming to the incident of the brazen serpent, we learn from John 3, 14, that “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up”. Of what aspect of the Cross is this a picture? It cannot be that after years of fruitless Christian living we are saved again by trusting the Lord, so what is its meaning?

One clue was provided for us earlier in the week when we were reminded of the various pictures or disguises that our great enemy Satan used in the Old Testament. The first picture was a serpent leading astray Eve in the Garden of Eden, so perhaps we could take those serpents sliding silently through the Israeli camp as a picture of Satan whose poisonous venom led to paralysis and death of all that remained alive of the Israeli host that had known slavery in Egypt. And are we not very conscious of that fatal flaw in each of us, are we not all members of Adams' race with its ingrained tendency to act in opposition and turn our backs upon God? We know what is right, yet time and time again do what is wrong!

The New Testament describes this situation in Romans 7. We who acknowledge our debt to the Lord, who know that Satan's power was broken at the Cross, find an interminable struggle going on within us—“the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. . . . I see another law in my members. . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members”. We are all bitten with Satan's fatal venom—the enemy is within.

Christians in the Middle Ages conscious of this tendency shut themselves off from the world and its attractions, but found even in the seclusion of their lonely cells and desert caves the battle for the mind was not over, and that even there lustful ideas and vicious thoughts came crowding in, in spite of great self-discipline. We have within ourselves no cure for this disease, but praise the Lord, just as in the Old Testament, God had a remedy for the serpent's bite, so He has a way of escape for Christians, a remedy outside ourselves!

In the first place, God knows about this fatal venom and at the Cross met our need, for Romans 8 v. 3 states that "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh". Just as the serpent was reproduced by Moses in bronze, so God sent His son to be born and to grow into a man—yet different from any other human in that He was flawless. Yet He who was sinless accepted in our place the sentence of death, and we looking with the eye of faith at our Saviour lifted up on a Cross can know that in Him we have life.

We have another clue provided for us in the verses that precede John 3.14 which tell us of the New Birth, or New Life that is a vital part of becoming a Christian. We receive from God the priceless gift of Eternal Life, the kind of "life" that Jesus lived, and into our inward struggle there comes a new and invincible ally to that part of us that knows what we ought to do, but finds itself powerless to do it—"The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death", (Romans 8 v 2).

The power is there—but how do we switch on? Well, it seems to be that only when a man has got to the end of the road, finding himself utterly helpless and bitterly frustrated, that he grasps at what God has been offering all the time. We have to come to the place Paul reached in Romans 7.15 when he exclaimed "in me there dwelleth no good thing", that even our best is useless, when we realise that we cannot come to terms with ourselves and recognise that we have come to the end of our tether—when we die to self.

Some pass from Egypt to Canaan early in their Christian life, whilst others struggle for years in the wilderness, their Christian life powerless, fruitless, dry and incomplete.

C. S. Lewis comments on this situation "Suppose a person who knows nothing about salt—you give him a pinch to taste and he experiences a particularly strong sharp taste. You then tell him that in your country people use salt in all their cooking. Might he not reply that in that case I suppose all your dishes taste exactly the same. The taste of that stuff you have given me is so strong that it will kill the taste of everything else. But you know that the real effect of salt is exactly the opposite, so far from killing the taste of the egg, the tripe or the cabbage, it actually brings it out. Now it is something like that with Christ and ourselves. The more we get what we now call "ourselves" out of the way and let Him take us over, the more truly ourselves we become".

To die to self is to make the best of ourselves, not for ourselves—but for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

ESSENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE _____ H. J. VINE

The Spirit and Christ's Co-heirs

THE first mention of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians speaks of His sealing the co-heirs (chapter 1. 13, 14). This sealing is individual, but it is in view of what is collective. Each one who hears the Word of truth, the glad tidings of salvation, and believes in Christ is immediately sealed with the Spirit of promise. It should not read, "After ye believed", but "having believed ye have been sealed".

The Spirit is here designated "The Spirit of promise" because the heirs and the inheritance are before the mind. His coming was often foretold. He is yet to be poured out on "all flesh" (Joel 2. 28). We have an example of it in Acts 2; but only one hundred and twenty were then baptized by Him. This was extended necessarily to Gentiles who believed (see Acts 11. 15); nevertheless, there is no repetition of this baptism now as some seem to seek after.

By the gift and baptism of the Spirit at the beginning both Jews and Gentiles who received Him were made one. That was according to the truth of the mystery—fellow-members of the same body. Since that time He seals individuals (thus, too, they are vitally brought into the one body), and He gives them a foretaste of what is to come, when He will pervade all, for He is "the Earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession". In God's own time the inheritance will be actually possessed by Christ and His co-heirs. They have the firstfruits of the Spirit now, as being indwelt by the Spirit of promise; and these co-heirs are the sons of God, the brethren of Christ; therefore, because they are sons, the Spirit of God's Son has been sent out into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Galatians 4. 6). In Ephesians 2. 18, their liberty of approach to the Father is said to be by "One Spirit", for though He graciously seals us individually as the sons and heirs of God, yet, what is collective is in view as we have said. Christ presents them with Himself before the Father. They are one with Him, and He is not ashamed to call them brethren. His own Spirit—the Spirit of God's Son—is in their hearts. All this subsists vitally.

Now, though the sealing of the co-heirs comes first in Ephesians, because the marking off of those who are to form the assembly is in view; yet, it is well that we should notice other things in connection with the work of the Spirit.

The preaching, which calls sinners out of darkness into this marvellous association, is "by the Holy Ghost sent from heaven"; and those who believe are "born of water and the Spirit". Scripture tells us that the water is the Word, and this is made operative in those who hear in faith by the Holy Spirit. A new nature is the consequence, and this delights in what is of God, in contrast to the old nature which finds pleasure in fleshly lusts. The love of God, too, is shed abroad in

the heart, the love which was manifested when Christ died for us, "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord", the love which God commends to us.

Moreover, the Spirit abidingly indwells those who believe. He is the power by which they enter into, and do, those things in which the new nature delights. The truths of Scripture become living and real to them, for the same Spirit who inspired the one indwells the other. This explains the fact that such understand what the most educated students of Scripture, if unconverted, fail to grasp. Those who have the Spirit may be guided into all truth, but those who are in the flesh, still unsaved, cannot know these things. The normal way of the Spirit is to teach us through the inspired writings. He brings them home to us by ministry or by private reading of the Word of God.

We have said, the Object in view in all His service is the Son of God, for He is here to glorify Him before our hearts. Even in the ministry of the truth of Scripture, He leads our thoughts to the One who is Himself the Truth personally. He may bring many things before us ; and, when grieved, give us a sense of what we have done to so grieve Him ; but, normally, his gracious work is ever to lead us to the Son of God, giving us to know His personal glory and love, and the portion which is ours with Him as His co-heirs.

The mystery itself was revealed at the first by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets. He is the Unction of 1 John 2. 20, by whom we know all things. It is He also by whose power we are strengthened in the inner man so that Christ, the Centre and Sun of the coming glory, might dwell in our hearts through faith ; so that the surpassing love of Christ may be our present portion. He it is who enables us to wield His sword—"the sword of the Spirit"—in the conflict with the powers of darkness, who would rob us of the enjoyment of our part with Christ. It is by Him we are maintained in the spirit of prayer and supplication ; and in Him the kingdom of God is known—its righteousness, peace, and joy. How needful, therefore, is it for us to heed the exhortation, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption".

He would ever keep the Object of His mission, and the true Object of our hearts, before us ; but the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. Those who are the sons of God are led by the Spirit, and the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in them as they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is the Spirit who witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God ; and "if children, heirs also : heirs of God and Christ's joint heirs : if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Romans 8. 17).

The one Spirit and the one body

We learn in Ephesians 3. 6, that the unifying of all believers into one body is the second part of the mystery : called out from amongst Jews and Gentiles they are made one. Chapter 4. 4 teaches us, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your

calling". The "one Spirit" is named again in chapter 2. 18, in regard to our access to the Father ; also in 1 Corinthians 12. 13, in reference to the fact that "by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or freemen, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit". This emphasizes the vital unity of all true believers, and the power by which this unity subsists.

Throughout all the present period the Spirit maintains this vital organism, whatever failure may come into the professing assemblies of Christ : during the time of Christ's rejection, of His bodily absence from the world, of His exaltation at the right hand of God as the Head of the assembly, the Spirit never fails in His gracious work.

When Christ ascended to the Father, the Spirit came down at Pentecost upon about one hundred and twenty believers who were gathered together in one accord at Jerusalem. That was the beginning of the body, the assembly. It was the baptism of the Spirit. From that moment it could be said, "There is one body and one Spirit". It could not have been said previously, for redemption had not been secured, and risen life in and for man was unknown. Moreover, the Head of the assembly, the body, was not exalted, nor the Spirit given. Both were necessary for the forming of the one body and the uniting of it vitally to its glorious Head. It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ in resurrection, "He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the **Beginning**, Firstborn from among the dead". The assembly could not have been in being before this.

The truth of the one body was not unfolded till long after Pentecost, though the body was itself there. The truth was given to the apostle of the Gentiles to minister. There had been **national** dealings with Israel, and **individual** dealings with Abraham and others, but nothing of a **corporate** nature before Pentecost. Such a thing as the members of one body being vitally united together by the Spirit to a living Man in heaven was not and could not be previously known. The very gifts which are peculiar to the present dispensation are for "the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4. 12). They had no existence till Christ was ascended to God's right hand. Those, too, which are in the assembly itself derive their diverse abilities and operations from the Spirit given at Pentecost.

The importance of the peculiar and special constitution of the assembly needs to be better understood, and the functions of the members of the body in the Spirit's power also. "All these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according, as He pleases. For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12. 11-13). This aspect of the truth not only preserves from clericalism, but also from independency ; for all the members of the one body are necessary ; and where the Spirit is unquenched collectively He manifests His activities through the members for the profit of all. If all the gifts in the assembly were thus happily in function there would be oneness and yet diversity in ministry, and the distinct operations of the Spirit therewith would be for the comfort, cheer, and blessing of the whole.

The apostle Paul often refers to himself as the persecutor of the assembly. He, above all the others, became its devoted servant for Christ's glory after his conversion. Then, we are told in Acts 9. the assemblies had peace ; being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, they increased through the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Where the Spirit is unhindered in His gracious and encouraging work, prosperity in the assemblies is sure to be present. He is called the Comforter, also the Spirit of Truth. He leads, He guides, He teaches, and He glorifies Christ. He is in us and with us, nor does He leave us even when we grieve Him, for we are sealed by Him unto the day of redemption. May we therefore have grace and solicitude to see that no hindrance exists on our side. May we be self-judged, and free in heart and mind to be led and guided by Him.

In speaking of the gifts named in Ephesians 4. we said they had the edification of the assembly in view. The first two named had to do with the foundation ; the second two (for they are not three) with the continuation of the work. We are distinctly told that "the apostles and prophets" laid "the foundation" (Ephesians 2. 20). These were given from Christ ascended, and have no connection with Old Testament prophets. The "evangelists" and "shepherd-teachers" are the two gifts remaining to-day, and will remain till the work is complete. There is also, as we have indicated, the functions of the body for its self-building up, through the working in its measure of each member and part, and thus it makes "the increase of the body to its self-building up in love".

There is still one body and one Spirit to-day : one living organism energized by the Holy Ghost : every member is livingly joined to the exalted Man, the Head of the assembly ; and it is to Him we are to grow up in all things, as we await His coming again.

FROM THE EDITOR'S NOTE BOOK

THE ASSYRIAN (Concluded)

Let us examine now the passages which treat of this second siege.

In Isaiah 10, the Assyrian comes up against the people of the Lord who dwell in Zion (verse 24), that is to say, the Remnant (verse 22). Like Pharaoh of former times, he lifts up over Israel his rod in the manner of Egypt. God will lift up this same rod upon him, smiting the sea and delivering His people. The Assyrian arrives, he threatens with his hand the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem (verse 32) ; he is destroyed.

In Isaiah 29, after the description of the first siege, in chapter 28, we find the siege of Ariel, the second siege of Jerusalem. At the invasion of Sennacherib (see 2 Kings 19 : 32), the Assyrian raised forts against the city, when Jerusalem is at its extremity, when, "brought down shall speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out

of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust", God will scatter the Assyrian and the multitude of the nations (vv. 4-8). The Remnant alone have believed in "the stone laid in Zion for a foundation" (28 : 16).

In Isaiah 31 : 4, 5, Jerusalem is defended by the Lord descending on Mount Zion.

In Isaiah 33, the Assyrian after having made fine promises to the people, established outside Jerusalem, makes a covenant (verse 8) which had happened historically under Hezekiah, (2 Kings 18 : 13-17). It is at this moment we must place the covenant of the unbelieving people with Egypt related in chapters 30 and 31 by the same prophet. They send ambassadors there then they take flight across the desert carrying away their wealth. The enemy puts his hand upon them, while the Remnant who are eating the bread of distress and the water of anguish at Jerusalem while waiting for the Lord will certainly be delivered. The sinners in Zion (33 : 14-19) tremble ; the saints who dwell there will see the king in His beauty. They will never again see the Assyrian. Zion, the city of solemn assemblies, will henceforth be a quiet habitation, a tent which will never be carried away.

In Isaiah 59 : 19, the Assyrian comes like a flood ; the Lord lifts up a standard against him and the Redeemer comes to Zion and to those who, in Jacob, turn from transgression (the Remnant).

In Zechariah 12 all the nations are assembled against Jerusalem. The ways of God have led to this gathering in order to destroy them all. The governors of Judah who are outside the city are the means, employed by God to destroy the nations around them as they carried devastation as far as the territory of the Assyrian, (Micah 5 : 5), but it is the Lord Himself who will deliver His people from the Assyrian, (Micah 5 : 6), and Jerusalem will be protected against a terrible scourge (Zechariah 12 : 8). The manner in which the Assyrian Gog will perish is revealed to us in Daniel 11, and in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

In Zechariah 14, the mention of a second siege (verses 3-5) follows that of the first (verses 1-2). The Lord manifests Himself on the earth in favour of His people at Jerusalem and annihilates Himself the nations.

In Obadiah (verse 17), there is deliverance on the mountain of Zion, and Edom, who had shown formerly his hatred against Israel, and hoped even to acquire for himself alone the territory of the people of God (Ezekiel 36 : 5), is judged and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau (verse 18). Further, to finish the story concerning Edom, one sees in Ezekiel 35 that at the end Edom thinks that the two nations, Judah and Israel are his prey (verse 10). One seeks, for this purpose together with Moab, Ammon and others, the support of Assur (Psalm 83). This could be the reason for which the king of the North, coming into the glorious land (Daniel 11 : 41), does not put his hand on these three nations. It is the Lord who destroys the carnage of Bosrah in the territory of Edom, the armed nations who are there assembled (Isaiah 34 : 5-17 ; 63 : 1-6), but Edom itself falls more particularly by the hand of Israel (Ezekiel 25 : 14).

THE WORSHIP OF THE FATHER _____ J. S. BLACKBURN

John 4 : 20-24

IT is probable that these communications to the woman at the well of Sychar are the first recorded words of the Lord Jesus in John's Gospel bringing to light the Father's Name. The two shining phrases in chapter one, "an Only Begotten from the side of a Father", and "the Only Begotten Son, the One who is in the bosom of the Father", are clearly John's reflections by the Spirit long afterwards and used to preface his Gospel. In chapter three it appears to me sufficiently clear that in both narratives, concerning Nicodemus and the Baptist, there is a point where John's record of events and speech passes into John's comments with all the light he had received when he wrote the Gospel. If these suggestions be accepted, then they form the basis for the conclusion already noted, that the first recorded words of the Lord manifesting the Father are in chapter four, in the verses quoted.

The theme is worship, and the central sentence in this new and vast disclosure is, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father". One can easily overlook the immensity of the step forward thus taken in the great sweep and advance of God's revelation of Himself as the Object of His people's worship.

Overlooking for our present purpose the earlier names by means of which God revealed Himself to Abraham, let us allow the fact that Old Testament story and prophecy can be looked at as the rise and fall, wax and wane, of the maintenance of the worship of Jehovah in Israel. There is a mystery about Exodus 6 : 3 : "By My Name Jehovah was I not known" unto "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", in view of the whole story of the life of Abraham, and especially Genesis 12 : 7 : "And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land : and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who (had) appeared unto him." It is evident, however, that in a special way the knowledge of the name Jehovah was reserved for the beginnings of the history of Israel as a people, and from that point the Name dominates the narrative.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain", the woman said, and the Lord's reply leaves us in no doubt that the Samaritan worship on Mount Gerizim is in no sense an example for the true worshippers. In contrast with this, the Lord Jesus Himself in our passage makes the distinction between this spurious worship of the Samaritans and the

worship Jehovah had Himself instituted and which was finally centred at Jerusalem. It was indeed true that "in Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship." Reflect on the great events and the names of true renown which mark the stages in the history of that worship. Take account of the fire of fervour, the depth of devotion, of the fragrance from the altar fires ascending to Jehovah. If the new worship now being introduced in our passage supersedes that worship, have we rightly esteemed the fervour, the devotion, the fragrance which will be engendered in the devotees of the worship of the Father? Like the Psalmists' joy in God, let us pray that as we consider some features of the worship ultimately placed at Jerusalem, it may be found infectious.

The first great landmark in this region begins with Moses' prayer in Exodus 33 : 18. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." "And Jehovah descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of Jehovah. . . And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Thus begins the long story of the worship of Jehovah, coming as a spontaneous response to the proclamation of His Name. This Name is immediately connected with making a covenant ; Jehovah is the Name of the God of all the earth who stands henceforward in covenant relations with one chosen people, Israel.

A striking feature of later developments is the naming of altars with compounds of the name Jehovah. Study of the occasions of the building of each of these altars reveals that in each case the experience by Israel of some special facet of the content of the Name and its blessing for them is turned to worship. When through Moses' intercession they gained the victory over Amalek, they named the altar Jehovah Nissi (my banner). Gideon records the strength which came to him from a visitation of Jehovah ; he builds an altar and names it Jehovah Shalom (peace). This kind of response reaches back to Abraham. To mark the enunciation of the great truth, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering", Abraham erected his altar to the Name "Jehovah Jireh", (Jehovah will provide). The great lesson of each of these altars is that learning by experience the fullness flowing from the God whose Name is Jehovah produces worship.

Gradually the time drew near when the question asked by Sychar's well acquired its meaning, that is, when the worship of Jehovah would be finally centred in that city in which His Name was placed—Jerusalem. Then an immense brilliance shines on the cleavage between those whose hearts were fully with Jehovah, and the worshippers of false gods in Israel. Let us notice the emergence of the special phrase, "Jehovah the God of Israel". It becomes prominent in times when, as a whole, Israel was turning away from its God, and special faithfulness was demanded.

This great thing is said of David, that he followed Jehovah with all his heart. There was power in Jehovah to engage utterly the hearts of his people. This became the standard by which later faithless kings were measured ; "his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of David his father". Jehovah possessed the heart of

David whole, and this had its immediate outcome in worship. It was because they worshipped Baalim that the later kings are compared so adversely with David.

It is in Elijah that we see the white heat of passion for the Name and glory of Jehovah most vividly portrayed. He describes himself at his first meteoric appearance before Ahab as the man who stands before Jehovah the God of Israel. Read his prayer over the corpse of the widow's son, "he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto Jehovah, and said, O Jehovah my God, I pray Thee, . . . And Jehovah heard the voice of Elijah". Listen to him imploring God on Mount Carmel. "O Jehovah the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. . . Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou art Jehovah God. . . Then the fire of Jehovah fell". Nowhere in Scripture, outside Gethsemane, is prayer of such intensity recorded as the prayers of Elijah to Jehovah.

Through to the end of the Old Testament, beyond the utter destruction of the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, and the restoration under Ezra, the worship of Jehovah is a principal thread on which narrative and prophecy, psalm and lament are developed.

In the New Testament there is a sudden gap, a complete absence of all reference to that great Name, Jehovah, save for the opening, and primarily Jewish, scenes in Matthew and Luke, and in some quotations in the early chapters of Acts. But in connection with the future restoration of Israel, once again the Name of the God of the New Covenant is Jehovah. The worship of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the holy mount of Jerusalem, is re-established in victorious earthly blessedness. The harps are for the last time taken off the willows, and the song goes round the earth. "Praise ye Jehovah. Sing unto Jehovah a new song. . . Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth. . . Praise ye Jehovah."

What is the reason for this dramatic disappearance of the Name Jehovah? Does such fervour as we have traced, such overflowing intensity of joy in God and honour to His Name disappear with it? The reason is that, as the stars disappear when the sun rises, in like manner the Name of Jehovah, so great in the region of earthly blessing, is outshone when a greater Name supersedes it as God's revelation of Himself, a Name unfolding the last secrets of the heart and nature of God, a Name declaring a relationship of love, the Father. The Name of such glory and majesty, Jehovah, points to an earth basking in the sunshine of the knowledge of Himself, and to the law going forth from Zion and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. The Father's Name points to the Father's house in heaven, to that home of peace and joy, of glory and love without end.

It is the voice of the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has declared God in this way. No other voice could declare it. Such a declaration needed infinitely more than a Moses, a David, an Elijah. It must await the coming and the sacrifice of the Son. "The Son who knows, He only, all the Father's love. . . dwells in His bosom, knoweth all that in that bosom lies. . . and came to earth to make it known".

It is, here and now in John four, His voice to which we are listening. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father. . . the Father seeketh such to worship Him". To a revelation of a Name so much beyond the earlier disclosures, we ought to expect in greater measure, not less, the fervour, the intensity of expression, the experience producing worship, the fragrance of incense ascending, than was formerly manifested in response to Jehovah, the God of Israel. We are not given the words for the expression of such worship in Scripture. We have not directed to the Father the example of an Elijah's fervour. But we have the Spirit of God indwelling. Such worship is the springing up of the Spirit's activity within us. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". All that follows makes clear that such springing up is in worship to the Father. That the Son has declared His Name ; that the Spirit is within us to be the power ; this is all we are needing to be the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975

6. THE SPRINGING WELL --- ALAN BRADLEY

Numbers 21 : 10-20

John 4 : 10-15

YOU might be forgiven on first hearing the title of the Springing Well, if you were a little confused as to which springing well was meant, because there are three incidents recorded where God quenched the thirst of the company in the wilderness by divine power.

The first in Exodus 17, the most familiar, Moses was told to **smite** the rock with his staff and the water flowed out.

The second, in Numbers 20, Moses was told to **Speak** to the rock. In fact he failed by smiting it the second time. The water flowed out as God intended but Moses suffered loss because of his disobedience.

There is yet a third incident which is our present consideration.

Much has been made in the past of the typical Scriptures and there is a need of simplicity and caution in interpreting them, but the rock, according to 2 Corinthians 4 : 10—was **Christ**—the source of all our blessings, and the water is a type of the Holy Spirit of God.

The three incidents have been interpreted as :—

Exodus 17—The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a general way upon the church as a result of the death of Christ.—cp. John 16 : 7

Numbers 20—Ministry of the Holy Spirit in priestly grace.

Numbers 21—Provision of the Holy Spirit in abundance of power, preparing us and sustaining us in Christian service.

None will fail to notice in Numbers 21, the sense of direction, movement and purpose at this stage of the wilderness journey. They are seen at the end of the forty years of wandering and after the searching incident of the brazen serpent and the admission of guilt, the people went forward and were soon to enter the promised land. The most striking fact is that they were passing through a well-watered and populated area. The names mentioned are significant. **Oboth**—the hollows, **Ije-abarim**—fords, **Zared**—brooks of willows, **Arnon**—a rushing stream, city of **Ar**. No longer in a desert, and cut off, there were at hand worldly supplies, but this could not satisfy their particular need so God gave an independent supply—from Himself for His own people. Notice also the absence of chiding and murmuring ; there is even the mention of a song—what a contrast to their past history ! In v. 16 the statement is “Gather the people together and I will give them water”. To understand this it is helpful to look at the parallel passage in the New Testament, John 4 : 10, where Jesus meets the woman at the well. His words to her were “If thou knewest the gift of God (or the giving God) and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water”. The Lord was longing to win her to himself and fill her life with the power of the Holy Spirit. The passage goes on to show how He did so and she became the means of carrying the blessing to others.

This same longing on the part of God is seen in both cases and should encourage us in our turn.

The expression in v. 14 “The book of the wars of the Lord”, suggests that there is a continual conflict in which we are all engaged.

The opposing armies are arrayed in Romans 7 : 8, where Paul analyses his inmost longings. “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7 : 23). “For the good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do”. (Romans 7 : 19). On one side he is captive to the law of sin and death. On the other, in Romans 8 : 2, he speaks of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The battle is between the flesh and the Spirit, and the question is who is going to win, or more particularly, how we gain the victory in this conflict.

It would be wrong to suggest that it is an easy situation for us to meet—no more than it was easy for the Israelites to meet the trial of the fiery serpents that stung them and caused the death of so many. God does not remove these evil propensities from our hearts, but puts at our disposal a greater power, the Holy Spirit. If we try to overcome by restraining the flesh we shall fail, we can only succeed by a life which is based on the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and allowing it (and not sin) to dominate our lives and our thinking.

This can be illustrated by reference to the simple example of an aeroplane at take off. Initially, it is held captive to the earth by its own weight and that of the payload. On the runway, the aircraft moves forward with increasing speed until the airflow over the wings

generates a lifting force. At one point, the lift and weight are exactly balanced, but the aircraft is still on the ground. With increased air speed however, the lift becomes the greater force and the plane rises and leaves behind the limitations of the runway, brakes and tyres. Under the flying controls of ailerons, elevators and rudder, the plane is now liberated and can move freely throughout the atmosphere surrounding the earth.

If we can understand this, and learn how God is longing to set us free, we will begin to see the meaning of the expression, "the glorious liberty of the sons of God" (Romans 8 : 21). It is as the Holy Spirit fills our hearts, minds and lives that we will overcome in this conflict.

The question was asked, "What happens if we fail ?" Again referring to the illustration, What happens if the aeroplane should stall ? The aircraft stalls because the smooth airflow over the wings has been lost and with it the lifting force. The result is that the ever-present weight takes over and the aircraft plunges downwards. The pilot's task now is to recover that smooth lifting airflow as a matter of urgency.

The Scriptural principle is in 1 John 2 : 1, "If we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". The Lord Jesus Himself is at hand to guide and keep us in straight and level flight under the power of the Holy Spirit.

If I have pressed this illustration, it is only because this is a fundamental lesson for all young Christians and is neatly summed up in 1 John 4 : 4, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world". The same thought is in the verse :

"Go do thy work, the law demands,
But gives us neither feet nor hands.
The gospel speaks of better things,
It bids us fly and gives us wings".

The Spirit works in our lives in two ways : **in us** and **through us**. It is good to see the abundance of the Spirit's power in our favour giving us victory over sin within, but there are more practical effects that must be considered.

In John 14 : 17 the Lord spoke of the Spirit of Truth that dwelleth with you and shall be in you. This tells us of His constant presence in our hearts. From the moment of our conversion His influence has been applied. Little did the disciples realise what the Lord was telling them, Peter perhaps least of all, but on the day of Pentecost, He became a springing well with blessing surging out to all.

"He will guide you into all truth" (John 16 : 13). It is the quiet work of the Holy Spirit to make the truth of Scripture alive and real to us. This was my own experience as a young Christian ; what had been a closed, mysterious book in my luggage, suddenly began to live as I read the wonderful truths of Christ and His greatness.

Ephesians 3 : 16, "That he may grant you, according to his riches in glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man". This prayer shows how our weaknesses can be overcome by this

divine Person who can change our lives, attitudes and behaviour. "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". (2 Corinthians 3:18). This verse tells of the Spirit's work in fitting us for a place in another scene altogether. How gracious of God, to be even now preparing us for His own presence.

These are some of the things the Holy Spirit is doing within our lives, independent of ourselves, and for our future blessing in glory.

But the Spirit also works **through us**. Going back to Numbers 21, how was the water made to flow in this instance? The princes and nobles used their staves under the direction of Moses. They removed the hindrances in the way of the springing well. We all have known men like this in our assembly experience. We have listened to their prayers and giving of thanks at the supper, older saints of God, who with patience and kindness have helped us to understand these truths and removed our difficulties. We would not worship such, but would honour them and value them for their works' sake. The Spirit of God used these men, or flowed through them, to bring the blessing to us. It can be our privilege to be used of God in this way. Let it be said at this point, that while there may be many interesting and exciting activities we might go in for, vocationally or socially, none can be more lasting or rewarding than to be used of God to the blessing of some other person.

The Holy Spirit works in us in at least three ways: in our assembly, family and personal lives.

In the passage, it was as "gathered together" that the springing well was given. This suggests the assembly setting and it is of particular concern that young Christians should see this and take up their privileges and responsibilities in assembly worship and service. It is a distinctive feature of our gatherings that in the absence of a clergyman, minister or pastor to direct the proceedings, the quality and tone of assembly worship is in direct proportion to the extent that our hearts and minds are "**in the Spirit**". The fact that we can attend the breaking of bread repeatedly over many years and so often experience the Lord's presence and have our hearts lifted with the joy and freshness of the subject matter, is practical evidence of the springing well and its ability to satisfy the soul. All are encouraged when there is evidence of the springing well in the hearts of young Christians in the worship meeting. It is this that God is waiting to hear, not repetition of colloquial expressions or brethren jargon, but the springing up of the inward sense of God's mercy and grace. Young Christian, let it be your ambition to be of service in offering worship and praise in the assembly.

If it is a good thing to know individually the urgings of the Spirit, it is better if there are two—husband and wife—helpmeet in material things but in spiritual things also. The springing well can be seen in the way we open our homes and show hospitality and kindness to others. The home of Priscilla and Aquila is an outstanding example of this, but it stresses the danger of the unequal yoke—marriage between believer and unbeliever. Whatever such a union may have, it will be

devoid of the joy of walking together in the Spirit. You cannot share the benefits of the springing well with those who are still in Egypt, outside of Christ and unconverted. Conversely, the blessings of family life are enhanced when it is a spiritual partnership as well. The Spirit works through us in our personal lives also. This is the most testing sphere of all. It is one thing to put on a good show in the meeting or at home with the family, but are we equally true when on our own, in personal response? Paul stresses the personal aspect in the verse mentioned so often in this Conference, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me". (Galatians 2 : 20).

In his book "Foundations of the Faith", p.131, F. B. Hole stated—"We find in Ephesians 5 : 18 the exhortation 'Be filled with the Spirit', and this addressed to all saints in that city so that evidently it is something that each saint should know and experience for himself and not something only attainable by the few.

If it be further asked, 'Why then is it so little known?' the answer we fear is because with most of us the flesh is so often unjudged and therefore active that the energies of the Spirit are largely taken up in counteracting its power.

The first step towards being filled with the Spirit is so to walk in the Spirit that the flesh is judged and quiescent, with the sentence of death upon it in a practical way".

In the wilderness journey, the experience of the springing well resulted in a spontaneous burst of song. In many ways our life and times are quite different from theirs, and yet, if we think about it, as Christians living in a hostile world in many ways our experiences are similar to theirs. In both cases, the abundant power of the springing well (the Holy Spirit) is available for us, not only to liberate us from bondage but to enable us to live victoriously and bring blessing to others in our assembly, family and personal lives.

The question asked as the Conference began was, "What do you want Christ to do for you?". Let your answer be in the words of the woman in John 4 : 15, "Sir, give me this water".

" MY KINGDOM " _____ ANDRE GIBERT

(Luke 22, 29-30 ; John 18, 36)

MY kingdom. . ." The Lord Jesus speaks in this way once His public ministry is over, but He only speaks thus on two occasions : with His disciples at the moment when His Passion is about to begin, and at the crucial moment of this Passion, when He was before Pilate.

In Luke 22, rejected and with death before Him, He was able to

say at the conclusion of His ministry of love amongst men : "I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain" (Isaiah 49, 4). At least He is still among his own ; He has just taught them how they should remember His impending death, and He is entitled to expect their devoted sympathy and seek some consolation from them. These disciples who were disquieted on hearing Jesus say that one of them would deliver Him up, and asked among themselves who would do such a thing, straightaway begin to dispute to find out which one of them should be accounted the greatest. And the one most full of his own importance a short time after is going to boast of being ready to follow the Master even to death. This is how they were at this point, displaying affection for their Master, combined with sadness, disquiet and selfishness, pride and impatience to shine in this kingdom in view of which they had left all to follow Him (Luke 18, 29). Had He then "worked in vain" amongst them thus far ? Surely He is not going to conclude their three years, spent together as a group, by dismissing them, heaped with reproaches, these disciples who have understood and known Him so feebly ?—He speaks, and it is to appoint unto them a kingdom, to make them sit on thrones, to say to them : "Ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom !"

He speaks as the King. They had often heard Him talk about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Father, the kingdom of the son of man, but here He distinctly says : "My kingdom".

He was indeed the king, but what a King !

The angel had said to Mary, of the Child to be born to her : "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever : and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1, 32-33). The Son of David as a man, but the Son of God (v. 35), the Son of the Highest, His rights are thus stated to be over an earthly but universal kingdom, which will not pass away with visible things, but of which there "will be no end" : at "the end" He will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father (1 Corinthians, 15, 24), to carry on into the eternal state.

The one about whom such glorious things were said was bearing here below in His own person this kingdom with its power and blessings, just as the prophets foretold. Not only did He preach the kingdom and talk symbolically about it, but He was to say, "the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke 11, 20 ; 17, 21). There were signs which bore witness to this fact. But so that this kingdom might be established, it would be necessary that men, and first of all Israel, should receive this Person. A moral question, foreign to the thoughts of men for whom the authority of all government, be it the most democratic, is imposed from the outside, the condition of the heart being of little importance.

Furthermore, the kingdom of God made known in Jesus did not attract attention and men only have eyes for whatever looks good and which humours pride and covetousness. Even if the name of Jesus was made public, against His own will, following His miracles and His utterances which so amazed people, that had nothing to do with

this brilliant appearing about which the Pharisees were enquiring (Luke 17, 21) and which the disciples were anticipating (Luke 19, 11). But wherever there is an ear to hear, Jesus is the minister of the "grace of the kingdom" (J.N.D.) towards men. That is why there were disciples following Jesus, looking upon Him as the Messiah. Their faith remained simple and wavering of course, but through this divine grace, and despite the trials of the pathway of the Son of man, they were upheld, trembling with fear, amazed, but faithful, in this path. These were the little flock of poor folk to whom the kingdom was promised, to whom Jesus could say that the Father took pleasure in giving them the kingdom : that they should seek it first though the Father was making them heirs thereof.

He himself knew that He would have to leave this earth hated and rejected, to go to a far country to receive the kingdom (Luke 19, 12), and from there He would return to establish it in power. The apparently triumphant entry into Jerusalem, amidst the acclamations: "Blessed be the king that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19, 38) confirmed the Scripture, by the grace of God, but hid the underlying refusal of the grace with which this humble King was coming : in fact He was entering the city which killed the prophets, and Jesus subsequently made known to His disciples how many formidable events had yet to take place before the true Hosannas would be uttered by a new people, purified by tribulation and saved through the judgment of their enemies. But before all these things He himself had to be delivered up, condemned and crucified ; suffering was necessary before there could be glory. He was going to be the true passover, the Lamb of God. The kingdom of God would come later, and the true Nazarene will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come. "The night in which he was betrayed" had come. . . .

It is then that He speaks as the King. He, who was hated by the authorities, not recognised by the people, misunderstood by his own, the One who was to be numbered with the transgressors and crowned with thorns, His heart broken with reproach, His soul exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, on the threshold of those terrible hours speaks as the King and appoints thrones unto those who have followed Him thus far in spite of everything. What marvellous grace ! Instead of confounding them he only calls attention to that which in their conduct has been dear to His heart : "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations". He knows far better than they do how deceitful and desperately wicked are their hearts—and ours too alas. Peter was soon to have a bitter experience in this respect, but the Lord sees his faith (Luke 22, 32), and He knows that if Satan sifts these poor men, the good seed will remain ; is this not already the fruit of His impending death ?

He speaks as the King, as the King of kings, since He is appointing kings within his own kingdom. This kingdom has been appointed unto Him by His Father, whose pleasure it was to give them the kingdom. Jesus then appoints unto them the kingdom at a time when they would appear least worthy to receive it and when He himself seemed least

in a position to make such a gift.

He is the King, but not as these kings of the nations who are respected because they dominate. He is one who does good, but not at all like those who derive vain glory thereby : He does so by divesting himself of everything. He is among his own as the One who serves. He had come for that purpose, to serve men, and save them by giving His life—and the world did not wish to be saved. The world wants nothing to do with such an unusual King, whose greatness is found in His humility. Men's innermost thoughts are there condemned. They cannot suffer to be governed by a self-denying, humble kind of love. For here indeed is the fundamental reason for the rejection of Jesus, just as true today as it was 20 centuries ago. It is God's love which humiliates the sinner most of all, nothing else reveals his condition more. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, these two are inseparable.

He causes these to shine upon those who have received Him. You may eat and drink "at my table" : this will mean communion and fellowship with Me in the royal execution of judgment according to righteousness and peace which will kiss each other (Ps. 85, 10) ; but from now on I make you kings, like Myself, with the same features of grace and truth, and, as such, you will be hated by the world as I was.

"My kingdom. . . ." It is not of this world in which I am leaving you. You will be required to fight there, but not with real swords. It is not yet the time, my servants have not to fight that I might not be delivered up to the Jews (John 18, 36), for this must happen.—How then were these poor disciples supposed to fight ? When Peter uses the sword, he was reproved, and soon after, he denies his Master. All of them forsake Him and flee. Where are they then, these kings, whom Jesus himself has appointed ? Not one among them will stand up and say in front of His enemies : "He is the king" and lay claim to His kingdom.

It is another voice, but only one, which will be heard speaking in this way. The thief of Luke 23, 39-43 will acknowledge publicly as Lord and King One being crucified like himself. "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." To have declared Him innocent was already quite something : it was a contradiction directed at those who had condemned Him as an ambitious imposter, and it was evidence of repentance on the part of the thief who, in contrast, confessed that he deserved his punishment. But to address Him as Lord and to talk to Him about His kingdom was going a good deal further than simply declaring that He had done "nothing amiss" : it was an acknowledgement of the fact that the One whom men thought was defeated, was indeed the conqueror before whom every knee will one day bow. And further, the thief whose misdeeds ought to have made him tremble at the thought of a judge coming to punish the wicked, talks without any fear of the future reign and asks the King to remember him ; it is then that he had the assurance that his sins would be forgiven him, that they were already, in fact, and this could only be possible through the One who had the power on earth to do this, and who was there, on

the cross, suffering the just for the unjust. The Lord responds to his faith by making available to him the blessed rest of heaven while waiting for the glory. He enters paradise at the same time as the rejected King. At the same time, Joseph of Arimathaea, who also looked for the kingdom of God, but who had not dared to confess it until then, comes out into the open asks for the body of Jesus, takes it down from the cross, and buries it.

Everything is accomplished: the world will see Jesus no more until that moment when "every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him. . . ." Is He any less the King? Quite the opposite. He had borne witness to this in a positive manner when He was before Pilate.

"My kingdom is not of this world". . . . He was speaking as the King, greater than Pilate, greater than Caesar, greater than the world. "He shall be great" the angel had said. This could not be more true than when He made the "good confession" before Pilate, witnessing to the truth Himself (John 18, 33-19, 11), and thereby supplying the governor with reason for His condemnation. "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Pilate had scornfully asked Jesus. Jesus obliges him to say that it is the Jewish nation and its High Priest who have delivered Him up before Pilate; if then he condemns, it will be to please them and not to see justice done. Then He declares: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." Pilate finds himself confronted with something quite different to a poor king of a small people. "Art thou a king then?" he asks him (no longer: "the king of the Jews").—"Thou sayest that I am a king." And here is what this kingship is dependant upon: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." His kingdom is not of this world because He himself is not of it either; He has come to express the truth, which faith alone can hear, and to cause a light to shine, which faith alone can see. Pilate, conscience-stricken, goes out to escape from this voice and this light, and finds again "this world" and its hostility towards God. After having had Jesus iniquitously whipped and scourged by his soldiers, troubled inwardly and acting as a coward before the High Priests, he questions Jesus afresh. On this occasion he claims his power to release Him or to crucify Him, but it is really to see his own authority restored to its rightful place: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above". And the unhappy man submits to the High Priests who proclaim: "We have no king but Caesar". They preferred Barabbas to the innocent One and Caesar the dictator to the King anointed by God in Zion. But Jesus has spoken in the name of the power before which every knee must bend. And now the representative of the Roman power had to write the inscription which, by its very nature, invited the passers-by to deride and insult, but which in spite of him proclaimed the truth: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

"My kingdom is not of this world. . . ." He will establish it there one day. But for a while—that is now for us, Christians—this kingdom, far from being suppressed, continues with its King in heaven and, on the earth, its subjects, who are not of this world either, although in this world. The kingdom in this sense exists morally on the earth, as it did in Jesus and is outcast as He was. "It is not meat and drink ; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14 : 17). God's life shown forth in men. Linked with this is a thought, even more precious, that we have been "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1 : 13).

Such is the present position of the Lord Jesus and His own with regard to the world. It has not changed. The rulers of the time, who crucified the Lord of glory, the wise men indifferent to the truth as those who do not care, the synagogue of Satan in all its guises, the masses attracted by the things which are visible, all these do not want to believe in Him now in His present glory any more than they did when He was here below as the Man of sorrows. Those who acknowledge Him as Lord and Saviour, may not be outwardly persecuted but may be flattered with a view to leading them astray, they are hated and scorned according to how faithful they are. There they are with all their weaknesses, their failures, their walk so often uncertain, and they would soon be brought to nothing by the sifting if the Lord were not watching over His scattered seed and the fruit of His threshing floor. They are called to take up their cross and follow Him, but He is leading the way, to that glory which He purchased for them and of which the Holy Spirit is the earnest on His behalf.

Now He "has made them kings and priests". Now they receive "a kingdom which cannot be moved". They have to fight, but He puts at their disposal spiritual weapons, the armour of God.

Soon the suffering Church is going to be called away to be forever the glorious and pure companion of the One whose body and fullness she is. We are continually reminded that "the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8, 18) ; and that is not simply a word of encouragement : the fact is that whatever these sufferings may be, with Christ or for Christ, the strength to bear them is found in the sufferings of Christ. He is not only the Pattern and the Guide, He is the one who has overcome that we might overcome (1 John 5, 4-5).

"My kingdom is not of this world. . . ." His servants have not to fight that He might not be delivered up to His enemies—or to subject earthly powers to Him, as the established Church has so often aspired to do, nor to change this condemned world—but to manifest in it the results of His victory won through shame out of which His glory has shone. They are left here "to bear witness to the truth", as He, Himself did ; "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20, 21). We have to continue to say : The kingdom of God has come, the One who brought it has been rejected, but He is glorified and He is coming again ; know this, that the kingdom of God is at hand ; woe to the world which will not have this Man to reign over it ; fear Him and believe, "before his wrath is kindled but a little". But "blessed are they that put their trust in Him" (Psalm 2 : 12)

CHEERFULNESS

J. STODDART

IN this day and age it would be fairly easy to find reasons why cheerfulness appears to be in short supply. Gloom and despair seem to dominate the present mood of people under the pressures of economic and political syntheses. In a leading national newspaper recently the following editorial comment appeared. "In recent years the wind has begun to blow from the bleakest and gloomiest part of the compass. Contemporary Britain is gripped by a mood of profound despair. Newspapers are full of death, violence and failure. Politicians warn us of impending disaster—the latest contribution has come from Mr. X (a cabinet minister), who discovers that we are in a 'long, deep and serious slump'".

There was a time when Christians were blamed for this kind of pessimism, but this dull prognosis now comes from other quarters. The question arises therefore, "Is it possible, or even right to be cheerful under present conditions?" The answer to this may be thought to depend upon the varying dispositions of individuals, some being of a naturally more cheerful temperament than others. Again, we have warnings that the desirable quality of cheerfulness may be fickle or even false unless its premises are assured. Such a warning is boldly given in Proverbs 14:13, "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness."

For the believer in Jesus there is adequate cause for cheerfulness, not arising from a personal quality and independent of the vagaries of circumstances or temperament. Let us think of a few New Testament passages which would adequately bear this out. Firstly, in Matthew 9:2 we have the Lord Jesus saying to a palsied man, lying on a bed, "Son, be of good cheer." This man, without doubt, had an unhappy history and we could scarcely suppose he was a cheerful person until this moment. Nor was the Saviour's word to him accompanied by any promise of relief or betterment; but rather dealing with the root cause of all suffering and unhappiness He added, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The first great need of the man was not the cure of his physical disability but the removal of his greatest burden—his sins. And so for us all; the beginning of "good cheer" is when we hear the One Who has every right to use these words say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Be they many or few our sins are a more intolerable burden than any other factor in our lives and true cheerfulness stems from the sense of forgiveness received from the Son of God. "Happy (blessed) is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Psalm 32:1 and Romans 4:7/8). The critics denied Jesus His right to bestow forgiveness and accused Him of blasphemy, but in a sense it was easier to demonstrate His authority by saying to the man, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." And to their chagrin and dismay He did precisely this. Would they then continue to deny His right to forgive? Beloved, do our circumstances rob us of good cheer, then let us remember that He Who has purchased for us forgiveness through His precious blood is

equally competent to deal with our circumstances, needs, weaknesses, etc. in His Own good way and time. Let us then, "**Be of good cheer.**"

Next may we consider the well-known incident of the storm in Matthew 14:23/27. Many features of this story could engage our attention with profit, but for brevity comment will be confined to the subject of this paper. The disciples were in dire peril as their ship, tossed by mounting waves, battled the storm and contrary wind. Little or no cause apparently here to be of good cheer as the fourth watch, the darkest before dawn, arrived. At that very moment their troubles climaxed by what their superstitious minds thought to be an apparition. Walking on the sea and so evidently unaffected by the storm, they saw a form and were scared. In their fear they cried out, "It is a spirit (an apparition)." Who or what else could defy such a storm, having no thought that this was their Lord. Had they never missed the company of Him Who in a previous storm had been in the boat with them and Who then "arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm?" Only when that well-known voice spoke saying, "**Be of good cheer**; it is I; be not afraid," were their hearts comforted and pacified. In the storms of life encountered by every Christian, not only due to the state of the world, but often due to our forgetfulness and neglect, may we more readily expect and recognise the voice of One Who is superior to every storm and Who comes to His Own to banish the clouds and quell the turbulent waves with these words. "**Be of good cheer**; it is I; be not afraid." Then cheerfulness having displaced despair and gloom, we shall gladly come like the disciples and worship Him, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." (v. 33)

A word of immense comfort and cheer is given us in John 16:33. In this instructive chapter the Lord was giving prophetic directions to the disciples for days that lay ahead when He would go back to the Father. The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, would come to them to be their Guide and Advocate in days of tribulation which would certainly come. Said Jesus, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but **be of good cheer**; I have overcome the world." What meaning these words would have when the events of which He had spoken actually happened. So that when the imperious might of Rome threatened to *extinguish Christianity, throwing Christians to the lions, demanding the acknowledgement of Cæsar as Lord and no other*, they would recall His words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. . . . **Be of good cheer**; I have overcome the world." This applies to us as much as it applied to them. The world to-day may have changed its tactics and appear innocuous enough at times but its character, aims and objectives are not changed, so we must be on guard and cling in tenacious faith to the words of the Son of God so that under its attack, however subtle and disguised, we may stand firm in His peace and "**Be of good cheer.**"

In no one more than the apostle Paul do we see the cheerfulness of the Christian demonstrated while under extreme pressure. See him in Acts 23:10/16 under threat of being "pulled in pieces" by the Jewish mob and only rescued from lynching and death by official intervention. But unflinchingly he awaits his Lord's instructions, so we read, "The night following the Lord stood by him and said, "**Be of**

good cheer, Paul ; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." At last his great ambition to reach the great Metropolis was assured, but not yet was it disclosed to him that he would reach Rome as a prisoner under guard. However, his cheerfulness would be undoubted, as evidenced in the innermost prison at Philippi, when with feet fast in the stocks at midnight he and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. Such surely is the kind of cheerfulness needed in the world to-day ; not merely an exhibition of empty optimism, nor yet the pessimism of current attitudes among men. For the Christian, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8/10) and lacking such joy we are weak and vulnerable. It is the Lord Jesus Himself (as no other can) Who says, "**Be of good cheer.**" Fellow-Christians, shall we belie Him Who thus **commands** our cheerfulness ?

Few things in life can be calculated to destroy every vestige of good cheer so much as a shipwreck, especially under the conditions described in Acts 27. Paul was now on his eventful voyage to Rome, as a prisoner. In mid-Mediterranean the dreaded tempest called Euroclydon blew hard and soon had the vessel in which Paul sailed at its mercy. The danger of being driven into quicksands and the non-appearance of sun or stars for many days, the mounting violence of the storm, all combined to strike terror into the stoutest hearts. The truly dramatic language of this chapter reaches its climax in the words, "All hope that we should be saved was then taken away." (v.20) Surely this was the supreme test of cheerfulness ! Even Paul had no thought of food, but in this crescendo of terror and hopelessness he "stood forth in the midst of them, and said, 'Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to **be of good cheer** : for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul. . . . Wherefore, sirs, **be of good cheer** : for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me'." No superficial smile on his face, but solid confidence in God spread cheer like sunshine to those in the grip of fear. Soon he was setting the example by taking food and giving thanks to God "in the presence of them all." "Then were they **all of good cheer**, and they also taking courage began to eat food." No fiction written by men ever excelled this story of courage and good cheer, but it has been recorded by the Spirit of God to inspire our trembling hearts in such days as these to **BE OF GOOD CHEER**. Everywhere now we see "men's hearts failing them for fear, and expectation of what is coming on the habitable earth," as the Lord Jesus so rightly predicted in Luke 21 : 26. The helpless world around us looks on awaiting a ray of hope, which can only be supplied by the Christian who by confidence in God and the word of His Son has learned to **be of good cheer**.

May we through grace be enabled to rise above the present gloom, since He has said, "When these things begin to come to pass, **then look up, and lift up your heads** ; for your redemption (i.e., bodily) draweth nigh." Surely this is the very essence of Christian cheerfulness.



Scripture Truth

SEPT./OCT., 1976

PSALM 84

COLIN CURRY

THOUGH the full light of Christianity was not yet shining when the psalms were written, the psalm-writers frequently show a remarkably high level of response to the limited revelation available to them; and they express it in a most attractive manner. Psalm 84 is a good example of this. The psalmist shows plainly where his heart's-desire lies. His spirit homes towards the sanctuary, where Jehovah dwells, and where His praise is the supreme activity. The living God is his great pre-occupation. The total nature of his commitment into that area of interest, and his delight in his involvement there, lie on the surface of this psalm. There are surely real lessons for ourselves in observing and admiring the spirit of the writer here; and we may also need to feel reproved in considering these attitudes alongside our own kind of appreciation of the far greater light that shines in Christ.

The psalm has three stanzas, each four verses long. Each of these contains a beatitude, i.e. a statement of the blessedness (or the happy lot) of those that are in a certain situation. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house"; "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee"; "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" (vv4, 5, 12). Each of these expressions seems to sum up the thought of its particular section. **Yearning** characterises the whole psalm, but is particularly in evidence in the first four verses. Physically remote from the place and presence where he would be at home, the psalmist joins in spirit those who are already there, in "the courts of the Lord", and shares something of the joys of their occupation with the living God. Yet he also feels the distance from that place, and longs to share its delights at first-hand. **Resolution** seems to mark the second stanza. The Psalmist finds new heart and purposefulness as he visualises those on the way to Zion, and senses the eagerness of their journey. No longer is he thinking of those already there; but he envisages the pilgrim band, pushing on vigorously to Zion, gathering strength as they go. He joins those pilgrims in heart and in courage, though it cannot be in actuality. The final section has a **deep satisfaction** about it, deriving from his present trust in the living God. Though he has a goal still ahead of him, and the pull towards the homeland of his spirit is strong, yet his faith grasps the fact that basically all is well already and this fills his heart with thankfulness. The awareness of what God is to him now, the wealth of what He

gives and the wisdom of what He withholds, gives him the opportunity to respond in delighted trust, even in his present circumstances.

We shall take these sections in turn, and seek to extract some lessons from them.

The Courts of the Lord

In the beautiful opening verses, the psalmist longs for the place to which his heart is firmly attached. This is wistful language; language of deep affection for his native environment, of strong feeling for the home-atmosphere for which he yearns. He knows where he "belongs". We catch a glimpse here of the attitude of heart felt by a godly temple-servant in that faraway day, of his devotion to his rôle and the delight that he found in it. In engaging in such an activity the participant was happy and free. In almost any worthwhile pursuit the experience known and shared by those who are well-involved is something quite foreign to the uncommitted bystander; and when the soul is taken up with the living God and deeply engaged in His concerns, how supremely acceptable **that** experience is found to be! The psalmist knew this, and valued it above all else, and happy are those who can share some fellow-feeling with him here. We may be thankful if this rings true in our own consciousness; if we can say from experience that we understand what the psalmist means. But his wholeheartedness may perhaps be a lesson to us. Certainly what is exhibited in these verses is a commitment which overrides everything else, a total preference for the precincts and the activities where the Lord is supreme. "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand (elsewhere)". Another psalmist, Asaph, showed the same attachment in equally choice words, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25). The apostle has a well-known statement of similar character: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

The challenge of these verses is felt by asking questions of the following kind. Where are **our** spirits most at home? What kinds of interests command and dominate **our** affections? Judging by our conduct, what objectives seem to be the controlling concerns in **our** manner of life? "Set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth", says the apostle (Colossians 3:1, 2). "Being let go, they went to their own company" is surely a significant statement, showing the direction naturally followed by those impelled by the Spirit of God in the early Christian days (Acts 4:23).

It seems clear, then, that these early verses by their singlemindedness, indicate the secret of genuine satisfaction and joy of heart. We **know** that satisfaction in the same measure as we are at home where Christ is highly honoured, in companionship with those who truly own Him Lord, and in those activities which serve the living God: we know it in those realms of activity where the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (now fully revealed) fills our vision, calls forth our responses, and dwells amidst the praises of His people. We **lose** it insofar as other pursuits assume anything approaching comparable value in our estimation or in our practice.

From Strength to Strength

The psalmist, however, was deprived of the complete experience for which he longed. Though he might enjoy it in thought (and perhaps also in recollection) it was not possible in reality to know the blessedness of dwelling in Jehovah's house. His intense desire and his objective was to be there, but that possibility lay in the future beyond his immediate reach. He was not there, but going there ; or at least that was his hope. Perhaps, being an exile from his homeland, the journey to Zion could not yet start ; but it had already begun in his mind and heart. In this second section he finds support and encouragement in thinking of some who were really on that journey, passing through all kinds of experiences, maybe even hardships, yet **on their way to appear before God in Zion !** Such is his zeal for that road himself that he can picture their progress, overcoming the rigours of the way, finding new and increasing energy as the pull of their beloved Objective gets stronger. It is as if he joins them, so vividly does he see their journey and its destination. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee" he says. This idea could be put in more general terms as follows : happy are those who draw strength from their hope, from the Person to Whom they are going, from the sure End toward which they are drawn, from the prospect of entering that Presence where there is fulness of joy. The N.T. version of this attitude is again well demonstrated for us by Paul (physically curtailed, but unrestricted in his spirit) : "Not as though I had already attained", he writes, "but. . . reaching forth to those things which are ahead, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3 : 12-14). It was a straight, urgent course that he followed. Verse 5 of our psalm has this idea in it, as other translations show. The road to Zion is a highroad.

The pilgrim journey has its tests ; its low places, its valleys, its arid regions. The psalm recognises this. If we accept the marginal reading the valley of Baca is a place of weeping. But these are not the permanent experiences ; the pilgrim **passes through**, and onwards. He can even make something out of adversity, he can find wells in the valleys, he can dig blessings out of trials ; and God can send rain too, to deal with our dryness ; the heaven-sent blessings are the most refreshing ones !

Does all this strike a cord with us ? Does our experience agree with it ? Perhaps we are able to take sides with the psalmist in his first stanza. In some measure we have tasted the joys of the home-atmosphere, and have a true sense that this is the supremely acceptable experience. Those who know it best will agree, however, that the entirety of those joys, the length and breadth of the full participation remains yet to be known. Scripture makes it clear (in John 14, for instance) that the atmosphere of the eternal home, the love of the Father, and the life that belongs there, can be a present experience by the Spirit. But the full entry into that home, into the Father's house, awaits the hour when our Lord takes us there. We shall be with Him where He is ! We are **on our way** to something not foreign to us, but which (in another sense) transcends all our knowing until

we get there. Does this great prospect have its control upon our lives now? Is there an increasing urge forward on the Christian way, day by day, in view of it? Do we find ourselves fortified for hard experiences, and some easement in overcoming them, in the light of this bright and certain hope?

A Sun and Shield

From thinking of the happy lot of others the psalmist returns to his own solitary situation, at the close of the second section (verse 8). But though he may be alone, God is still with him. He is not without support, as is clear in the rest of the Psalm. He can appeal to His God, he can know His close presence and His dependability, he can confide in Him. That in itself is a great happiness and blessing. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee" is a first-hand statement; it is his testimony as well as a general truth. This direct converse with God, appreciating Him in the way described here, is at least as rewarding an occupation as his earlier wistful review of the blessings of others. Contentment with his present position, proving God in a very real way in it, marks the last stanza more than the others. Thoughts of what God is, here and now, to those who trust Him, to those who walk uprightly (i.e. with an undivided heart), bring contentment and assurance. Verse 11 is a fine statement. The Lord God is a **sun and shield**, pouring out the blessings in pure liberality, protecting surely from all that would harm; what marvellous figures these are! **Giving** all that is good, unreservedly, and entirely on **His** own initiative; **giving** grace, and glory too in due course. Withholding nothing that is good, yet guarding from harm and evil. To be trusted in what He allows, and what He withholds. With the scale and quality of God's love fully demonstrated in Christ, the N.T. is able to expand on this in a broad way. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 etc.). The confidence and the calmness that this brings is again on view in the Philippian letter. From a situation which we might consider quite unenviable, Paul can write words such as "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"; "I have all, and abound"; "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (4:11, 18, 19). This ability to transform the less-desirable experiences into occasions for knowing God, for finding satisfaction in proving Him, and learning that all His ways with us are good, was known in no small measure by the psalm-writer back in those pre-Christian days. How much more should it be possible, with the full bible as our light, in the kinds of experiences we may be called to meet today?

Finally, is it not heartening to think of the singers of this psalm? "A psalm for the sons of Korah". The story of Korah's rebellion is found in Numbers 16 (but see also Numbers 26:11). Sons of a rebel father, on whom the wrath of God fell, were spared in the remarkable mercy of God. Their descendants were to sing praise and echo their

confidence in God after the manner of this psalm ! We too can surely recognise ourselves as once the "children of wrath", yet now objects of the rich mercy of God. May we also be able to join with the sons of Korah in finding the home and desire of our souls in His presence, and in appreciating above all else the knowledge of Himself which He has given us.

ECHOES FROM CAMBRIDGE: 1975

7. THE LAND OF PROMISE ————— J. S. BLACKBURN

Joshua 1 : 1-11 ; Ephesians 1 : 19-23 ; 3 : 16-19

Introduction

LET us begin by going back to a point in time which must have been near the beginning of the forty years' wandering in the desert by the Israelites. Twelve men had been sent out by Moses to reconnoitre the land of promise. Forty days later they returned, two of them staggering under the load of an enormous cluster of grapes. Then ensued the most astonishing scene. This great host had emigrated from Egypt, (with overpowering evidence of God's power on their side), for the clear purpose of taking possession of Canaan. But now they refused to proceed. Four men stood for going ahead : the rest of the people clamoured to return. For the time being the majority prevailed, and they turned their backs on the land flowing with milk and honey and set their faces to the wilderness. A few saw that lovely land as the land of true delight which was their possession by gift of God and were all for courage and obedience. The many were blinded to the delights of Canaan under divine gift, and were not urged forward by its appeal : but they **did** see the difficulties and the giants, and thought it not worth while. And so for many years, (in the case of the individuals concerned, for ever), they missed the opportunity of life in the Land of Promise, and chose instead death in the desert. "Now all these things happened unto them for examples", and they are written for **our** warning. Let us see whether we can grasp the lesson, for the book of Joshua showed that Caleb and Joshua, Moses and Aaron, were right and the rest were wrong.

The shocking forfeiture involved in this turning back is underlined. If at any stage the question had been raised, "Why did the Lord rescue us from Egypt ?", only one answer would have been final, true and adequate. He rescued them to bring them to dwell in the land flowing with plenty. All through from the call of Abraham Canaan as God's highest gift was in view as the goal. The story begins with Abram leaving Ur of the Chaldees at the call of God "to go into the land of Canaan. And into the land of Canaan they came. . . And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give **this land.**" More than four hundred years later the time was ripe for the fulfilment of this promise, but the children of Israel, now become a great nation, were slaves in Egypt, and a rescue operation was neces-

sary before the journey could begin. But the purpose of God's intervention to rescue them was clear and explicit from the first words: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people. . . and I am come down to deliver them. . . and to bring them out of that land into a good land and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey".

During this series we have been learning that in the Scriptures themselves this rescue from slavery and this journey through the desert are a God-ordained picture to teach us about the Christian's salvation. God has spoken to us of "Christ our Passover", (1 Corinthians 5 : 7) ; the passage of the sea, (ib. 10 : 2) ; the manna, (John 6 : 32) ; the serpent of brass, (ib. 3 : 14) ; the springing well, (ib. 4 : 14). "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples" to warn us so that we do not make the same mistakes as Israel. And **the great** mistake was to choose death in the desert to life in the land of promise. We must now enquire, therefore, what in Christianity corresponds to Canaan, what, for the Christian, is God's goal in a land of plenty.

Indeed the Lord had said, "Let my people go to serve me", and we would be very right to emphasize the fact that we have been saved to serve. But the ultimate goal is something beyond that service ; it is that we might possess **our** land of promise. (Joshua 1 : 11). And I pray we may see that God intends this to be a **present** possession, as well as a hope for the future.

"The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields, or walk the golden streets".

The Christian's Canaan

What, then, is Canaan for the Christian? Our reading in Ephesians 3 did not mention Canaan ! My first answer, it will be said, is an over-simplification. But I hope that a small measure of over-simplification is not inappropriate under the circumstances. Our reading was in Joshua and in Ephesians, and I will now add a verse, Ephesians 1 : 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ". Now here is our simplification.

1). Canaan, in the earthly history of Joshua, corresponds to "heavenly places" in the spiritual teaching of Ephesians.

2). The grapes of Eshcol and all the lovely fruits of Canaan correspond to the "spiritual blessings" of Ephesians.

3). The fighting to possess Canaan in Joshua corresponds to the Christians's holy war in Ephesians 6 : 10-18.

These three are special cases of the general truth that the earthly history of the book of Joshua corresponds to the spiritual teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Perhaps someone is moved to say that it has been understood that Canaan represents heaven and our entrance there at the coming of the Lord or perhaps by death. Do we not sing, "When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling Love divine thy foot shall bring" ? Is not Canaan the home we enter after this life is over ? The answer is very simple.

Israel possesses Canaan in three distinct ways. First, by gift of God long before there was any possession at all. (Genesis 12 : 7). Second Israel possessed Canaan in the measure in which they conquered it, and therefore incompletely. (Joshua 13 : 1). Lastly, in the future Millennium Israel will possess the land of Canaan up to the full extent of God's promise to Abram. (Genesis 15 : 18). Our present subject is the second of these possessions, that is Joshua's conquest. We are encouraging each other not to make the mistake of scorning God's gift, but rather to go on, to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold of eternal life, to possess those spiritual blessings in heavenly places which demand our taking the whole armour of God for the struggle against the wiles of the devil.

We owe to F. B. Meyer sentences which are simple, true and concise answers to the question, What is the Christian's Canaan ?

"Heavenly places stands for that spiritual experience of oneness with the risen Saviour in His resurrection and exaltation which is the privilege of all saints."

"The spiritual meaning of the story of Joshua tells of that satisfaction of rest, wealth and victory, which may be enjoyed by those who come to know the secret things which God has prepared for those that love Him, and which are revealed by His Spirit".

Let us take first "that experience of satisfaction". This is in exact conformity with Ephesians 3 : 18. To know the love of Christ is to be filled into all the fulness of God. The complete and unmixed satisfaction in the love of God in Christ which is set before us as our eternal dwellingplace in the Father's house in heaven, is open to us now, in this life, in the measure in which we set ourselves to possess it, even against the spiritual powers arrayed against us. Everyone who looks for satisfaction in earthly things will find it in measure. There are matters of heart's delight in earthly relationships which in the mercy of God are often experienced by us. But every person of mature experience knows that, though our hearts long for these delights, there is always the cloud of our sinful condition hanging over them. It is only in the love of Christ that there is that fulness of satisfaction which is the fulness of God. "Satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord" is the blessing of Naphthali, and such a verse plays its part in pointing out the connection between Canaan and the experience prayed for in Ephesians 3. Let us pray for it also. Prayer is the last of the weapons which make up the whole armour of God available to us in our warfare.

Our quotations also included an experience of wealth, and this also is true to the references to riches in Ephesians (1 : 7, 18 ; 2 : 4, 7 ; 3 : 8, 16). One of these is in the prayer of 3 : 16-19 ; what God is asked to do for us in this inspired prayer is "according to the riches of His glory". What a person can do for us depends on his wealth in the things we need, and this in turn often depends on his rank. The phrase quoted means something like this : "according to the wealth of His illustrious rank". It is out of the limitless resources which belong to His unique majesty as God that flow the answers to such breathings as are here put into our mouths. One of the greatest things for us to learn, old and young, is where true wealth lies. I have quoted before

the divine who said that the world is like a shop window where someone has been at work changing round the price labels. In such a situation, the only thing which will keep the passers-by from making fools of themselves is a true and just understanding of the real values of things. One of the greatest needs of the Christian is to learn where true value is to be found. In our subject we are learning that the true wealth lies in the Christian's Canaan. Teaching on this theme is not confined to Ephesians. To the Colossians Paul writes, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; and to the Corinthians, "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels".

We cannot leave this part of our subject without a reminder where the heart of the matter is found. It is surely in Ephesians 3 : 19 : "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled into all the fulness of God". Even in the prayer itself there is a build-up to this. Are you surprised that there is a build-up to such a tremendous thing ? Here is the build-up :

"to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ;
 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ;
 that ye, being rooted and founded in love
 may be able to comprehend with all saints. . .
and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,
 that ye might be filled into all the fulness of God."

At this point perhaps you feel like asking whether knowing the love of Christ belongs to our Canaan only. Surely the knowledge of the love of Christ belongs to our wilderness journey also ? The answer is in the very remarkable types of the old corn of the land, (Joshua 5 : 11, 12) in contrast to the manna ; the supply of manna, miraculous provision for the wilderness journey, ceased the day after they ate for the first time the corn which grew in Canaan. The manna represents the contemplation of Christ "come down from heaven", (John 6 : 31-33) whereas "the corn of the land" represents the contemplation of Christ, not as sharing our earthly experiences, but as belonging to His own home and circle of interests in heaven. We find the latter in such passages as Proverbs 8 : 30, John 17, and Ephesians 5 : 25-27. The parable of the manna and the corn of the land is not nearly so difficult as it has sometimes been made to look.

The Jordan Crossing

We have all the time kept central to our studies the light cast by the incidents of the journey, illuminated by New Testament teaching, on the manifold meaning of the death of Christ. It might well be said that the real heart of our studies has been the new light cast by each incident on that event of the greatest and deepest significance, the death of our Saviour at Calvary. The entrance to Canaan is to be no exception. Jordan is a well-known picture of death, and its crossing reveals to us that yet another of these aspects in that the death of Christ was necessary to our entrance into the place of spiritual bless-

ings in heavenly places. But let us briefly review each section of our theme. In the Passover we learn that it is by the blood of Christ that we are protected from the judgment of God, because Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The precious blood of Christ is God's answer to the guilt of our sins. But sin for us is also a slavery. In the Red Sea crossing and in Romans six we learn that in that Christ died, He died unto sin, and His death is our way of escape from the slavery of sin. But we also find by experience, bitter experience, that sin is also the fatal venom by which our nature is poisoned. The death of God's own Son, as typified by the Brazen Serpent, by which He took on Himself the condemnation due to this root-principle of sin, has liberated us from the control of that evil nature, to be able to walk in the Spirit given. The gift of the Spirit is pictured by the springing well of Numbers 21.

Out of the bed of the Jordan, at the time of their crossing, were taken twelve stones representing Israel. They were taken out of the bed of death, and set up on Canaan's shore. In Ephesians 1 and 2 we find what corresponds to this. The believer is considered as found in death—"dead in trespasses and sins". (2 : 1 and 5). That is not the same as being dead with Christ. The former is the worst possible form of our mortal disease of sin. The latter is the cure. Since in Ephesian truth, we are first found to be dead in sins, so we first find Christ in death (1 : 20). If we first hear of Christ raised from the dead, then it must be true that we first find Him in death. But Christ is raised, and seated in heavenly places at the right hand of God, and since we are one with Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, so we also are quickened, raised and seated with Him in heavenly places. We could not be there without His death and resurrection.

Perhaps you feel moved to say, this is too deep for me. Yes, and so it is for me. But part of my purpose is all the time gently to persuade you that God does not intend us to spend our lives paddling in the shallows. The best is yet to be, in this life if you are willing to go in for it, and certainly in the Father's house in heaven. But you must resist the constant pressure of almost everyone around to think that you have 'arrived'.

Let no man think that sudden, in a minute

All is accomplished, and the work is done :—

Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it

Scarce were it ended in the setting sun.

The Holy War

This brings us so naturally to our final thought from Joshua and Ephesians. They are both pictures which show the promised land as a series of battlefields. Israel, in the course of this story, fought many battles. But only one was the fight God intended them to fight. And that was the fight to possess Canaan. In this point appears most obviously the correspondence between the two books. In Joshua we learn that Israel had to fight, and God told them to fight, to dispossess the inhabitants in order to possess themselves the land God had promised to them. In Ephesians 6, the particular point of view is that

the saints are securely in possession of "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ", but the wiles of the devil, and wicked spirits also active in heavenly places, are ceaselessly attacking to bring them down. The aim of the holy war is to continue standing in experienced possession. Thanks be to God there is ample provision in the strength of the Lord and in the whole armour of God to enable us to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand. This fight is not a generalised struggle of right against wrong. Some enemies we are to flee. But these we are to fight, strong in the Lord. The prize is living in the experience of the love of Christ ; being filled into all the fulness of God, the present fuller tasting of that joy we shall know in its perfection in the Father's house in heaven.

The two great themes which have occupied us have been the Cross and the Spirit. The Cross has dealt with every form of the chameleon-like appearance of sin ; and the Spirit is the present power by which all this is made good to us. "Not I, but Christ" has been our watchword from the beginning, and on this note we close.

When the Portuguese explorers sailed up the east coast of Africa, they found evidence of a form of Christianity in a ruined church, with, still standing high over the fallen nave, a great bronze cross. Great bronze crosses have very little to do with a New Testament Christianity, but the sight stimulated words which have lived.

In the Cross of Christ I glory,
 Towering o'er the wrecks of time ;
 All the light of sacred story
 Gathers round its head sublime.

PORTRAIT OF A CHRISTIAN J. STODDART

Acts 11 : 26, Acts 26 : 28, 1 Peter 4 : 16

PORTRAITS are seldom, if ever, perfect representations of their subject, sometimes flattering, and perhaps more often disappointing to the recipient ! In contrast with such results are the portraits in words traced with Divine skill on the broad canvas of Holy Scripture. Never flattering and never inaccurate, the word pictures inscribed on the sacred page are true and full of inspired detail. The passages quoted at the head of this paper are the only references to 'Christians' as such in the New Testament. On consulting these we shall find that they convey the most impressive portrait of a Christian and his readily identifiable features.

How often the mental picture of the Christian held by uninformed minds is nothing but a caricature of the truth when compared with the inspired description. Thus we shall find it both profitable and challenging to consider prayerfully these verses since they provide an unerring standard whereby we may judge how near or how far

we may be to being Scriptural Christians. We shall find that they refer in each case to features readily recognisable not only by fellow believers but by unbelievers, too.

First then, in Acts 11 : 26 it is clear that the name 'Christians' was one **given** (not **taken**), presumably by those who were not such and possibly in a critical or even scathing description. We learn that the term was given **first** at Antioch to the disciples, who not only had heard and believed the gospel but in whose lives the grace of God was seen (cf. v. 23) and who obeyed the teaching of the apostles by the Spirit, assembling themselves regularly in the church (cf. v. 26). Thus they were **seen** to be Christ's ones, from which the name 'Christians' may have derived. Is our testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ so patently clear that we earn the name 'Christian' as the early disciples did ?

It was certainly Paul's clear-cut and convincing personal testimony before King Agrippa that compelled the ejaculation (sincere or otherwise), "Almost (in a little) thou persuadest me to be a Christian" ! (Acts 26 : 28). The magnanimous apostle credits the king with knowing and believing the truth he had expounded, but reluctant was the monarch to defy Rome and pay the price of becoming a Christian ready to wear a captive's chain, as did the prisoner he admired. The august court must have been staggered at the grace and humility of the prisoner's reply, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, **except these bonds**" (his chains). What perfect protocol, what dignity, what grace marked this man so rightly called a Christian in circumstances of humiliation. Doubtless, the world in which we live has become inured to the challenge of the Christian life but it is still the standard expected from those who confess His name and speak His worth. Do we evoke in others the desire not only to believe and know the truth of the gospel but to become Christians, that is, exhibiting the features of Christ in our manner of life ? Surely this and more is inculcated in the apostle's exhortation to the Philippians (3 : 17) when he wrote, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (or model). From this it would seem that our entitlement to the name 'Christian' is concerned not only in what we believe but most particularly in our walk, which is the manner in which we portray Christ to the world, His patience, His grace, His lowliness and love.

Lastly, we look at the features of the Christian portrait in 1 Peter 4 : 16. The subject and context of this verse is the **suffering** of the Christian, an experience about which one can say all too little. If we lived in Communist lands this passage would radiate with encouragement, as undoubtedly it does to the Lord's people whose lot is cast in these unhappy areas of the world. The teaching of the Lord Jesus Himself and that of the apostles constantly emphasises the fact that suffering and Christianity are inseparable. The Christian is not exempt from a share in the common sufferings of humanity, but this chapter treats of his "share in the sufferings of Christ" (v. 13, J.N.D.), (not, of course, the vicarious sufferings of the cross which are uniquely His).

If the pathway of the Christian is marked out by the footsteps of his Master (cf. 1 Peter 2 : 21) surely he must expect the kind (if not the degree) of suffering that pathway entailed. This, however, says Peter, is cause for rejoicing, "inasmuch as ye are partakers (sharers) of Christ's sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4 : 13) How wonderfully this was illustrated in the attitude of the early disciples whose powerful witness had incurred the wrath of the Sanhedrin. After being beaten "they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they (the apostles) departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." (Acts 5 : 40-41) "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you : on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." (1 Peter 4 : 14) How much do we know of such experience, which is so prominent a feature of the Christian portrait ?

The only three Scriptures which mention the word 'Christian' have thus been shown, when put together to give an adequate and essentially true portrait of a Christian and it may be that our thoughts and lives will be enriched by a closer approximation to the features drawn by the Holy Spirit in these passages. Perhaps a simple, brief glossary of our findings in these verses could be helpful to younger students of Scripture in this form :—

- Acts 11 : 26 The Christian **seeks** after the will of God. "The disciples (seekers, learners) were called Christians first at Antioch".

- Acts 26 : 28 The Christian **serves** according to the will of God. It was Paul's service and witness that evoked from King Agrippa the words, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian".

- 1 Peter 4 : 16 The Christian **suffers** according to the will of God. But rejoicing results from suffering and God is glorified in such likeness to the pathway of His Son.

J. G. Deck's well-known verse would seem to be an appropriate prayer with which to conclude these considerations :—

Master ! we would no longer be
 At home in that which hated Thee,
 But patient in Thy footsteps go,
 Thy sorrow as Thy joy to know ;
 We would—and O confirm the power—
 With meekness meet the darkest hour,
 By shame, content, however tried,
 For Thou wast scorned and crucified.

THE FATHER WORKING J. S. BLACKBURN

“BUT Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do : for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth : and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. . . That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”

(John 5 : 17-23)

IF in John's narrative the first extended disclosures declaring the Father were made in private conversation with the Samaritan woman, it is equally clear that the first detailed explanation was given as recorded in the passage quoted, to the Jews at Jerusalem. It is always necessary to distinguish the different classes of persons in John. The simple folk in town or country, the crowd or multitude, come into prominence in chapters six and seven, and one can clearly see the distinction in those chapters between these and the 'Jews', whose popular leaders were the Pharisees. The 'people' are confused and eagerly questioning among themselves. The 'Jews' were inveterate in their hatred of the Lord, broke with Him from the earliest pages, and began to plot His death in our quotation. The distinction is clearly seen in Chapter seven, for example vv. 11 to 13 : "Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he ? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him : for some said, He is a good man : others said, Nay ; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews". The Jews pretended to and indeed possessed a learned knowledge of Scripture, and were of all people those who were responsible for recognising the rightness of the claims of the Lord Jesus, and leading the people to do the same. It is to the Jews, then, that we have in this passage the Lord's declaration of the Father. We might almost call it a formal explanation, dealing always, after v. 17, with 'the Father' and 'the Son'. It is the more to be prayed, therefore, that as we write and read, our words may be imbued with the light and love by the Spirit which will make them words of life

We are at once face to face with a statement most revealing as to the nature of the Father and the Son, and full of comfort and strength for us. It is nothing less than this, that the Father cannot rest in the face of the world's suffering and hopeless agony. The Lord Jesus was confronted by 'a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting'. His reaction was to 'make whole' a man whose infirmity had been with him thirty-eight years. This took place on the

sabbath day. The Jews, with hearts utterly estranged from the love of God, and only concerned with the severity of the law, persecuted and sought to slay Jesus because He had performed this work of mercy on the sabbath. The answer of Jesus was, "My Father has been and is at work up to this moment, and so am I". When did that working begin? It began when first the world became a place where men were suffering the consequences of sin, immediately there in Eden. When and how will this working end? It will only end in the sabbath-keeping which remains to the people of God, when God shall have wiped away all tears from off all faces "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new". (Revelation 31:4, 5) This is the Father's working, and shall we not rejoice and be glad in knowing it?

Let us linger over this incident so as to allow its immense meaning to seize us. Here lies the world of 'the things that are seen' as we know it: a world filled with the long agony of the plight of men away from God: a world of savage hatred and callous indifference. There impinges on that world, before our eyes, a deed majestic with immediate power over man's disease, and softly whispering the existence of a Heart and Will to intervene. This reply of the Lord Jesus simply, but firmly, locates the source of that intervention in the unseen world, inaccessible to man's highest powers, but which He the Son had come to reveal, the Father's world. And in that world where is abundance of love and light, of mercy and truth, the Father is, and will one day be seen by all to be, the Source of the works which will bring in the true sabbath rest.

"My Father. . . and I", the Lord said in reply to the Jews, but the immediate effect is something far removed from the mercy and hope we have glimpsed in the words. The words reveal that in God is a relationship of Father and Son. But the Jews only use this as an occasion for the intensification of the most murderous hatred against the Lord, but they **did** acknowledge a most important truth. Heretics from the earliest days have not seen this truth, which even these assassin Jews recognised, even as they knew where the Christ should be born. The superficially rationalistic argument of Arius and Arianism in the 4th century was put thus by the historian Socrates. What is true of human fatherhood is true of the relation between the Father and the Son. A human father exists before his son, therefore the same is true in regard to the Father and the Son. This is the Arian error. It is mentioned now because our passage brings it to mind, in that even the Jews knew better than to fall into such an error. Also many a young believer is troubled by this same argument. More than one false religion of our times is Arian in its teaching. It is still something against which we have to strive for the faith once delivered. The Jews rightly understood that in saying that God was His Father the Lord Jesus was declaring Himself equal with God. We have to abandon our reasonings from human parenthood and understand that the Lord was declaring His complete oneness of nature and substance with the Father. Lying very near the surface in the next verse (19) we have

a statement which we shall return to later, but clearly involves the equality the Jews recognised in the most profoundly meaningful verse 17. "What things soever (the Father) doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise". Only a Person equally God could make such a claim.

It is more than time we returned to the positive teaching of the passage. "The Son can do nothing from Himself" is the real statement with which v. 19 begins, with the usual formula of great emphasis. The Son is declaring in these verses that it is not to the Son to originate the works of God. It is for the Father to originate. If we take in v. 20, then the part of the Father to originate action is described by two verbs which I do not find easy to explain by the use of other words. In the 'doing' of God, the Father 'shews' and the Son 'sees'. Between what the Father originates and shews on the one hand, and what the Son sees and does on the other, there is not the smallest discrepancy, for "what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." It is evident that we are not to understand a duplication of works, that is that the divine actions are performed twice, but rather that for every act of God, the Father and the Son are working in perfect harmony, the Father originating as the Source and the Son carrying out the work.

There seems to be nothing to indicate that these works described are to be thought of as referring to the Lord's earthly life only. "My Father is working up to the present moment" seems to encourage us to understand that these are timeless statements relating to the Persons of the Godhead, and this is especially suggested by the reason given for this way of working, "the Father loveth the Son". There is everything to encourage us to understand here a statement of eternal truth in all these present tenses. Oh! for words so Spirit-filled as to communicate such truths! Oh! for hearts moved to their deepest depths by such a disclosure. Not only is it the Father's part to be the Originating Source of the divine works, but we are brought exactly to the heart of the matter by this word which tells us that the source is the love of the Father for the Son. The Son is performing what He is seeing the Father shewing. The Father is showing because He loves the Son. However blinded and deafened by their unbelieving hatred, any who has ears to hear is led by these words to stand before the ultimate secret of the universe, on the threshold of a realm in which is laid open in the ears of the disciples in the seventeenth chapter: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world".

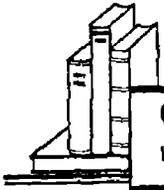
We ought to pause here, in order to note how closely all this is in accord with other Scripture, indicating in a still wider setting, how truly we have understood and worshipped the Father as the Source of all. Let us turn the pages to another passage of almost credal quality, 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us 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." In this v. 6, the first preposition is that used for a river flowing **out of** a source. The second preposition is that used to describe a river running **into** the sea. Thus, more exactly, we must understand v. 6 to mean: "to us there is one God, the Father,

who is the source of the river of all existence, and we into him". We hardly need John 4 : 14 to help us to understand that it is by their worship that the saints return the flow to its Source in God the Father. In the second part of the verse we are taught that the one Lord, Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, and perhaps also the Upholder. This is His work for "all things" in the first creation, and for the saints in the new creation.

Returning to John 5 : 20-22, we read of "greater works" shewn by the Father to the Son, and these are raising the dead and judgement, greater works than the healing of the paralysed man. This leads us to v. 23 "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him". These words call for equal honour to the Father and the Son, but we can reverently notice that the standard by which such honour is measured is the honour due to the Father. This, the honour due to the Father has primacy in the Lord's words. When the cloud received the Risen Lord, and He passed out of the eyes of men, He is seen by John sharing the honours of the divine throne, and receiving, together with Him that sits upon the throne, the honour due to God alone. In the previous chapter we have listened to the Son who said, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father seeketh such to worship Him", and our hearts are moved to desire to render this worship the Father is seeking. Now in our verse 23, we are moved to desire to give the response here set before us, to give equal honour to the Father and the Son.

The door into this blessing, so to be able to respond to the Father and the Son, is by 'hearing his word'. This must surely follow on from honouring the Son. He that heareth His word is the one who submits to Him, bows to Him, takes heed to Him. Such a person receives and possesses eternal life, for this is eternal life, to know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Note. A difficulty might arise in the mind of the reader in the form of the question, How can the Persons of the Godhead be spoken of by the Lord in such detail without so much as a mention of the Holy Spirit? Does not this lend support to those who do not believe in the deity of the Spirit? To the latter question a decided negative must be given. Scripture is abundantly clear about the deity of the Spirit. The **three** Persons are linked together so many times that the link becomes a dominant Scripture fact. (2 Corinthians 13 : 14 ; Matthew 28 : 19 ; Ephesians 2 : 18 and 4 : 4, 5, 6 ; 1 Peter 1 : 2 ; and others). It is very much to the point to draw attention to the close parallel between our passage in John 5 and the way the Lord speaks about the Spirit in 16 : 13 and 15 : 26. "He shall not speak from Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak". "The Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father". In these quotations, the 'hear' and 'speak' relating to the Spirit are exactly equivalent to the 'shew' and 'see' and 'do' considered in this paper relative to the Son. Also, the 'proceedeth' about the Spirit is exactly parallel to the 'begotten' concerning the Son.



THE FATHER'S HOUSE

J. S. BLACKBURN

LET not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also. . . . 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". (John 14 : 1-3, 23)

We cannot too often be reminded that in these chapters which record the Upper Room Discourse, especially in the prayer of chapter seventeen, we have the heart and centre of the work which the Son came to perform, the revelation of the Father. This is one of the great essential, if not the great essential doctrine of Christianity. It is worth while to quote lines written at the time when these revelations were being re-discovered, after ages of darkness. "Thus it was not until the present age that the full name and glory of our God was published. The Father had been working, it is true, in all ages of the Jewish times ; but still Israel were put nationally under God simply as "Jehovah". The revelation of "the Father" had to wait for the ministry of the Son, and certain dispensations had to finish their course ere the Son could come forth. . . the Holy Ghost came forth, with His gifts and powers, to wait on the ministry of the Son. . . the Holy Ghost was now to dwell in the saints, telling them plainly of the Father. . . . And this would give the Church her full form and standing, having thus communion and knowledge, through the Holy Ghost, with the Father and the Son. . . Now to draw the disciples out from a mere Jewish place into this elevation of the Church of God, and by this to comfort them under the sense of His absence, is the Lord's great purpose in the discourse which He holds with them in these chapters—the like to which never passed between the sons of men—the heart and mind of God had never before so largely and blessedly communicated their treasures to the desires and thoughts of His people, as now the Lord was doing. Most sacred moments indeed of communion between heaven and earth were these. . . . It is of the love of the Father as of the glory of the Son, that the Comforter tells us by the way homeward. He is our companion for all the journey, and this is the theme of His discourse with us. How did the servant, I doubt not, as He accompanied Rebecca across the desert, tell her further of His master. . . . And, beloved, were we more consciously "on the way" with the Comforter, the way would be to us in like manner thus beguiled by His many tales of love and glory, whispering of the Father

and the Son to our inmost souls. Be it so with us, Thy poor people, blessed Lord, more and more !" (J.G.B. 1838)

A person reading John's Gospel thus far, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, will now come again on this new Name, the Father, as upon a major recurrence of a theme whose sweetness and majesty, beauty and glory, call for a resolution in which heart and mind can rest satisfied. On the opening page, the disciples have enquired "Master, where is your permanent home?" and the only begotten Son has replied, "Come and see". "They came and saw His permanent dwelling-place, and remained with Him". Through all that intervenes in the developing narrative, the Father loving the Son from everlasting to everlasting, the Father seeking worshippers, the Father working until tears are wiped from all faces, the Father who is the source of the river of all existence and has in His disposal the authority for the last judgment, there broods that simple incident in the prologue, "Master, where is your permanent dwelling-place?"

Here, in these opening verses of the Upper Room Discourse, is the answer, so deeply comforting, so permanently satisfying :

This God whose Name is the Father possesses a **home**.
 In that home there are **many** permanent dwelling-places.
 In these permanent dwelling-places there is a place for **you**.
Where I am, there you will be.

The Troubled Heart

Hearts were troubled amongst the disciples by the communications they received from the Lord immediately before. There was above all the warning of immediately impending separation. Only a little while longer He would be with them ; and afterwards, "whither I go ye cannot come", and, "whither I go, thou canst not follow me now". Then, as if to complete the shattering of any confidence they might have retained for the future, came the foretelling of Peter's lack of strength to be shown by his three-fold denial of the Lord. Only a little earlier, the Lord Jesus had Himself manifested a troubled spirit (13 :21) at the unveiling of the traitor, Judas Iscariot.

Every part of what is recorded in chapter 14 was directed to bring peace to troubled hearts, but among these comforts, none was greater than that which stands first, the assurance of their place in the Father's house. When the light of all hope and peace for the future was quite extinguished, this most blessed hope is brought to them. We have every reason to believe that hearts more deeply troubled than ever lay immediately before them, but soon they began to see the fulfilment of the first of the promises here made by the Lord for their comfort, "a little while, and ye shall see me. . . I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (16 : 19, 22).

No greater distress could befall the children of God than that which came upon the disciples within a few hours of these words, and it is altogether fitting, therefore, that the first three verses of chapter 14 should have become down the centuries since the words fell on

the ears of the first disciples, the greatest possible comfort and strength to everyone whose faith is in Christ.

The Father's House

The contrast has often been pointed between the earliest recorded sayings of the Lord Jesus in the gospels and the latest. The progressive way in which He occupied His own with the Father is never more clearly seen than in this contrast. For the earlier teaching, let us look at Matthew 6 :32, 33 "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed ? for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things". What an immense assurance, that God, so to speak, stoops down and concerns Himself with the needs and interests which belong to His people's homes ! Could anything exceed such grace as this ? Could our Father in heaven to a greater degree than this express His thoughts of good for His people ? Our passage in John 14 is the unmistakable answer that there is something immeasurably greater than this ; and this is that the Father has Himself a home. There is a centre of concerns and interests which are the Father's own, and are not originated for our relief. How clearly we can see the special need for such prominence as the Lord here gives to the gift of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, for without His indwelling we could never receive the knowledge of that home. And so is seen the whole concept of the Father's home, into which the Son loves to introduce His disciples, as the measure of the extent to which it is the Father's gracious purpose to bring His children in the end finally and completely over to His side of things.

F. B. Meyer has written, "Heaven is a home. What magic power lies in that word ! It will draw the wanderer from the ends of the earth ; it will nerve the sailor, the soldier, and the explorer with indomitable endurance ; it will bring a mist of tears to the eyes of the hardened criminal, and soften the heart of stone. But what constitutes a home ? Not the mere locality or building ; but the dear ones who lived there once. . . . It was father's house, though it was only a shepherd's shieling ; he dwelt there, and mother, or brothers and sisters. And where they dwell, or wife or child dwell, there is home". And how many times have Christians confessed, "Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there".

Divine glory is there, because the Son has said to the Father, "the glory which I had with thee before the world was". Divine love is there, and is at rest there, because the Son spoke of it ; "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world".

The unregenerate mind of man cannot conceive of a perfection which does not pall. All human experience confirms that it is so.

The Worldly Hopes men set their heart upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers : and anon
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone

but our Saviour, the Son, here speaks of something outside and above human experience. We are here introduced to eternal life, the life of God. And the leaves of the Tree of Life in the new creation are never-endingly renewed ; they are perennially fresh ; there is nothing which can ever pall in the home of life, the Father's house.

There is at least a hint that this home forms the resting-place behind the service which belongs to the home of eternal life. "His servants shall serve him : and they shall see his face" (Revelation 22 : 3, 4).

The Many Mansions

The A.V. word 'mansions', now used, as everyone knows, for a large and imposing house, represents here its earlier meaning, that is a permanent dwelling. But I think that the point that is to be stressed here is that the word describing our heavenly home brings to a focus, to a certain fulfilment, a glorious, holy consummation, the apostle's very frequent use of the verb which corresponds to the noun 'mansion' and represented in the English Bible by the four words, abide, remain, continue, and dwell. The disciples are invited again and again to **abide**, that is, to live uninterruptedly in Christ. (15 : 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). If they do this, there will result fruit, including joy, which **remains**. John is never tired, by the constant repetition of this one word, of insisting that only in Christ and the faith of Him, are available to us the things which never pass away. The "many mansions" are dwelling places in which will come to everlasting fruition this quality of permanence. There, in a day which shall know no evening shade, the saints will enjoy, in fadeless light, in eternal love and glory, that eternal life which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

In John 2 : 16 the temple is called "my Father's house". And we are reminded that the temple as built to God's pattern given to David, contained all round its walls three stories of "chambers", partly, it would appear, for storage, but available for dwelling places. The temple is probably the model for the Father's home of many mansions. Not only was His Father's house the eternal abode of glory and love, but part of its essential character was that it was a place of many abodes, a place of fellowship between those brought in from the distance, and made the children of God, and the Father and the Son whose home it is.

"A Place for You"

In Hebrews 6 : 20 we read, "within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus". This passage indicates first, that it was necessary that Jesus should enter heaven before His people, but second, that His presence there is the guarantee that they will be there. This verse in Hebrews is perhaps the best comment on the words of the Lord Jesus which now lie before us : "I go to prepare a place for you". By His sacrifice on the cross, He made ready His people for heaven. By His entering the Father's house before them, He prepares a place there for them. "Without presenting redemption there, and presenting Himself the new man according to the power of that redemption, there is no place prepared in heaven". (Synopsis, J.N.D.)

For their heart-trouble the disciples needed something for the immediate future, and this is soon given them. But with finality to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, they needed before all assurance about the final outcome, their ultimate destiny. And there is nothing hazy or uncertain or ambiguous in this promise: "A place for you". The many mansions are only introduced to make clear beyond the possibility of doubt that the Father's house is not structured to be a place to which the Only Begotten Son would return to be alone there. It was structured to be a place where there was room for every single one of the new family of the children of God, and so that He could say, "a place for you". What a revelation are these facts about the Father! First and foremost the Lord Jesus said "My Father", but, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God".

"Where I am"

These words are the final link in a chain which extends from chapter 7. In 7:32, 36 there commences a series of sayings which deeply perplexed the Jews, to whom they were first addressed, the multitudes, and also the disciples. The first of these sayings was, "Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent me. Ye shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will He go. . . . ?" Three phrases afterwards are seen to stand out in this saying :

whither I go
a little while
where I am

The repetition of these phrases, and the perplexity they occasioned, are seen in : 8 : 14-22, 12 : 26, 13 : 33, 36, 14 : 3-5, 16 : 16-19, 17 : 24. For the moment our concern is with the phrase, 'where I am'. Since the Lord Jesus is the fulness of God, the fountain of living waters, the "deep sweet well of love", no more fearful night could possibly befall men, than this, "Where I am, ye cannot come". On the contrary, what prospect opening before the human heart could exceed the unmixed blessedness of the certain hope imparted in these words, "that where I am, there ye may be also" ! Three times in the series detailed above, this blessed assurance is given in addition to 14 : 3 just quoted. "Where I am, there shall also my servant be : if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." (12 : 26) "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

On the Way

Only once more do we meet the word 'mansion', or 'abode'. The Lord Jesus has set at peace the troubled hearts, first, with the certain

bliss of their final and everlasting home in the Father's house. But there follows in these chapters a piled-up succession of provision for their hearts on the way there. A great deal centres round the promise of another Comforter from the Father.

But perhaps these provisions for the time of His absence and their absence from Him are most wonderfully summed up in verse 23. The bright and blessed hope in its fulness is that He Himself will come again, and receive us unto Himself in the Father's house. We shall be taken to dwell for evermore in the Father's house : there our abode will be. The promise for the way there, certain to bring peace many a time to the troubled heart, is this, that if we love Him and keep His word, then the Father and the Son, doubtless by the Spirit, will come and make Their abode with us. "Jesus said unto 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". (14 : 23).

RECOLLECTIONS OF RIPON : 1976

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST'S COMMITMENT ————— JOHN D. RICE

John 1 : 29-34 ; 12 : 20-26 ; 18 : 1-11.

Introduction

"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

(Hebrews 3 : 1).

WHEN we come to consider the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are immediately conscious of the magnitude of our Object and the inadequacy of our understanding and appreciation of Him. Our purpose here is to dwell on Him as the One "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2 : 6-8). Let us consider Him, Son of God and Son of Man, in His dedication, His commitment to the divine purpose on our behalf.

In each of the passages in John's gospel indicated above we find the Lord Jesus expressing in deed or word His firm intention, from the very outset of His ministry, to go to death, "even the death of the cross". Different facets of His purpose are illuminated on each occasion, but the end, death, is always in view. How this tenacity of purpose should affect our hearts, both to praise Him for the strength of His love and to desire that "the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3 : 5-JND). In our consideration of these scriptures we shall also find

specific challenges relating to the revealed aspects of the Lord's devotion and our desire is that these should find a response in our hearts, that God might receive glory from the reproduction of Christ in His people.

Let us then consider three incidents recounted in John's gospel looking particularly, in each, at the **commitment** of the Lord Jesus and the **challenge** this brings.

Commitment to death to "take away the sin of the world"

(John 1 : 29-34)

The common aspect of the Lord's commitment in each of these passages, as noted already, is that it was a commitment to **death**. Here, before the start of the Lord's public ministry, we see Jesus coming to John in the waters of Jordan to be baptized and, as He is marked out by the Holy Spirit (v 32), John recalls the promise he received that the One so identified would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v 33). However, this only took place after his death, for Acts 1 : 5 records that this saying of John would find its fulfilment "not many days hence", at Pentecost. Between Jordan and Pentecost lay Golgotha. So it is that John declares, as he sees Jesus divinely approved by the Spirit : "**Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.**" Consider Him, God's Lamb, given that the root cause of man's separation from God might be removed. Consider too the love in the heart of the Father Who "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8 : 32). Marvel that, knowing the end from the beginning, Jesus came, committed from the start to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53 : 7).

Challenge to Witness to His Person

Faced with the divine witness to the Person before him, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3 : 22), what response could John the Baptist make but to joyfully add his testimony concerning what he had seen and heard to those around him ? "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1 : 34).

Have we received a lesser revelation than that afforded to John ? The Lord Jesus Himself said, "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16 : 13, 14). We who "consider Christ Jesus", who are the beneficiaries of this sin-removing work, are challenged, as John was, to witness to His Person, His Deity, to the Son of God. Note that we are challenged not only to **hold the doctrine** that Jesus is the Son of God, but to actively **witness to its truth**. There has never been a time in the history of the Church when this doctrine has not been under attack. Where are those who will witness unequivocally to its truth today ?

Commitment to death to "bring forth much fruit" (John 12 : 20-26)

What a contrast there is between the scene of the previous pass-

age and this one. John pointed out Jesus to a few beside Jordan whilst here "a great crowd who came to the feast" have hailed Jesus as King of the Jews. But, behind the scenes as it were, Jesus is seen not as the divinely acclaimed Son of God, nor as the Son of David acclaimed by the fickle crowd, but as the humble Son of man, sought by certain Greeks. What is the Lord's response to those who "would see Jesus" (v 21)? How, at this crisis point in His life on earth, does He reveal Himself and His purpose? "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (v 23). Glory is before Him, but how is it reached? By the way of death. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15 : 20). He was committed to death that **fruit might result** (v 24).

There are many allusions in Scripture to this aspect of the Lord's death. In this passage the **universality** of the fruit is brought before us and Jesus views the prospect of the Greeks, as Gentiles, being brought into the sphere of divine blessing. He died that eternal life might be for "as many as receive Him", with no distinction at all between those who are the recipients of such blessing.

The thought of the fruit collectively as an **object of divine love** is a familiar one in the Word. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5 : 25). The divine principle, enunciated in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2 : 18), "It is not good that man should be alone", finds its ultimate fulfilment as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, goes to death that he might obtain a **bride**, towards whom His affection might be displayed.

Again, the thought of His delight with the fruit of His death is prophesied by Isaiah (53 : 11). "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." What a staggering thought that He should die that we might form part of that company, "a glorious church", which He will present in perfection to Himself.

Challenge to Serve with Humility

In our first passage the challenge came to us in the response which John the Baptist made to the Lord's commitment. In this second passage the challenge comes direct from the lips of the Lord Himself. When He has declared the purpose of His death He immediately challenges his listeners, and us today: "Follow Me if you want to serve Me" (v 26). The true service of the Christian is the imitation of the Perfect Servant. Having been told to follow we might ask, where does He lead? "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (v 26). The promise is of a secure destination with the Lord, but the pathway to this end leads through death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (v 24). If we would serve Him then self must be entirely ruled out, the seed must be concealed in the ground and die, that God might be glorified in the resulting fruit. Paul, the apostle who followed His Master so closely that he could exhort Christians to imitate him as he imitated Christ, knew the truth of this in such a way that he could say "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15 : 31). He was enabled to face physical suffering for Christ because his heart was full of Christ. "I

am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2 : 20). Selfless service in humility is the only pathway for those who would follow the Son of man.

Commitment to death in Obedience to the Father (John 18 : 1-11)

As the cross approaches, the end to which the Lord was inexorably committed, marks in this last passage His determination to accomplish the work which He had been given to do. Chapter 18 of John begins : "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth", and again in the fourth verse we read : "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth". The time for speaking was past, the one great action lay ahead.

How clearly had Paul appropriated this single-minded dedication of the Lord Jesus as he could say, "forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God" (Philippians 3 : 13, 14-JND). Here in John 18 we see the Lord "stretching out to the things before". He is not taken, He presents Himself a willing prisoner, and a willing victim.

Pause for a moment and consider the One Who offers Himself. Jesus of Nazareth is sought by the soldiers. I AM is revealed. The Son of God declares Himself and, albeit for a moment, reveals His power, casting His pursuers to the ground (v 6).

"If none could take His life unless He laid it down, so none could take Him prisoner unless He gave Himself up. Nor was it simply that He could ask His Father for twelve legions of angels, as He says in Matthew ; but in John did He **want** angels ? They might and did ascend and descend on Him as Son of man ; but He had only to speak, and it was done. He is God." (WK)

But He then declares that which binds Him to the path of duty : "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it ? " (v 11). **Obedience to the Father's will** which has marked His whole pathway on earth marks it to the end. "God had a plan for the glory of His Son, and that plan was to show the perfection of the Son's obedience, and that perfection of obedience to be followed by His being raised up to the perfection of glory at the right hand of God, the Father of glory." (GVW)

Challenge to Obey

As we contemplate the One who was "obedient unto death" we cannot fail to feel with shame the disobedience which marks us who "in time past had our conversation among the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2 : 2). Disobedience and unbelief are closely associated in Scripture. Is our obedience imperfect because our knowledge of the One Whom we seek to serve, to follow, is so small ? How little was Peter's appreciation of the Lord's power and purpose when he drew his sword !

“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”, said God to Abraham (Genesis 18 : 14). Our lives declare so often our lack of faith in the all-sufficient One we have come to know. How we need a deeper appreciation of the love of the Giver of every good and perfect gift, that our obedience might be to His glory.

May our response to the challenge be that of the children of Israel in Joshua’s day : “The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey” (Joshua 24 : 24).

Conclusion

The consideration of the commitment of the Lord Jesus Christ to die that the sin of the world might be removed, that a people might be won for Himself, in accordance with the will of His Father, challenges us that holding His full deity and full humanity we might give faithful witness to the Person of Christ, serving Him in humility, following His footsteps, in loving obedience to the One Who “commended His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5 : 8).

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith ; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. . . . Consider Him” (Hebrews 12 : 1-3).

THIRST FOR GOD

LEON LE DUNE

Psalm 42

WE all know what it is to feel thirsty. Indeed it indicates one of our most basic physical needs, the need for water. Without water we could not survive and animal and plant life would perish. The Psalmist in the 42nd Psalm thinks of an animal longing for flowing streams of water to quench its thirst, and he compares this with a great thirst he had discovered in himself. In his case it was not physical thirst that troubled him, but quite simply an intense longing and thirst for God. God was undoubtedly real to him, but the experience he describes in the psalm is true of everyone who would claim to have a real relationship with God. He had times of great testing and trial, times of doubt intensified by those around him who asked the taunting question ‘Where is your God?’. He also had vivid memories of singing and joy and thanksgiving in the fellowship of God’s people. These experiences were wonderful at the time and absolutely real, but clouds had covered the sky and he was depressed and discouraged. Through it all however, he was never without hope and was sustained in the knowledge that one day he would again praise God. Hope never died because his relationship with God was real and based on what he knew in practical terms of the Lord’s stead-

fast love in every situation. Most important of all the Psalmist's adversity intensified his thirst for God, and made him long for a deeper relationship with his Lord.

If we are becoming aware in ourselves of a thirst for a deeper relationship with the Lord, and a fuller knowledge of Him and of His ways, it is a sure indication that the Lord is lovingly working to produce growth and increasing maturity in us and is actually longing to draw near to us. The amazing thing is that a true two-way relationship is possible between the infinite God and His creatures because He is also a personal God. Jeremiah the prophet expressing the very word of the Lord says (9 : 23 & 24) “. . . let him who glories, glory in this that he understands and knows me. . . .” The wise man, the mighty man, and the rich man had no true basis for boasting, because they were simply relying on their own resources and self-sufficiency. God states through His prophet that man can only achieve a true basis for his existence in an on-going relationship with his Creator. The greatest error we can make is to suppose that we can as Christians substitute anything for a relationship with God based on an understanding and knowledge of Him with all that that means.

The Holy Spirit spoke with tremendous severity to the church at Laodicea because there was no evidence of a real thirst for a deepening relationship with their Lord. Instead they said (Revelation 3 : 7) “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing”. Genuine spiritual thirst for God Himself is basic to a developing relationship with Him.

Paul constantly prayed for his spiritual children in terms which emphasise the importance of what we have just considered. In Colossians 1 : 9-14 he asks the Lord to fill His people in Colosse “with the knowledge of His will”, he prays that they may be “increasing in the knowledge of God”. If we find that this prayer is echoed in our hearts, that we long to know God better, then let us be strengthened and encouraged by some of the wonderful and comprehensive promises of scripture. The Lord Jesus in (Matthew 5 : 6) says “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”. Isaiah states that God has promised “to give drink to my chosen people” (Isaiah 43 : 18-21) and He has also stated “I will pour water on the thirsty land.” (Isaiah 44 : 1-5).

It may be that while we recognise the importance of a true spiritual thirst, a longing to know God better, we may nevertheless realise that this thirst may be very much lacking in our experience. We may not in fact be very thirsty. What are we to do ? The Lord Himself because of His deep love for us and commitment to us, seeks to produce in us this thirst for Him. He does this in many ways appropriate to each of us as individuals, because in His love He knows us completely. In the case of the Psalmist (Psalm 42 : 2) the Lord stimulated a thirst and longing, by bringing into his mind the remembrance of better things, times of blessing and joy in the past. It may be that for some of us God will use this kind of memory. We may be shocked to find how deficient our present experience is compared with what we once knew of fellowship with the Lord and His people, and we will once more thirst for Him. God may allow us to experience depression and a sense of failure to deepen our longings (Psalm 42 : 6)

“My soul is cast down within me, therefore I remember Thee”. At other times God in love, will discipline us for our good. In Hosea 5 : 15—6 : 1-3, God is pictured as leaving His people alone in their trouble, in order to bring them back to loving fellowship with Himself. God does not discipline us to crush and depress us, but in reality to assure us that we belong to Him and are linked with Him in a parent-child relationship. Hebrews 12 : 5 asks the question “. . . have you forgotten the exhortation (the word of encouragement) which addresses you as sons ?”—the assurance is that “he disciplines him whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives”. The effect of God’s patient and loving dealings with us should be to make us say “Let us know, let us go on to know the Lord” (Hosea 6 : 3).

We come of course, supremely to the knowledge of God, to a right and true relationship with Him, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4 : 6). The Lord Jesus said to Thomas His disciple (John 14 : 6) “. . . no man comes to the Father but by me”, but our loving Saviour says equally clearly that He can also completely satisfy our thirst and our longing for God on an on-going basis.

This is a tremendous and glorious fact. John 7 : 37-39 gives us His very words, “Come to me and drink”. This perpetual and never failing satisfaction of our thirst is made possible by the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus Himself would send. Furthermore, not only are we satisfied but we can become sources of supply to thirsty lives around us. We do not have to go far to find them. God the Holy Spirit creates a basic thirst in the heart of the unbeliever, your neighbour, colleague, or workmate. Are we ready and able to satisfy that thirst ? To use the words of the Lord Jesus, are “rivers of living water” flowing out of our innermost beings ? God the Holy Spirit is creating a thirst in the life of a brother or a sister in Christ—the thirst we have been considering. Are we ready and able to respond to that need as indeed the Lord Jesus would have us ? The Lord Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit for this purpose (see John 15 : 26, 14 : 26 & 16 : 7). Our thirst for God can only be satisfied as we allow the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son to fill us. (Ephesians 5 : 18) The Lord Jesus said of the work of the Holy Spirit “. . . He will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16 : 14). If in a human relationship I share what makes me essentially the person I am with someone else, I am inviting that person to relate to me at a deep level. I am saying in effect “This is the person I really am. I am declaring myself to you, I am giving you myself. You may accept what you find or you may turn from me, but unless you really know me I cannot find a place of rest in my relationship with you”. So in an infinitely more wonderful and loving way, the Son of God makes it possible for us to know Him really and deeply. He gives us Himself in an on-going relationship calculated to satisfy our greatest thirst and longing. God the Holy Spirit is committed to this wonderful work of making it possible for us to know the fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1 : 3).

Within this divine sphere of fellowship made possible by the amazing and infinite love of the Triune God, I find myself in fellowship with every other child of God. In this fellowship spiritual thirst is

satisfied and I can become more like Jesus. The eternal purpose of God for His children can be realised, that we may be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8 : 29). How thirsty are you for the realisation of God's purposes in your life ? How thirsty are you for Him ? The Holy Spirit can at once create and fully satisfy this thirst in you, if you will allow Him to do His work.

"Whom have we Lord but Thee,
Soul-thirst to satisfy ?
Exhaustless spring, the water's free !
All other springs are dry."

PSALM 22 COLIN CURRY

THE contrast in tone between Isaiah 53 and its context was noticed in a recent paper (volume 45, p.227). The joyous language of the surrounding chapters was seen to owe its freedom to the profound contents of the central chapter, discovered to be true by a repentant and redeemed people of God. The key chapter is entirely different in spirit from the adjacent ones ; its language is subdued with amazement at the unbelievable suffering which was the price of that redemption.

We now turn to another profound passage ; perhaps one of the most solemn passages in Scripture. Certainly there is no joy and freedom here, except at the close. The words are the product of a sorrow and an agony too great to conceive or to measure. Psalm 22, though one of the better-known psalms, requires a special humility of approach every time it is considered. Easy familiarity would be quite inappropriate. Cold analysis (a doubtful approach to any Scripture) certainly cannot be right here. We must handle this psalm with the utmost respect, bearing in mind that this is the scriptural way of presenting the feelings of our Lord upon the cross. It is an impenetrable theme, and almost too holy to discuss. Nevertheless, though we cannot touch its depths, these feelings of His are indicated in this passage, for our meditation, and it must be wrong to avoid the passage altogether. We are shown here something of the passion of our Lord ; the emphasis is upon what He faced, what He carried, what He felt. Other Scriptures let us see that His death was also a mighty action of divine love, but here we consider all that he submitted to, and all that it involved for Him, in carrying through that great achievement of His.

For persons with a high view of Scripture, justification for this understanding of the psalm is hardly necessary. He used the very words of verse 1 on the cross. His enemies unthinkingly used the terms of verse 8 as they taunted Him. The actions of verse 18 are recounted in all the gospels, and are said (in John) to fulfil the psalm. Verse 22 is applied to Christ in a unique way in Hebrews 2 : 12 ; indicating a special joy to Himself which is among the firstfruits of His deep sorrow. Apart from these direct N.T. references, much else in the gospels agrees with the awesome experiences indicated here. So certainly and clearly does the psalm apply to our Lord, that it seems

uniquely and solely applicable to Him. The psalm itself makes the distinction (a tremendous one) between **this** Sufferer and all others who suffered in faith. It may perhaps be pointed out that other prophetic passages sometimes have words which do not apply to the immediate spokesman, nor in the immediate situation. (See, for instance, the comment on Psalm 16 : 10 in Acts 2 : 29-31 ; and note also 1 Peter 1 : 10-12).

The psalm has two distinct parts. Unrelieved suffering and anguish completely fill the first and major section. But an abrupt change comes near the end of verse 21, and a sense of relief and joy pervades the remaining verses. In the first part, the Sufferer is totally alone ; there is no answer to His cries, His appeals are seemingly unheard ; the feelings of weakness, exposure, and abandonment seem to overwhelm Him. He carries a load that none could understand. He is bereft of everything that might support Him. The inhumanity of men makes His distress the more unbearable. But from verse 21b He is no longer alone ; His cry has been heard, the burden is gone. The fruits and outcome of His sufferings begin to be celebrated. The compensations to Himself are mentioned. The glory is given to the One Who suffered. He is still at the centre of the action, however ; no longer the target of abuse and animosity, but the focus of widespread recognition, praise and gratitude. The effects of the cross spread out to the ends of the earth.

The darkest hour

The psalm begins with questions ; indeed it is the **same** question repeated in various ways. The urgency and poignancy of these appeals reveals something of the tremendous burden which our Lord carried at the cross. The unique and fathomless nature of His sufferings for sin overshadows everything else in the psalm. We know that real physical darkness descended during those deepest hours on the cross. But the abyss of darkness and suffering into which He entered alone is something far beyond our knowing. It is suggested to us here, however ; and it plainly underlies everything else. It adds to the desperate sense of shame and exposure expressed in later verses. It sharpens still more His acute sensitivity to the hatred and non-sympathy of men. This sense of dereliction, this question **why** His unfailing support (in God) had apparently been withdrawn, is the uppermost of all the deep distresses voiced here. More than all else the psalm picks out **this** aspect of His sufferings for our special meditation. Truly this is a theme which requires our quiet and reverent consideration. May our response not lack in the wonder and the gratitude which it deserves.

The question Why ?—wrung from Him in His anguish of soul—has an answer which is at least indicated in these verses. "But Thou art holy, that dwellest amidst the praises of Israel". Others, trusting in God, had found His support even in their direst moments. He alone was bereft of this. He alone had the blackest of all experiences to endure. "God made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5 : 21). If an utterly holy God were to dwell among a responsive, redeemed people, **this** was the price of it.

Also in these verses, amidst the sorrows of the cross, the perfect qualities of the One Who became the true sin-offering can be seen. From His birth He had constantly depended upon His all-sufficient God. That total reliance had been the unvarying pattern of His life, and He remains perfectly in that attitude in this the extremest of all tests. He does not fail in loyalty to God. Here is true and perfect manhood; here is perfect goodness, trusting in God Who seems not to hear, coming to such an extremity that His soul craves for God, yet persisting in honouring Him to the full. The way of submission and endurance, without support or encouragement, was His way in a unique sense. **This** was the way in which He conquered. Even His adversaries singled Him out, distinguishing Him from others, paying unwitting tribute to Him in their mockery, "He trusted in God": it was a hard gibe to bear, no doubt, but it was the plain truth too. They could find no fault in Him. His uprightness, His purity, His blamelessness, His God-honouring ways, were in reality the whole of what they had against Him.

Men acting as beasts

Alongside the pure spotlessness of the One central figure in this psalm, the deep darkness within the hearts of the mass of other men on that critical day stands revealed. His own voice conveys this to us as He feels the hurt of their brutality, their coarseness, and their heartlessness. The inhumanity of men was demonstrated in a totally shameful way at the cross. Men of all kinds agreed in rejecting Him, and He felt acutely the grossness of their concerted opposition. Yet there were many shades of antipathy to Him, and we can see here His sensitivity to the various adverse attitudes to Him. This alone must have been an almost insupportable grief for Him; and, as we have noted, the sense of the absence of God's support added immensely to its weight.

The bestiality of men came out into the open in many forms at the cross. Some were like lions, unsparingly cruel and bent on His destruction; others, like bulls, strong and irresistible in their intent to brush Him aside and to cut Him down. There were those that seemed like dogs, unclean and pack-like, snarling their insolence at Him. There were men like wild-oxen (unicorns, A.V.) intent on piercing, wounding and damaging Him, full of malevolence and hatred.

Some were leaders in the action against Him, bull-doing through their own destructive plans. There were spectators too, gaping at Him; many amongst the crowd finding cheap and awful entertainment in observing Him. There were callous people there, hard individuals unmoved by His pain, gambling for small gains at the foot of the cross. Some, like Caiaphas and Annas and the Jewish leaders, were **prime movers** in this dreadful action, though perhaps not in the foreground at the actual crucifixion. They pushed the whole plan through, and their special responsibility for that initiative is not overlooked. Others were drawn in and **carried along** by the crowd; though to be involved in such a mass movement does not exonerate them. Sadly

we have to recognize the faithfulness of this picture of the basic attitude of heart of all mankind towards God and His Christ. None ever felt it so keenly as He did, the Saviour of men, when He bore the brunt of their hatred on that day. Yet the greatest marvel of all is that He died for men of this very kind !

Some of these verses suggest something of His physical sufferings. These are brief allusions to experiences of a most appalling kind. The sense of exposure, pain, and abuse, the acute thirst and the deep degradation He experienced are indicated in a few words. As we come to the close of this section in which the sufferings of our Lord are prominent, it may perhaps be observed that Scripture is restrained and moderate when it speaks of these things. We need to follow its lead here. In the gospels, the plain story of the cross is told in calm factual terms, and the feelings of our Lord are not accentuated. Here, where His feelings are more prominent, brief but profound expressions are used. There is no elaborate appeal to our emotions. These sufferings are too deep for many words ; and there is no room for unguarded or highly-coloured words on such a sacred subject.

The morning

While the significance of the caption to the psalm is not entirely clear, a fair translation of the words left untranslated in the A.V. is "according to the Hind of the Dawn". **Daybreak** certainly lights up the closing verses, and the title seems to provide a glimpse ahead to the turning-point of the psalm. Suddenly the morning breaks after the darkest of sorrows. The Speaker is heard at last ! From unspeakable troubles, the relief for which He had cried so urgently floods into His soul. Joy and triumph sweep away His grief. Soon there is wide recognition of His achievement. Glory and high honour are given to Him Who suffered. The song of the Lamb begins, and swells, but never ends.

These verses assure us of a **full** ultimate response to our Lord. It will come from several different quarters. The verses convey a sense of enthusiasm as they envisage a great **build-up** towards this total response to Him. His fame is seen to spread **out** to the ends of the earth ; and **onwards** too, to generations yet to be born. First mentioned is a circle of close relationship to Himself, of those He is not ashamed to call His brethren, the firstfruits of His death. These He delights to lead in response to the One Whose Name He has revealed to them. This is a present and developing activity, soon to have a great consummation. Then there is a call to fear God directed to the seed of Israel ; and ultimately a response from "the great congregation" is foreseen. The Gentile nations have their place in these verses too. Out to the widest limits the nations are to know about Him ; the proud ones of earth are to be humbled, and will make their contribution in honouring Him. Zeal about the dissemination of the story of what our Lord has done seems to fill these final sentences. May we also be affected by this kind of zeal? Meditation on the dark but glorious story of the cross should certainly move us in this way. Let us continue to learn more of our immeasurable debt to Him, and find ourselves urged towards a worthy response to Him.