

Contents

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. Martin

VITAL VERITIES by E. W. Rogers

PSALM EIGHTY-FOUR

by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD

by J. B. Hewitt

SIGNS OF THE END

by W. J. M'Clure

ENOCH—SEVENTH FROM ADAM

by W. W. Fereday

THE WRITTEN WORD

Selected

COMMITTEE NOTES

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by J. Stewart

Rev. 21.2,21-24. Rev. 22.1-2.
Tune – Deep Harmony.

*Great City of our God and King
Its gates are ever opened wide
With former things then passed away
No evil thing can there abide.*

*River of Life for ever flows
Its source is found in God alone
The Throne of God and of the Lamb
Who for our sins did once atone.*

*The Tree of Life, twelve fruits it bears
In never failing full supply
And all shall live for evermore
Eat of its fruit and never die.*

*No sun or moon to light the way
God's Glory is its only light
For come that one eternal Day
And gone for ever is the night.*

— Henry Porter

EDITOR'S NOTE

What a year this has been! Unexpected changes everywhere. Some for good and some bad. Ungodliness increases, lawlessness abounds. The world is characterised in the words spoken by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, when he prophesied saying "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him"—

UNGODLY PERSONS

UNGODLY DEEDS

UNGODLY CONDUCT

UNGODLY SPEECH

In such a day Enoch prophesied and yet he walked with God and had this testimony that he pleased God.

He prophesied of things that would take place after he had been translated that he should not see death. We too are called to announce terrible judgments take will take place after we have been translated — Maranatha! In the mean time he, by faith, walked with God. He did not walk with the ungodly. His was a path of separation from the mass of the people. But his testimony was not only negative, it was positive for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. In this he was like our Lord He did always those things that pleased the Father we therefore, with the example of Enoch, and the supreme example of our blessed Lord, should likewise seek to walk with God and to please Him.

We expect very soon to be translated. We may may not see this year out. We believe He is coming. Hallelujah!. Let us then, "knowing the time, that it high time, that it is high time to awake out of sleep" seek to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. "He that shall come will come and will not tarry"—May we share Enoch's testimony.

The blessing of the Lord be upon all the dear saints including every reader of the Magazine

With love in the Lord

—A. M. Salway Gooding.

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

Part XI — The Millennial Reign of Christ

In the present dispensation grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5. 21). In the eternal state righteousness will dwell. (2. Pet. 3. 13). But, in the millennial kingdom righteousness will reign.

The kingdom of heaven exists now. (Matt. 13). So also the kingdom of God. (John. 3): and believers are said to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Col. 1.13). God has delivered us from the power of darkness. The prince of darkness no more blinds our eyes to the evil of sin, the curse of the law, the glory of God, the face of Jesus, the preciousness of salvation, For, God "hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." We are out of the kingdom of nature, sin, pride and unbelief. We live under the spiritual reign of Jesus.

Therefore we possess the graces of this kingdom; faith in and love to the Lord of the saints, and "to all the saints" who confess the Son of God, and salvation by Him only. The reign of Christ as King is confined to the millenium. Mary was told concerning Him that "the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David (Luke. 1. 32) It is obvious that this promise has not yet been fulfilled; for when He was presented to the Jews as their Messiah, they would not receive Him, finally crying "We have no King but Caesar" (John. 19. 15). But every word of God must stand, and He will yet be the King of Israel, as the Son of man He inherits still wider glories, "all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan. 7. 27). Israel will be the centre of this universal dominion, and it will be through them that He will govern the nations upon the earth.

First, then, of His throne, which we understand will be consequent upon His appearing, He will act in judgement after the pattern of David; that is, He will judge according to righteousness. Therefore the Psalmist says, "Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgement".

(Psa. 72. 1, 2). He will therefore “gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity”, and “the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one”. (Zech. 14. 9) We have a remarkable scene of this character in Matthew 25. Having established His throne in righteousness, all nations are gathered before Him for judgment. This is connected with His kingdom; “when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations (vv31, 32). It is the only time that our Lord applies the title of King to Himself; “Then shall the King say unto them,” etc., (vv34-40). This shows that the kingdom has been founded . . . marking, in fact, the commencement of His millennial reign. If we examine the features of this period of judgment, it will be manifest that there is no excuse what ever for confounding it with that of the great white throne (Rev. 20) or for deducing from it the once popular idea of a general judgment . . of believers and unbelievers together. It is in fact, a judgment of living nations; there is no scriptural precedent for terming the dead “the nations.” Three classes are apparent here . . . the sheep, the goats and the ‘brethren’ of the king. It is noticeable that the way the nations treated the Kings’ ‘brethren’ becomes the ground of their classification, whether among the sheep, or among the goats. This fact is the key to the whole scene. Who then are the King’s ‘brethren’? Very clearly they must be the Jews His kinsmen according to the flesh, but also His true servants. We find a clue to them in Isaiah 66, in a passage already alluded to. There we find that after the Lord has come in judgment some of the saved are sent to declare His glory among the Gentiles. So in the scene before us, the King’s ‘brethren’ have evidently gone forth as His messengers among the nations, and they are invested with a special place and authority, even as the ambassadors of a sovereign now are clothed with all the honour and dignity of the one they represent. The principle on which they are sent forth is that on which the Lord sent out the twelve disciples, “He that receiveth you receiveth me” (Matt. 10. 40). Then the king says to those on His right, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto me”; and they are made to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. In like manner He says to those on His left,

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me". And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal. (Matt. 25. 34-46).

Thus Christ as King, by the display of His power in righteous judgment, obtains universal dominion; for the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him". (Psa. 72, 10, 11). Having put down all rule and all authority and power, He reigns as Prince of peace. "His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed. (Psa. 72. 17). Leaving the reader to study for themselves in the Psalms and prophets the details of His millennial kingdom, may we point out a few of its leading features.

(a) Jerusalem will recover its former glory: No! its future condition will far surpass the former, as the glory of Christ the King will outshine that of David and Solomon. "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought". (Isa. 60. 10, 11. See also vv. 13-15 & 62. 3). Surely it is fitting that the metropolis of Messiahs kingdom be suited to the worthiness, dignity and glory of the King!

(b) The temple services will be revived in surpassing splendour. (Ezek. 40-46) Some folk have difficulty as to sacrifices being restored; but the problem vanishes when it is remembered that these sacrifices will be connected with an earthly people, and an earthly temple, and will be commemorative in their character. In the old dispensation they had no efficacy whatever, apart from their reference to Christ; for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10. 4) and in the millenium they will look back to that one sacrifice for sin which was offered upon the cross, as those under the Mosaic economy foreshadowed it. They will therefore, but recall to the grateful worshipping hearts of God's people, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.

(c) *All nations will come to Jerusalem to worship:* We read in the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah concerning this event (Read Isa. 2. 2, 3. & Zech. 14. 16).

(d) *The animal creation will share in the peace and blessing of that day:* The wolf and lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. (Isa. 65. 25; see also Isa. 11. 6-9). It is added to the first of these scriptures “And dust shall be the serpents meat”; showing we suppose, that the serpent will be excluded from the deliverance from bondage under which even the brute creation has hitherto groaned.

But as we know, “The creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”. (Rom. 8. 21).

(e) *The curse will be removed from the earth:* When Adam fell the ground was cursed on his account. Whatever the alleviation of this sentence under Noah, it is not completely repealed until the reign of Messiah. The Psalmist sings, “Let the people praise thee O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us”. (Psa. 67. 5, 6). The prophet Amos adds to this theme, (Amos. 9. 14). It is at this time that “the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose, it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God”. (Isa. 35. 1, 2).

(f) *There will be no death, except in the way of judgment, throughout the thousand years.* (Isa. 65. 20). The meaning of this scripture would seem to be, that death will be exceptional, and then only in the way of righteous judgment. The age of Methusalah may not therefore be equalled but even surpassed, in the blessed period of Messiah’s millennial reign.

(g) *All injustice will be instantly redressed:* This is of necessity connected with Messiahs righteous rule .i.e. “He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in His sight”. (Psa. 72. 12-14). Men fondly dream that this is the goal of human enlight-

enment and progress; but they are ignorant of, or forget, the incurable corruption of human nature, and do not consider that even though the whole world were to obtain just and equal laws, they would fail in their administration or application. No! Christ is the only hope for the earth; as for the saint; for "He cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity". (Psa. 98. 9).

(h) But, notwithstanding all these blessed features, *There will be rebellions even under the reign of Christ*. In Psalm 66 we read, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee"; or, as it is in the margin, 'yield feigned obedience! The same phrase is found in another psalm, "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me; as strangers shall submit themselves unto me or yield feigned obedience. (Psa. 18. 44). It would appear from these statements that the display of Christ's power in judgment will be so overwhelming, as it surely will be in the judgment upon the nations assembled against Jerusalem, that many, not bowed in heart, will yet be terrified into the acceptance of His rule.

They will profess subjection while their hearts are alienated from Him; they will be as easily tempted to renounce as to submit to His rule. Accordingly we find that after-perhaps not long after-the establishment of His throne, Gog, with a multitude of followers, "a great company, and a mighty army", comes up against his people Israel, "as a cloud to cover the land". But he comes to meet with immediate and utter destruction, so great and overwhelming that "seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land" (Ezek. 38, 39).

At the close of the millennium there is a larger rebellion, directly attributed to the work of Satan. "And then the thousand years were expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog (not to be confused with the Gog of Ezekiel) *To Gather them to battle*: the number if whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city". (Rev. 20. 7-9) Thus every dispensation closes with failure as a striking testimony to the character and nature of man. Tried in

every way, without law, and under law, under grace, and at last under the personal reign of the Messiah, he shows that he cannot be improved, that flesh remains the same, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, that the carnal mind is enmity with God. The Jews chose a Caesar, yes a Barrabas, in preference to Christ, and finally man accepts Satan himself, and under his leadership goes to attack and destroy "The camp of the saints and the beloved city". that are under the special protection of the glorified Messiah. The outcome could be but one. There remains nothing for God but to vindicate the righteousness of the throne of Christ; and we read of His reply in Revelation. 20vv.9, 10. Thus closes the period of a thousand years. It was introduced in judgment, and it closed with judgment; but, it will yet be the time of earth's blessing and joy. For it should be remembered that Satan is bound at the close of the period, and while flesh remains the same, the power of evil being absent, all the influences to which man is subject will be on the side of Christ. It will be a total reversal of the present state of things; so that the Psalmist may well cry "Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth". (Psa. 96. 11-13).

Ephesians Chapter One, Verse Seven

IN WHOM – THE PERSON.
WE HAVE – THE POSSESSION.
REDEMPTION – THE PURCHASE.
THRO HIS BLOOD – THE PRICE.
THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN – THE PARDON.
ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE
– THE PROVISION.

– (James Neilly)

VITAL VERITIES (13)

by E. W. ROGERS

The Resurrection of the Saints

The subject matter of 1 Corinthians 15 is not the Resurrection of Christ in particular, but resurrection *in general*. It was written because some of the Corinthians asserted that “the dead rise not at all” (v. 12). Paul deals with the matter by

1. Citing a historical case of resurrection (vv. 1-11).
2. Detailing logical deductions from such case (vs. 12-34).
3. Furnishing a prophetic forecast of the future resurrection (vs. 35-end).

THE HISTORICAL CITATION

It is not possible to hold a universal negative while claiming as an exception a single positive; in other words it is not correct to say that “the exception proves the rule,” for as a matter of fact it destroys the rule. If it is possible to show that only one person was raised from the dead, that suffices to establish the general principle of resurrection, which would prove false the contention that there is not such a thing.

Now this Paul does in citing the resurrection of Christ in verses 1-11. He affirms that that resurrection was the subject of *Old Testament prophecy* (“according to the Scriptures”); it was a matter of *actual accomplishment*, attested by over five hundred and thirteen witnesses, most of whom were alive and available for confirmation of the fact in the day when Paul wrote (indeed, Paul himself had seen Him and so was not dependent on second-hand information) it was the subject of *Apostolic preaching*, and it was the subject of the *Corinthian faith*, unless, Paul adds, “ye believed in vain,” that is, unless they believed not taking though as to whether what they believed was true or not, which it was incredible to suppose.

“RESURRECTION” was not an idea of Paul’s innovation: it

was in the Scriptures. It was not a wild fancy impossible of realisation; it was an historic accomplishment. That being so, Paul reached it when at Corinth, and the evidence being so convincing, the Corinthians had believed it.

LOGICAL DEDUCTIONS

In verses 12 to 34 Paul makes certain logical deductions. An examination of verses 12-19 will reveal that there are seven deductions on the supposition that there is no resurrection. If the errorists are correct, then:

1. Christ has *not been raised*, for the exception cannot be held if the universal rule is true.
2. Paul's *preaching was vain*, there was nothing in it.
3. Resultant thereon, the Corinthians' *faith was vain*, it was equally empty.
4. A more serious aspect of the matter is that the apostles had become *false witnesses of God* in attributing an action to Him which never occurred.
5. Moreover, instead of faith being effectual in securing for the believer the removal of his sins, they were "*yet in their sins*," if Christ was still in the grave; their faith was vain.
6. Furthermore, those that had "*fallen asleep*" had perished.
7. Paul and his associates were of *all men the most to be pitied*, for they had lost the good things of this life on the supposition that there was another which was a delusion, "*if the dead rise not at all*."

Thus the error affected God, Christ, the apostles and the Corinthians.

In vs. 20-28,

CLEAR DECLARATIONS

consequent upon the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead are stated. They may be stated thus:

1. That Christ is the *firstfruits* of them that sleep, that is, He is the first from Whom all the harvest of risen believers is to take its stamp.

That His resurrection is the guarantee of the *resurrection of all others*, believers and unbelievers alike. The word "all" in verse

22 is co-extensive in each of its two occurrences: all Adam's race were affected by the first Adam: all Adam's race will be affected by the last Adam and because He was raised, all others will be raised. That there are differences in the order the following verses teach, but the fact is universally true.

3. The ultimate issue will be the *abolition of death* itself. Death is that state of dissolution wherein the soul and spirit of man are separate from the body. The abolition of death for any individual is the reunion of the soul and spirit with the body. That is resurrection. When this is accomplished for all, death as a principle will be totally abolished. The Lord Jesus by His own resurrection "abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light." Thus the foundation was laid: v. 26 of this chapter speaks of the final issue. Believers, in resurrection bodies, will spend eternity with Christ; unbelievers raised will spend eternity with Satan.

POINTED APPEALS

In vs. 29-33 the Apostle appeals to the Corinthians interrogatively thus: if there is no resurrection, what can be the *significance of baptism*, since the emergence of the candidate from water denotes resurrection? If there is no such thing, what can such emergence mean? (v.29).

Again, why are we in jeopardy every hour? Why do we risk our lives and lose our earthly comforts if there is nothing beyond?

Such "evil communications" (v.33) would corrupt all the good manners and customs inculcated by the belief in resurrection and its issues; while the reception of such a false doctrine reveals the Corinthians to have been asleep. Therefore Paul enjoins them to "awake righteously and sin not" (v.34). To doubt the possibility of the resurrection betrays the fact that the doubter "knows not God," with Whom all things are possible. The opposition of Science does *not* hold the field when the power of God is owned.

PROPHETIC FORECAST

From v. 33 to the end of the chapter the Apostle furnishes a prophetic forecast. His double question, "How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?" is answered in the

reverse order v.s 35-49 dealing with the “body,” and 50 to the end with the “how?”

Illustrations are drawn from botany, biology, and astronomy, showing that “nature itself teacheth” such a thing as resurrection. As the flower is infinitely more beautiful than the grain, so the resurrection body will be related to the former, but excel in glory for it will be “fashioned like unto His body of glory.” As the flesh of men, birds, beasts and fishes all differ, so the resurrection body will differ from the natural body which is now the habitation of the earthly life. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.” As the sun, moon and stars differ from each other, and as each star differs the one from the other in glory, so, too, is the resurrection of the dead. *Related to, different from, better than* the earthly body will the resurrection body be.

Weakness, dishonour, corruption marked the natural: strength, glory, incorruption will mark the spiritual. It will take its mark from the last Adam, the Lord from Heaven; and as He is from Heaven, so, too, the body that shall be will be a Heavenly one as the first one was earthly.

But how will this be? This is just the question the rationalist and the scientist ask. Paul in reply says that a *change is essential*, since flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom. Moreover, he adds that a *change is certain*. “Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (v.51). The sleeping believer whose body has been corrupted will be raised incorruptible. The living believer whose body is mortal will assume immortality. These two things will be effected in the minutest conception of time at the moment known only to God. Then death will have been finally conquered: then sin, its cause, will have been altogether removed, and the risen Christ Who, by His death and resurrection, conquered these things potentially, will then be seen by all to be the Victor over them actually.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast” of your own will “immovable” when others seek to impose their will on you, “always abounding” (not casually engaging in) “the work of the Lord,” knowing that there is a resurrection when all such labour will be rewarded.

PSALM EIGHTY-FOUR

by E. R. BOWER

Part 1

As you and I read (or sing) those poems which make up our hymn books, do we ever stop to consider that many of them are born of the deep spiritual experiences of their writers, and that in many cases behind their spiritual experiences are the life experiences — the joys and sorrows, the sweetness and bitterness of the journey or life? If we have not considered this, then perhaps we should give more attention to what we sing!

This is also true of the hymn book of the Bible — that collection of sacred songs that we know as the Psalms, for in them, too, is a record of the spiritual longings and experiences drawn from the waters of the well of life. Here are written the hopes and fears, the sunshine and the shadow of godly, and yet human, men.

Just as we give titles or tunes to our hymns, so did the psalmists, and it may be that some of us like to give our own titles to our favourite Psalms; Psalms like Psalm 23 for instance — the Shepherd Psalm; the Nightingale Psalm; the Pearl of Psalms and so on.

Psalm 84 has its own title, but the writer of these notes likes to think of it in at least three different ways—

The Psalm of a Great Happiness.

The Psalm of a Great Longing.

The Psalm of an Attained Goal.

It is a Pilgrim Psalm and is closely linked with Psalms 42 and 43, for instance the phrase “the living God” occurs frequently in the O. T. but just twice in the Psalms, here (v.2) and 42.2. Psalms 42 and 43 might be thought of as the frustrations to a pilgrimage and Psalm 84 as Journey’s End. The goal had been reached.

VERSE 1. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.”

It is rather a pity that the newer versions have seen fit to replace the “amiable” of the A.V. — a word which is neither

'obscure' or 'archaic' — in favour of such words as 'lovable', 'beloved'. The Hebrew word is a plural of quality rather than quantity, and appears in the title of Psalm 45 as a Song of Loves. Not the song of individual 'loves' but of 'surpassing love'. A more complete meaning of 'amiable' is "pleasant; friendly; desirable; worthy of praise, love, esteem to possession." Has our own particular place of gathering all these qualifications? Is our desire toward the place where the "called out ones" gather? Not so much to the 'place' (although this, in itself, is important) but to the Lord and those members of His body who gather there.

It is also to be regretted that the versions have replaced the plural 'tabernacles' with the singular. It is difficult to understand why. The thoughts of the Psalmist were not confined to a single tabernacle or a single temple, either on earth or in his spiritual objective, heaven itself. When David determined to build a house for the Lord his God, the message that he received from God through the prophet way, "I have not dwelt in an house . . . but have gone from tent to tent and from one tabernacle to another" Chron. 17.5, and did not our Lord encourage His own when He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions (or, 'abiding places')? (John 14). It may be somewhat trite to say that bricks and mortar do not constitute a church, yet, nevertheless, a building in a Christian connotation is a meeting place for believers, not just to meet with one another but with God Himself, or perhaps more correctly where God meets with us. Note: Young's concordance defines the meeting as "by appointment". Every time and in every place where believers meet, be the meeting in a mud hut or a splendid building, they gather to the Lord in His Name; when they sit at His table and share the emblems of the bread and the wine, they "meet" the Lord. Thus every meeting place becomes a "tabernacle"—a facsimile of the whole, for where even the "two or three" gather together in our Lord's Name, He is in the midst (Matt. 18. 20). The local "tabernacle" is a place of meeting; a tent of meeting and of witness. An empty church, (in both meanings of the word) bears no witness, unless it be to the spiritual poverty of its absent members. To take these thoughts a step further, "know ye not" asked the Apostle Paul, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 2. 16). Thus

we ourselves are tabernacles of the living God; tents of witness.

The title “Lord of hosts” — Jehovah saboath — draws attention to the greatness of the One Who dwells within the tabernacles. He is first of all, Jehovah, He Who was, is and will be; (Ex. 3. 16) the Eternal God; the God of eternity. Then He is the Lord of hosts; God of the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 17. 45); God of the hosts of Heaven — the principalities and powers of which the Apostle speaks (Col. 1. 16. See Luke 2. 13; Heb. 1. 1-14). The pilgrim does not travel alone!

VERSE 2. “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the Living God.”

The Hebrew word for ‘longeth’ suggests a strong emotion; the pilgrim grows pale and fails (not faints) at the thoughts of the courts of the Lord. Body, soul and spirit cried out — sang for joy!—The pilgrim’s daily prayer was undoubtedly the Schema (Deut. 6. 4), “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . soul . . . might” and we think of how our Lord used these same words, but substituting ‘mind’ for ‘might’ and adding, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. (Matt. 22. 37—39).

The plurals of these verses are dismissed by some as “poetic language” and, in this particular verse, insist that there is no need to distinguish between the various courts. This may be true so far as it goes, but it must be remembered that the courts about the sanctuary were the “courts of My holiness”, or “My holy courts”. (Is. 62. 9). See Deut. 12. 7-15; 14. 23-26; 16. 11-14; and see, too, how the Psalmists view the “courts of the Sanctuary”. They were the place of Blessing or Happiness, and of the Chosen. (Ps. 65. 4:); the place where the righteous were “planted” (Ps. 92); the place to which the offerings were brought (Ps. 96. 8). See Is. 62. 8-9; Deut. 14, 22-27). This was “before the Lord.” The courts were place of praise (Ps. 100. 4); the place where vows were paid and the place of thanksgiving (Ps. 116. 17-19); the place of service (Ps. 135. 105); and the place of prayer (Luke 1. 8-22). No wonder that the pilgrim was overcome as he entered into the courts of the Lord. How suggestive is the definition of a ‘court’! A place that is walled around. Not only is God in the midst (Ps. 46. 4-5;—notice the plural ‘tabernacles’) but He is also a wall

about His people (Is. 26. 1). Cf. Matt. 18. 20. The pilgrim, body, soul and spirit, bubbles over with joy as he sings to the Living God. Think of those lovely words in 2 Chron. 29. 27, "And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also." Read the whole chapter to appreciate the scene in the Temple courts and then jump the centuries to the vision of the apostle John as he sees that glorious heavenly vision of Heaven, and hears the "new song", sees the ascending incense, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." (Rev. 5) As we have, in these opening verses, sensed something of the happiness of the tabernacles and of the courts of the Lord there is, in the mind's eye of the present writer, a picture of the pilgrim going up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles — the Feast of the Ingathering; of the turn of the year; of lights. A feast of sheer happiness and joy which fell at the time of the autumnal New Year. To gain a picture of this feast read the following Scriptures. Ex. 23. 16; Lev. 23. 39—44; Num. 29. 12—40; Deut. 16. 13-17; Neh. 8; Zech. 14. 16-21; John. 7. 2;

VERSE 3. "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of hosts. My King, and my God."

We have tried to imagine the scene in the Temple courts (Luke 1. 18-22; 2 Chron. 29; for instance) at the time of the morning and of the evening sacrifice and perhaps we can also imagine the waiting people, the priestly blessing (Num. 6. 22-27) and — the chattering chirp of the omnipresent sparrows upon the temple eaves, and the twittering, whirling flight of the migrant swallow. Does in the pilgrim here express his own feelings as he prays? Here was his nest; his dwelling place. Did our Lord have something of this in mind when He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . "? Ah, yes. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father Ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Matt. 10. 29-31;)

VERSE 4. "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy House; they will be still praising Thee." Selah.

This is the first of the three blessings or happinesses of the Psalm, as against just 26 occurrences in the Psalter, hence it is

happiness that is stamped upon the Psalm. What is the reason for this happiness? They, happy pilgrims, were dwelling in the House of the Lord (Ps. 23. 6), and their occupation? Just PRAISE.

The journey was behind the pilgrim; the troubles and trials of the way were no more. As he had praised his God during the journey, so he would continue to praise Him "for ever and for ever". Amen.

VERSE 5. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." (or, "in whose heart are the paths or highways (to Zion").

The first blessing was the blessing of the HOUSE . This second blessing is the blessing of the HEART. Happy indeed the pilgrim who has gained strength and guidance for the way! Ps. 119. 11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" and we quote our Lord's words concerning Himself, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." (John 14. 6), and the Apostle Paul has a word for the pilgrim, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Eph. 6. 10). — *to be continued.*

THE SOLITARY WAY

There is a mystery in human hearts, and though we be encircled by a host of those who love as well and are beloved, to every one of us, from time to time, there comes a sense of utter loneliness. Our dearest friend is stranger to our pain and cannot realize our bitterness. There is not one who really understands, not one to enter into all I feel. Such is the cry of each of us, in turn we wander in a solitary way. No matter what or where our lot may be, each heart, mysterious even to itself must live its inner life in solitude. And would you know the reason why this is? It is because the Lord desires our love. In every heart He wishes to be first. He therefore keeps the secret key Himself to open all its chambers, and to bless with perfect sympathy and holy peace, each solitary soul which come to Him. So when we feel this loneliness, it is the voice of Jesus saying, "Come to Me." And every time we are not understood, it is another call to us to come. For Christ alone can satisfy, the soul and those who walk with Him; from day to day, can never have a solitary way. —*Anthony Orsini (U.S.A.)*

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

4—THE REVELATION TO UTTER DISMAY

John 20. 19-23; Luke 24. 36-48

On this Easter evening the disciples saw the complacency of their Lord. They were badly frightened, very disturbed and, sorrowful enough, hard of heart. The Lord manifests Himself to every variety of need and in all sorts of places. These saints were terrified when the Lord appeared to them. They had reached the ultimate depths of fear and hopelessness and despair (Luke 24. 37). “Then came Jesus” (John 20. 19). He was still the centre of their lives and they still loved Him.

HE BROUGHT ASSURANCE (v.19)

Assured of His presence — “in the midst”, yes for pardon (ch. 19. 18); for peace (20. 19) and for power (v.22); the power of new life proceeding from the Risen Lord. The assurance of peace. Having brought peace by His blood, (Col. 1. 20). He now brought it right into the upper room. His greeting brought reassurance and replaced their fear with faith (Luke 24. 38, 40), bringing peace and safety. His Assuring Scars (v. 19, 20) His familiar voice and the scars in hands and side gave them abundant proof that “it is I myself”. Peace was proclaimed. He disentangled their thinking about Himself, straightened out their problems for them. There was identity — they saw Him, corporally —they handled Him, and reality — watched Him eat.

HE GIVE THEM AUTHORITY (John 20. 22-23)

Divine life and power were imparted and they were commissioned by their Master. They were despatched under His authority, He sent them out with all the power of heaven behind them. Their mission had already begun, he had commissioned them (v.21) and endued them (v.22) and promised them success in His business (v. 23).

“These words are the charter of the Christian Church, They

define its mission; they confirm its authority, they reveal its life.” Bishop Westcott.

“As the Father hath sent me” (v. 21). The Lord speaks of His mission as present and not past, as continuing and not as concluded. What a transformation was wrought in the disciples of this first Easter Day. Death had been defeated, they had received forgiveness and peace; they had felt the breath of divine life and entrusted with a supernatural message. They knew the consciousness of the unchanged love of their Master, His living sympathy, and His sovereign majesty.

The commission was given to the whole company present; not to the Apostles alone. The commission and the power have never been revoked and it is our responsibility to carry the message of the Gospel to a needy world.

HE GAVE THEM APPREHENSION (Luke 24. 45)

The disciples had doubt, despondency, and despair and needed a glimpse of the Risen Lord.

HE DISPELLED THEIR FEARS (v. 37, 38)

This is one of the most remarkable appearances of the Risen Christ. They are cheered by His greeting, “Peace be yours” (v. 36); and chided for their anxiety — why troubled? (v. 38a). He comforted their hearts but they were not yet convinced or at rest.

HE DIRECTED THEM TO HIMSELF (v. 39, 40)

“It is I myself”. He gave them proof by a demonstration of the reality of His person (Acts 1. 3). The familiar tone of His voice, the opportunity to handle Him and His pierced feet were abundant evidence that He was not a spirit. Occupation with Himself is the antidote to fear and despair (Psa. 27. 4,5).

HE DELIGHTED THEIR HEARTS (v. 41-45)

With His companionship, standing in their midst, and bestowing peace (v. 36). This brought them comfort, joy and confidence (v. 41). His communication of truth gave them a new Bible. He disentangled their thinking about Himself, and straightened out their problems (1 Cor. 2. 10-13). He opened their eyes to see the fascinating theme, Christ in all the Scriptures. Have you had this thrilling experience as you meditate on His Word? (Psa. 45. v. 1).

Note these lessons:—

The presence of Christ is the guarantee of real and enduring peace (v. 36). Panic and anxiety are dispelled with Christ in the midst (John 20. 20). A “spirit” may frighten but the Holy Spirit will comfort our hearts and glorify Christ (v. 38). Our Lord can always be identified by the scars of Calvary on His Person (v. 39-41).

Meditate on this thrilling chapter and obtain help from God each day to live and serve the sovereign Lord. The resurrection is vital (v. 1-12); the conversation was helpful (v.13-32); the revelation was valuable (v.33,34) the benediction was personal (v.36, 37), the identification was unmistakable (v. 39), the provision was acceptable (v. 42, 43), the interpretation was infallible (v. 44-46); the proclamation is universal (v. 47-49), the reception is eternal (v. 50,51) and our adoration is joyful (v. 52, 53).

“Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou doest love,
And do what Thou would’st do.

Breathe on me Breath of God
Till I am wholly Thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire Divine.”

In the Scriptures we have the great principle of believing—receiving. This is axiomatic. This principle underlies all the eight words that every Gospel preacher must use over and over again.

1. “Look” — *receiving with the eyes.*
2. “Come” — *receiving with the feet.*
3. “Take” — *receiving with the hands.*
4. “Taste” — *receiving with the lips.*
5. “Hear” — *receiving with the ears.*
6. “Choose” — *receiving with the will.*
7. “Trust” — *receiving with the heart.*
8. “Know” — *receiving with the mind.*

—A. T. Pierson.

SIGNS OF THE END (3)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

*(These articles appeared in 1918 in the Believers' Magazine.
How much more relevant now!)*

GREAT and sudden changes in national and political life will evidently mark "the time of the end." Events, which in the ordinary routine of things would be reckoned to require long years to accomplish, will be speedily brought to pass. For God, who lingers over men in the time of grace, will make "a short work" (Rom. 9. 28) of His judgement in righteousness. The present speedy overthrow of great Empires and powerful Nations may well prepare us for rapid and great changes in the countries out from which the ten kingdoms of the coming Roman Empire will arise. For example, should a result of the present war be, that some portion of the German Empire which originally belonged to the Roman Empire, should break away from Prussia, and Prussia and Russia (neither of which formed part of the ancient Roman Empire) become allies, Russia's millions, thoroughly Prussianised, would become such a menace to Europe, that a confederation of ten kingdoms under one head, would commend itself to men as the only safe course. And if some military genius should arise among the Allies, the combination would quickly be accomplished. Thus God would cause to be fulfilled His own prophecy, as He has fulfilled so many in the past, allowing the wars and policies of men to work out His purposes.

THE JEW.—In the "fig tree" mentioned in Scripture we have a type of Israel as a *nation*. We find this tree in three places and conditions in the Gospels. First, in Luke 13. 6:9 the nation is seen under suspended sentence for fruitlessness. Second, in Matt. 21. 18-20, the sentence has been executed, the tree is blasted and withered. For over eighteen centuries this has been the condition of Israel as a nation. Third, in Matt. 24. 32, 33, the fig tree is seen "putting forth" its leaves. Surely this condition is appearing among the Jews. After their long winter of *national* lifelessness,

the Jew is turning his eyes to Palestine, and we hear of Jewish Congresses and Conferences. These may be "the leaves," which at present events indicate, they have begun to "put forth."

Simultaneous with this revival of national life of the Jew, is Great Britain's altered attitude toward Turkey. About sixty years ago, she fought to bolster up Turkey, now she is fighting to drive her out of Europe and out of Palestine. And while we may see some temporary backsets, it will be done. Why this change? We look beyond men's changes of policies and cabinets, and see the hand of God at work. His "set time" had not come in the middle of the last century. Now, the hours of the Turk's dominion over the Holy Land seem numbered, and as soon as he is driven from the sacred soil, shall see a separate Jewish state set up. Men are speaking of this to-day, as they are speaking of the "United States of Europe."

It is not only possible, but probable, that we shall see both set up, ere we go up "to meet the Lord in the air." For although the conversion of the Jewish remnant will not take place till after the church has gone, they will return to their land in unbelief. And it will be while there, that their eyes shall be opened to see in the once-crucified Jesus of Nazareth, their Messiah and their Hope.

Of all the signs—present signs of the end—that are appearing, we believe this in connection with the Jew is the plainest, and that it ought to speak most loudly to us. Their newly quickened hopes cannot be realised fully until we are gathered unto Christ in the heavens. But if we see these things shaping themselves, how near must His coming be for which we wait. And how many of us may well be rebuked by the words of the Lord in Matt.16. 3, "Ye cannot discern the signs of the times." Worldliness has blinded the eyes of so many, earthly things have so obscured the Hope of the most, that His coming will be an unexpected surprise, instead of an event looked for, longed for, and heralded as "near, even at the doors," even among those who are the true children of God, and of those who will be "alive and remain" in mortal flesh, in the hour that the gathering "shout" of the returning Lord is heard. May the Lord awake His people to the solemnity of the time, and cause His watchers to trim their lamps and be ready.

Enoch—Seventh from Adam

by W. W. Fereday

The fourth chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Thessalonians suggest Enoch to our minds as we read it. In v. 16 the Apostle speaks of saints being translated that they shall not see death, and in v. 1, he tells us that while we wait for the great change we should walk and please God, abounding in this more and more. Three thousand years after Enoch had left the world, the Holy Spirit testified of him that he pleased God. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had the testimony that he had pleased God" Heb. 11. 5 (Darby).

In what way God made known to His servant His intention to remove him from earth to heaven without seeing death, we are not told, nor how He gave Enoch the joy of knowing that his ways gave Him pleasure. In the early ages of the world when there were no Bibles in circulation God sometimes spoke audibly to men. In Gen. 18, we have an example of this. How familiarly God communicated His thoughts to Abraham, and how graciously He listened to His servant's intercession!

The Scriptures are with us now, blessedly complete. God indited them during twenty-five centuries, using many penmen, varied in character, but all Divinely qualified to convey His thoughts to us without flaw. Mighty Kings, humble fishermen, and a farm-labourer were scribes who, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, have united to give us a matchless volume, harmonious in all its parts, the latest production being incomplete without the earliest, no incongruity whatever being found in them. In the Scriptures God's ways in grace and in government, with individuals and with nations are spread out before us, telling us not only of the past, but also of the final issues leading up to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who ponder these Divine unfoldings have wisdom impossible for burdened statesmen who know not God. Both earth and heaven are in view in the Scriptures. The eternal counsels of love, which centre in Christ

and the Church, are set before us filling our hearts with heavenly hope. The whole book of God is intended for our contemplation and study, and we should render willing obedience to both its principles and its injunctions. In this way we learn how to walk and please God. In times more difficult than Enoch ever knew, knowledge is placed within our reach beyond anything that Enoch ever imagined. Do we store our souls to the uttermost with what God has given to us? If the excuse be advanced that these closing days of the world's history are very strenuous, leaving little time for spiritual meditation, the reply must be that Enoch was no recluse. During 365 years of earthly life, he begat sons and daughters (Gen. 5. 22). His family was doubtless larger than any of our readers are called to face, with great responsibilities for training, education, etc. Moreover dark judgment-clouds were hanging over the earth which burdened Enoch's spirit. Jude, in his short Epistle tells us that he testified solemnly to the ungodly concerning what was coming. Yet, with family responsibilities and the duty of witnessing for God, he walked with God, and before his translation he had the testimony that he had pleased God. With much greater privileges, the greatest of which is the in-dwelling of the Spirit, and with the whole revelation of God in our hands, "what manner of persons ought we go to be in all holy conversation and godliness"? (2 Peter 3. 11).

Love solves the question how we may please God. In our healthy earthly relationship where love reigns there is desire to give pleasure, and carefulness never to cause grief and pain. One of the greatest truths of Holy Scripture is that we are Divinely loved. If we enjoy the love of the Father and the Son, ministered to us by the Holy Spirit, and respond there to, we shall long to be wholly obedient in our walk and testimony. When the commandments of our Lord come before us we shall keep them in reverent obedience, and the love of both the Father and the Son will flow out toward us in a special way; and if we keep the word in its entirety the Father and the Son will make their abode with us. In this is a lovely picture of walking and pleasing God, depicted by the Lord Jesus in John 14. 21-23. Let us cultivate simplicity and guilelessness towards God while we await the welcome shout that will call us up into Heavenly glory, our eternal home.

—(*Reprinted from Believer's Magazine*)

The Written Word

The word of God is all “pure,” all “tried,” it all testifies of Jesus. Seek to realize that it is God’s word; that He means what He says, and would have you believe what He says, not because you feel it, but because He says it. Very often we are looking for an inward revelation, an inward voice or feeling, instead of simply believing the written word of our God, and Satan thus gets a great advantage over us. How strikingly are we taught the value of the word in our conflicts with Satan in Ephesians vi., where the armour of God is described. Our girdle is to be “truth.” “Thy word is truth.” Our feet are to be shod with the “preparation of the gospel of peace.” This gospel of peace is the “word of faith,” the word of God. (Rom. 10.15-18.) We are to take the “shield of faith;” this also is the word. “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” (Ps. 91.4.) It is by this shield that we “shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Again, the “sword of the spirit is the word of God.” It was in this armour our Lord met Satan when on earth, and triumphed over him. May be strong in His strength, and clad with the panoply of God.

“It is written” is the word of faith, hope, victory, and power. Be not tempted to look inward for peace, it can only be enjoyed by resting simply upon the written testimony of the word of God. Desire not to have an inward answer, “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee,” apart from the written word. This is a very common and dangerous mistake. It tends so greatly to lessen the value and authority of the scriptures.

If you had come to Jesus when personally present, casting yourself—as you do now that He is bodily absent—upon His grace and love, you would have heard His spoken word “Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee;” but in His absence you have His written word, which declares “By him all that believe are justified from all things.” “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” Indeed, this is the very object of the Holy Ghost in the written word. “These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing

ye might have life through His name." (John xx.31.) "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye might know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 John v.13.

Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul,
Guilty, lost and helpless, Thou canst make me whole—
There is none in heaven, or on earth like Thee!
Thou hast died for sinners, therefore, Lord for me.

Jesus, I may trust Thee! Name of matchless worth,
SPOKEN by the angel, at Thy wondrous birth;
WRITTEN, and for ever, on Thy cross of shame,—
Sinners, read and worship, trusting in that Name.

Jesus, I must trust Thee, pondering Thy ways,
Full of love and mercy, all Thine early days—
Sinners gathered round Thee, lepers sought Thy face,
None too vile or loathsome for a SAVIOUR'S grace.

Jesus, I can trust Thee, trust Thy WRITTEN word—
Though Thy voice of pity I have never heard—
When Thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet,
Only, may I hearken, sitting at Thy feet.

Jesus, I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt,
"Whosoever cometh, Thou wilt not cast out"—
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood,
These my soul's salvation, Thou my saviour God.

—Selected.

Our editor, A.M.S. Gooding has recently changed his home. His new address is :

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COMMITTEE NOTES

In a day of spiritual lethargy it behoves us to take to ourselves the Lord's advice to Sardis, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain," (Rev. 3.2). It is all too easy to settle down in this world, lose hold on eternal things and begin to drift, all the while professing our supposed spirituality.

We find illustrations of such a state throughout the Scriptures.

- a) Samson, "he wist not that the Lord was departed from him," Judges 16.20,— ignorance regarding DEPARTURE.
- b) Ephraim, "gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not," Hosea 7.9. — ignorance regarding DECAY.
- c) The supposed parents of the Lord Jesus, "the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they supposing Him to have been in the company, went a days journey;" Luke 2.43,44 — ignorance regarding DEFICIENCY.
- d) Laodecia, "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" Rev. 3. 17 — ignorance regarding DEARTH.

The antidote for such a spiritual state is to be constantly watchful — 1 Cor. 16.13 "watch ye, standfast in the faith," Col. 4.2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving," 1 Thess. 5.6, "let us watch and be sober," 1 Peter 4.7. "be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." Also, as we come to the end of this dispensation of grace, the injunction of Matt. 24.42 is very apt, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

We would, therefore, enjoin on all our readers to search everyone their own hearts, detect the seeds of departure, uproot the growth of such seeds and return to a state of spiritual alertness and diligence.

We trust the continued publication of the magazine is helpful to the end that our spirituality is increased.

It would be impossible to continue without the help of our editor and his assistant, our Secretary and accountant and to them all we record our thanks. The willing help of those who take time to write articles and the encouragement received from those who write of their appreciation is gratefully acknowledged. It is always necessary to state for the benefit of new readers that the magazine is not subsidised in any way but is wholly supported by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people, through whom the Lord meets every need. No remuneration, gifts or expenses whatsoever goes to any who share in the work.

Finally we solicit the continued prayers of all the saints so that we may be enabled to continue faithfully "till He come."

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (11)

by J. Stewart (Trinidad)

MY CONVERSION

In my earliest years, I was taught according to the strict tenets of a popular so-called church, being sometimes reprimanded if I whistled on "The Sabbath."

My father died when I was five years old, and some years later we moved to another area, where I was sent along to Ballynashee Gospel Hall Sunday School, where I began to learn from the scriptures, that I was a sinner who needed a Saviour to fit me for heaven, which I could never reach by my own good works, as previously, but erroneously taught.

During successive series of gospel meetings, I learned four things which made deep impressions on my young mind:

- (1) That Genesis 6:3(a), was still true in my day and generation;
- (2) That only saved ones would be caught up to meet the Lord when He came to call away His blood-bought people;
- (3) The tragedy of making a false profession;
- (4) The danger of procrastination.

These solemn facts were constantly emphasised by preachers then, but the thought of the Lord's return caused more concern than anything else. A bright spot appearing in a clouded sky was watched with some dread and anxiety, also the thought of the Spirit of God ceasing to strive with me was often in my mind.

A Scotsman called Duncan Montgomery came to Ballynashee on several occasions for special gospel meetings, and these always deepened conviction, and when he visited our home, he always seemed to take a special interest

in me, and spoke to me faithfully about my need of the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour. During one of his visits to our area, a point was reached in my experience when I felt convinced that, as far as I was concerned, it was now, or never, for God's salvation. On 22nd. October, 1925, I was at home from school, so, under deep conviction of sin, and fearing lest I should make a false profession if someone tried to show me how I could be saved, I took my New Testament, without my mother's knowledge, and went to the barn about 10.00. a.m., where I knelt down, and asked God to show me how I could be saved. I rose to my feet, opened my New Testament, scanned some pages until my attention was focussed on words I had never seen before, so I read: "that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." How had God answered that childish prayer? He had, by the Holy Spirit, and by the holy scriptures, presented to my anxious soul, the Person of Christ in His death and resurrection, and what could I do only trust Him there and then? I closed the New Testament, knelt again where I had knelt a few minutes earlier, and thanked God for saving my soul while I was alone with Him, without any human help or advice. This fact assured me that I had not made a false profession, and the years which have passed from then till now have proved that that conclusion was correct. But immediately after I trusted Christ, and had thanked God for His salvation, I had a problem: where was that verse I had read? so I spent a while searching, until I found it in Acts 26:23. Since then, that is the most precious verse in the New Testament to me, and the old barn, still standing, is the most precious spot on the face of the earth, because both are inseparably, irreversibly linked with my soul's salvation. I need hardly say that Mr. Montgomery was very pleased when he learned that I was saved, and, as a faithful soul-winner, he continued to write to me for some years until the Lord called him home. And his letters? Scripture after scripture, from start to finish, seeking to guide the young lamb through the green pastures of God's word. I still have one

of those letters, dated 14th. January, 1927, written after I was baptised one week later. "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day." Acts 26:22.

MY CALL

During the years which intervened between my conversion, and my call to the mission field, opportunities to preach the gospel on Lord's Day evenings increased until most weekends were occupied in this work. In later years, Mr. W. J. Wells, and Mr. John Thompson asked me to join them in several series of gospel meetings, some of which continued for many weeks. During this period I was engaged in normal secular employment. Unknown to me, those meetings were equipped me for future full-time service for God. In the early 1960's, we lived near Dunmurry, and were in happy assembly fellowship there. During the summer months, each year, the Dunmurry brethren held an open air meeting in a large housing estate on the outskirts of their village. On Monday, 10th June, 1968, while one such meeting was in progress, a resident used his lawnmower very energetically in, what to me, seemed a determined effort to interrupt the preaching of the gospel.

At about 5.30 next morning, 11th. June, 1968, while engaged in morning prayer before leaving for work, the open air meeting of the previous night was remembered, including the interruption by the man with the lawnmower, so, with the possibility of a different venue being chosen for next week's meeting, I asked the Lord, "Where can be found interested souls waiting for the gospel," and in an instant, the words flashed through my mind, "West Indies, Trinidad." That was a quick, and totally unexpected answer to my prayer, when I had nothing only local interests in mind, but it was so personal that I felt I could not ignore it. What should I do? How could the genuineness of that call be confirmed? I did not tell one human being about it, not even my wife, for ten months, but quietly waited upon the Lord, neither asking him to send me to Trinidad, nor to keep me at home. The final issue was left entirely in His hands, the final decision must be His. By the end of ten months, the Divine confirmation reached a point where it

would have been more difficult to stay in Northern Ireland, than to respond to the call, and sail for Trinidad, so I told my wife and children what had happened, and there was not one word of disagreement there. Next, I told the Dunmurry elders, and asked them to pray well about the matter before making their decision known to me, as I was prepared to abide by their decision, either way. At the end of two weeks, they asked me to meet them again, when they told me that they unanimously agreed to give me the right hand of fellowship, and to commend me to do the Lord's work in Trinidad. One brother said they felt honoured to do so. When all formalities were eventually completed, we sailed from Belfast in mid March, and arrived in Trinidad at 12.30 a.m. on the 1st. April, 1970. Since then, the course of events has confirmed the genuineness of both the conversion, and the call. We lay all the honour humbly at HIS feet.

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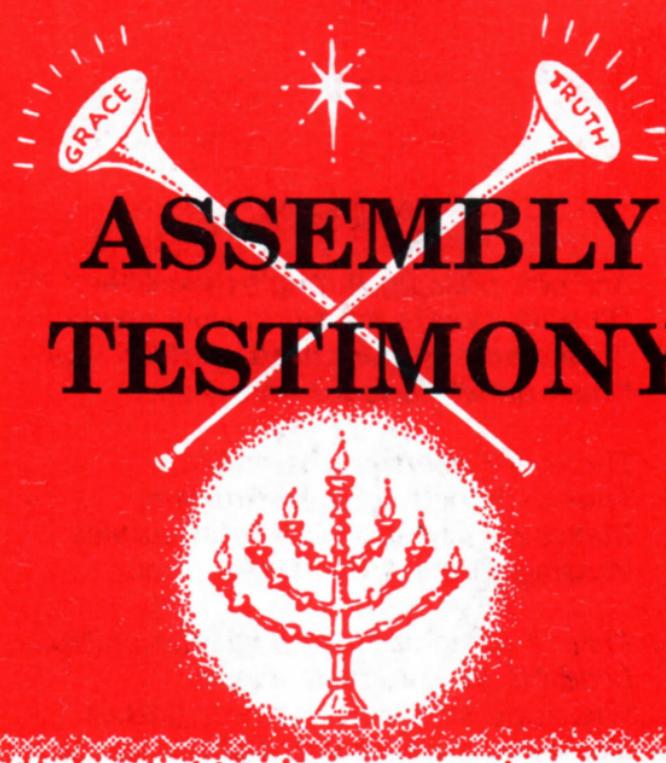
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Contents

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. Martin

VITAL VERITIES by E. W. Rogers

PSALM EIGHTY-FOUR

by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD

by J. B. Hewitt

I PETER 1. 1-11

by N. McDonald

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS

by W. J. McClure

FAITH TESTED

Selected

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by J. Heading

VALLEYS

*Are you passing through the valley,
Do dark clouds surround your way;
Cast down, in mind and spirit?
Kneel down, look up and pray.*

*There are rivers in the valley,
That will soothe the weary feet;
Blessings flow from every streamlet
Passing through the desert heat.*

*There's a highway through the valley,
Leading on to higher heights;
Where no storm clouds ever gather
'Tis there we take our flight.*

*There's a blessing in the valley,
Although tears may gently flow;
Learn to trust the loving Saviour
For Himself alone doth know.*

*There is joy beyond the valley
Soon the day star will appear;
Calling all to scenes of glory
For His coming draweth near.*

*Then farewell to all dark valleys,
Glory shineth on before;
And the days of earth's deep sorrows
Will be hushed forever more.*

— R. Magill, Belfast.

THE BLESSED HOPE

by D. M. MARTIN, Dorset

Part XII — The Redeemed at Home in Heaven

The Lord Jesus spoke of 'my Father's house' (John 14. 2). The Father's house is the children's home. Where are these future dwelling places we all speak of, and read about, without enquiring further and fuller into its blessed prospect?

Where is heaven? There are three heavens spoken of in scripture. Firstly, the lower region of the rain and birds, "But the land, whither ye go to possess is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven". (Deut. 11. 11). Behold the fowls of the air. (Matt. 6. 26): Secondly, a higher region of the stars and planets, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and stars shall fall from heaven". (Matt. 24. 29). Thirdly, the third heaven, the abode of God, where Christ is, (2 Cor. 12. 2; Eph. 4. 10; Heb. 4. 14).

Heaven: The Home of the Soul: — Home is perhaps the most comforting word in the English language, the place where there are those who love us, understand us, who serve us and do us good. After the daily tasks are over how pleasant to return home to the ones we love and who love us, after we have been separated by various causes, how keen we are to get back to the atmosphere of home — are we as keen to be in the glory-land?

Heaven: The Place of Open Vision: — "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known". (1 Cor. 13. 9). Also we must not ignore his injunction in 1 Cor. 8. 2 which is very humbling, and would seem to verify other phrases such as "The half has not been told", (1 Kings 9. 7): "The time would fail me to tell", (Heb. 11. 32): "The world itself could not contain", (John 21. 25): There are many other similar phrases in the Psalms and Epistles.

Our future state, although somewhat clear from many passages dealing with it, is still like a dream. It is hard to realise how wonderful it will be, due to our present lack of experience, and our limited intellectual capacities to the understand. "Eye hath not seen

nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him". (1 Cor. 2. 9). But, God has graciously given a foretaste of His handiwork in earthly things of His creative power for us to enjoy, the scenic landscapes, the beautiful formation and fragrance of flowers, our ears have been privileged to hear the beauty of music, birdsong, etc., the things yet future will surpass all that we have and enjoy as pleasant at this present time. The best is waiting. "Faith . . . the evidence of things not seen". (Heb. 11. 1).

The function of faith is to give us the anticipation of the life to come with all its glorious joys described as the completion of the salvation of our souls. The joys await us and the capacity to appreciate them will be given in due course, but even now we have the first fruits. Let us set our affection on things above when things on the earth are difficult and disappointing. Let us look for and hasten unto the coming of the day of God. The prize in front of us should quicken the pace and lighten the step and enable us to despise the treasures of Egypt; let us not be overtaken with an unworthy love of this world and its toys, "Eternal glories gleam afar, to nerve our faint endeavour".

Heaven: The Place of Perfect Government: — Where God's will is done, "The government shall be upon His shoulder, of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end". For over 1,900 years governments of many shades and varieties have been endeavouring to govern peoples and nations peaceably, none have yet, or ever will succeed, even as we saw in our last article, at the close of the Lord's millennial reign, there will be a preference for Satanic ways. Mr. Naismith gives the following information on the English word government, i.e. it is derived from the Greek word 'Kubernesis', the act of steering. A 'kubernetes' was a fisherman who guided the ship. Hence the figure was transferred to the "Ship of State", whose helmsman is its government. Helmsmen are required also for the local churches of Christ. (Heb. 13. 17, 24).

Heaven: The Place of Increased Service: — "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants serve Him". (Rev. 22. 3). All weaknesses verbally and physically will be gone, for which the writer will be eternally thankful, verses three and four of this final chapter of scripture reveals three choice blessings which will be ours in glory.

(a) "His servants shall serve Him". No other masters shall oppress us, no other service will distress us, we shall serve Jesus always, perfectly, without weariness, and without error, this will be heaven indeed for the saint. In all things to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to be owned by Him as His servant is our high ambition for eternity.

(b) "And they shall see His face". This will make the service even more rewarding and pleasant, for we shall see Him as He is. To see the face of the Lord Jesus, is the utmost favour that the most faithful servant of the Lord can ask. What more could Moses ask than — "Let me see thy face?"

(c) "And His name shall be in their foreheads". They gaze upon their Lord until His name is indelibly imprinted upon their brows. They are acknowledged by Him, and He acknowledges them.

In conclusion almost two thousand years have passed since Our Lord Jesus Christ promised He would come again, and yet He has not arrived. The reason why is given in 2 Peter 3, where the delay is explained as due to the long-suffering of God, for He is loath to close the door of salvation and end the dispensation of grace. But, come again He will, for He has spoken, and shall He not do it? In the meantime the whole creation groans, for discord has entered; men and nations live in suspicion, while the whole of the animate creation suggests that sin has created disharmony. And we who are redeemed also groan within ourselves. There is the problem of sin around — and, alas within; there is suffering everywhere, and while we live in the world we are in sympathy with its groans of sorrow.

But He who testifieth these things saith, "Surely I come quickly". When we least expect Him and without special warnings the heavens will be opened, and God's Son and Sovereign will come to receive His own, and then to reign over all in righteousness. Our hearts will then be glad and we shall say, "This is Our God; we have waited for Him and He has come at last".

The promise of His coming again is the ground of a hope which is called a blessed hope. It is meant to make us glad, to keep us from fainting in the battle. The prospect of coming victory and glory should give us a happy spirit when we are most pressed. So we look longingly to see Him whom we love.

Amen, even so, Come, Lord Jesus.

VITAL VERITIES (14)

by E. W. ROGERS

Eternal Punishment — Part 1

DR. A. T. PIERSON, opening a sermon entitled "The inevitable alternative" remarked:— having read Matthew 25.46: This is, without exception, the most unpopular text in the Bible. There is no one text upon which ministers of Christ so infrequently preach, and from which the bulk of hearers so constantly shrink as from this verse. Yet we are bidden to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear. And if for no other reason than this, that the declaration of the entire message of God is the essential condition of freeing our own garments from the blood of lost souls, there is no minister of Christ that ought to preach without at times calling attention to a subject like this."

This remark will furnish sufficient justification for dealing exclusively with such a solemn theme in a special paper. For it is important that believers should be established in this fundamental doctrine, and unbelievers should be apprised of it that they may thereby be driven to seek the way of escape which is not far off.

An initial consideration of no small importance is that outside of the Scriptures nothing is known as to this matter. Men may speculate, but nothing can be affirmed unless it be based upon God's word. For that reason, the first article of this series related to the Inspiration of the Bible, since unless one is assured that the Bible is God's Word nothing will convince, seeing in this paper the Bible will be the alone recognised source of authority as to Death and After.

Accordingly, let us raise the question first of all. Is Eternal Punishment (or to use an equivalent term Eternal Judgment) a Bible doctrine?

A reference to Matt. 25.46, and Heb. 6.2, will immediately reveal two facts:—

a. That Eternal Judgment is a Bible doctrine, taught by the Lord Jesus and His inspired penmen.

b. That is a fundamental doctrine, being amongst the foundation truths (see Hebrew 6, 1).

It is certainly named in the Bible.

But we should consider the three terms that are in these two phrases, viz.: (a) Eternal; (b) Punishment; (c) Judgment.

ETERNAL

That this is correct English translation of the Hebrew and Greek words cannot be seriously contested.

Paul speaks of the “things which are seen as being temporal and the things which are not seen as being eternal”... from which it is evident that the antonym of “temporal” is “eternal”: the one is limited: the other is unlimited. The one lasts for a specific period: the other, for ever.

Dr. Pierson writes:—

“For example, it has been said that the word translated ‘eternal’ does not mean ‘eternal’ at all. It is a Greek word ‘ainios’. That word is from the Greek word *aion*, which is the same as the English word *eon* or *age*; and it has been said that this word means age-long, that it is a punishment that reaches through a definite period, but not necessarily through eternity. But the same word precisely is applied to life in the other section of the verse: ‘but the righteous unto life eternal.’ Though the word is translated everlasting in the first part of the verse, and ‘eternal’ in the last part of the verse, it is the same original word in both; and if the word means age-long as to punishment, does it not mean age-long as to life? And if that be the case, then there is no guarantee in this verse here for the everlasting punishment of the wicked, there is no guarantee here for the everlasting life of the righteous.”

“But then notice that, while that word does mean age-long, so does the word ‘eternal’. The word ‘eternal’ is from the Latin word *aetas*, an age, which is the exact correspondent of the Greek word *aion*, an age; so that our word *eternal* means nothing but age-long. We have to take words to express ideas that are far

beyond us. We have to take words that fall within the compass of our experience. We have never known a life that did not end, not a life in which there was no succession of days and hours, years and centuries; and so when we try to express the idea of a life that is not bounded by those limits, we take the longest period of which we know anything — an age. Take the most indefinite period of which we know anything — an age; and we use that word to express the conception of eternity. Now, if you will stop a moment you will see the reason of this. Suppose the word that is here translated eternal meant year-long. A year is a definite cycle of time, 365 days. It marks the period of the revolution of the earth round the sun in its orbit, and so a year means a definite period. But the word 'age' means an indefinite length of time, and so we have no word that comes so near to eternity as the word age, for there are no limits to mark the beginning, no limits to mark the end, and that is the characteristic of eternity . . . And so the Greek, having no other word, said 'ainos' age-long and the Latin having no other word, compounds one from the word 'aetas' age, and we take our word eternal from the same Latin word 'aetas'."

Added to the foregoing, we may observe that this word "eternal" is applied to life in such famous passages as John 3.16 and 10.28. To God Himself in Romans 16.26. To the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 9.14. Also it is a characteristic word in Hebrews where the eternal blessings of Christianity are contrasted with the temporal blessings of Judaism in 5.9; 9.12 and 13.20.

Then we may call attention to the use of the same word in more solemn instances and the reader should himself examine Matt. 18.8; 25.41; 2 Thess. 1.9; Heb. 6.2 and Jude 7.

Were it not for the objection of the opposers this point could the more speedily be disposed of, but since there are those who will oppose we would ask:—

1. Were the scholarly translators of the A.V. ignorant of the true force of the original words and blundered in their translation?
2. Did the various scholars who sat on the Revisers Committee make the same error or is their translation in the text intended to be a confirmation that the A.V. in this matter is correct.

Indeed etymologically the Greek word 'age' is compounded of two other Greek words, one being 'aie' meaning always, and the other being the present participate of the verb "to be," i.e. "being," and together they mean "always being." Not that etymology can always determine the meaning of a word in its usage, but here certainly it is useful.

As to the expressions "for ever and ever" which some translate "unto the age of ages" or "unto the ages" we may quote the words of the late J. R. Caldwell:

"It is useless to argue that the words imply a limited though an extended period. An 'age' with God is at least a thousand years. 'Ages' must be much longer. But the expression 'ages of ages' what can it mean but that which exceeds human conception, in short, eternity?"

This is an expression used of God Himself, and the duration of His throne, and is frequently found in ascriptions of glory to Him. Similarly the precisely same expressions are employed in Rev. 14.11; 19.3; and 20.10, in relation to the subject before us, viz.: that of Eternal Punishment.

We shall later on see that, in the nature of things, nothing but Eternal Punishment is possible for the Unbeliever, and that apart from the words themselves, it is an integral part of the doctrine of Scripture. But the words are definite and only they who are wilfully blind, having an unscriptural theory to support, deny the true meaning of these terms.

PUNISHMENT

Our next enquiry is as to the meaning of this word. It is a good translation of the Greek word which it represents, and ordinarily is clearly understood. The prisoner who is imprisoned for a term of say, "seven years" has to undergo "seven years' punishment," and such a one would surely understand correctly the plain English expression "eternal punishment," for like as his punishment on earth is for a term of seven years, so the punishment referred to in Matt. 25.46, is for ever. He would not quibble as some have that "eternal punishment" does not mean "eternal punishing." It has been asserted by those who teach "Annihilation" that when a sinner dies he ceases to be. This annihilation of his being, it is claimed, is tantamount to "eternal punishment." But were this so,

surely it would be called “summary punishment” or some such equivalent term. Certainly the term eternal punishment would be misleading. On this reasoning, Eternal punishment is inflicted on the murderer who goes to the gallows, or on the ox which is destroyed because of his goring a man.

But the fact is that the Greek word here translated “punishment” denotes a process, and would equally well be rendered by the English word “punishing,” for what the Lord Jesus here affirms is that the wicked go away into an endless term of conscious punishing.

This same word occurs in 1 John 4.18, translated by the word “torment,” “fear hath torment.” Another has written “The use of it here is conclusive; it cannot bear any rendering other than that given. The torment of fear is intensely real, and implies of necessity consciousness in its fullest sense.” And again “It would be perfectly allowable therefore to render Matt. 25.46, as in 1 John 4.18, ‘these shall go away into everlasting torment’.”

These are the only two places where the Greek word ‘kolasis’ occurs, though its cognate verb occurs in Acts 4.21, in a corporal sense, where its meaning is plain. If, then, the meaning of the word is clear here, why seek to confuse its meaning in Matt. 25.46, and 1 John 4.18, unless it be that the doctrine is found unpalatable and there is no sense of salvation therefrom possessed.

Trench, speaking on *Timoria* and *Kolasis* in his *Synonyms* writes:—

“It would be a very serious error, however, to attempt to transfer this distinction in its entirety to the words as employed in the New Testament. The *Kolasis* *ainios* of Matt. 25.46 as it plainly itself declares is no corrective and therefore temporary discipline; it can be no other than endless punishment; with which the Lord elsewhere threatens finally impenitent men; for in proof that *Kolasis* had acquired in Hellenistic Greek this severer sense, and was used as ‘punishment’ or ‘torment’ with no necessary underthought of the bettering through it of him who endured it, we have only to refer to such passages as the following” (and here he enumerates quotations from classical Greek).

— (*to be continued*).

PSALM EIGHTY-FOUR

by E. R. BOWER

Part 2

VERSE 6. "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

It has been said that the valley of Baca was the last "staging post" on the road to Zion. "Baca" (weeping or weeper) possibly refers to the mulberry trees of the area, because of the resin exuded by them, but whatever the reason, "weeping" is peculiarly appropriate within the connotation of this psalm. One other rendering is "Bitterness". The present writer's father often reminded him that the best school was "the school of experience". The journey of life is, as we well know, beset by tears, trouble, strife and bitterness, but for the pilgrim who has his eyes firmly fixed upon the goal, such things become the wells from which may be drawn strength and comfort. For the believer the "valley of the shadow" (Ps. 23) is but another staging post. It is the pilgrim himself who makes the valley a well, and even the shallow pools left by the rain bring refreshing and sustaining waters for the thirsty. "All things" the Apostle reminds us, "work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8. 28) and truly, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. 30. 5). Out of his own experience Paul, who was ever pressing on to the prize of the "high (or, upward) calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3. 14), could say, "... the God of all comfort who comforted us in all our tribulation, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted." (2 Cor. 1. 3-4). This is help for the footsore travelling companions.

VERSE 7. "They go from strength to strength (or, "from height to height"), every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

The pilgrim's strength was in his God (v. 5), and the fact of having the Lord of hosts, like the Pillar of cloud, before and behind him was, despite the hardships, the sweet and the tears, of the road, to give him the strength for the day. Strength to scale the

heights and attain the goal that awaited him in Zion — that “beautiful city of God.” The incentive was there!

“He who flags not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing,
Only he his soul well knit
And all his battles won, mounts
And that hardly, to eternal life.” (Matthew Arnold).

No true pilgrim will be lost on the way. Every one appears before God. Heb. 12. 22-24 reminds us of this, “Ye are come unto mount Zion . . . and to God the Judge of all . . . and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling . . .” Cf. Rom. 14.10.

VERSE 8. “O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear O God of Jacob. Selah.” What a contrast and yet what a comfort is here. The God of all strength, might and power is the God of a weak and often failing “Jacob”. We recall Jacob’s dream of the ascending and descending angels, and we recall, too, Jacob’s wrestling with the Angel. (Gen. 29.10-22; 32.1-2, 24-30). The pilgrim by experience knew that the words “My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12.9) used by Paul were his comfort. There was nothing that he could not do; no height that he could not scale for God was His strength.

Do not ourselves take the same introspective look as the psalmist and see ourselves as “Jacobs”? Selah — think about it, says the psalmist. As Jacob had neared the end of his life, he, in the middle of blessing his sons, gave away the secret of that which had kept him going — “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.” (Gen. 49. 18) What was the prayer of the pilgrim to be?

VERSE 9. “Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed.”

The prayer becomes a humble petition. Standing before His God the pilgrim has but one plea. It is that God would look upon the face of His Anointed. And who was this “Anointed” one? Commentators differ as to the identity of the one so described; this “Messiah” is; but as the scene is set within the environs of the Temple courts, to whom would this description apply more than to the High Priest of Israel? When our pilgrim spoke of God as his Shield, did he think, perhaps, of how God had spoken to his forefather Abram after he had met with Melchizedek, saying, “Fear not Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great re-

ward." (Gen. 15.1). Abram, told by God to leave his country and his kindred had obeyed and "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacled . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11.8-10). The pilgrim enters into the meaning of that promise. The God before whom he would appear was His Shield. The psalmist used the analogy of the shield often. The shield was one of Favour (5.12); Salvation (18.31); Truth (91.4); "Favour" includes, Life (30.5); Mercy (Is. 60.10); truly, God is our Shield and Defender.

We now come to the core of the psalm; that which had been the centre of the psalmist's thoughts of the Temple, "Look upon the face of Thine Anointed." We have already imagined the scene in the Temple courts as the people waited for the priestly blessing (Num. 6.26. Cf. Ps. 4; in Luke 1 and 2 Chron. 29; 23.18-19) and there is a vivid pen picture of that scene upon the Day of Atonement in that gem of Hebrew literature, the book of Ecclesiasticus, "How splendid he (the high Priest) was . . . when he emerged from the curtained shrine, like the morning star among the clouds . . . like the sun shining upon the Temple of the Most High . . . when he put on his splendid vernalts, and clothed himself in glorious perfection, when he went up to the holy altar, and filled the Sanctuary precincts with his grandeur . . . as the people pleaded with the Lord Most High and prayed and the service of the Lord was completed. Then he would come down and raise his hands to give them the Lord's blessing . . ." What an experience for the weary pilgrim. What an ecstasy filled his being as he saw the ascending smoke from the altar and knew that the lamb had been slain; to see the face of the Lord's Anointed Priest.

This is just a faint picture for the believer for "we shall see His face", the face of our great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. (Heb. 4.14). Who has offered one sacrifice for sins for ever. (Heb. 10.12). He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9.26) and in the not too distant future, fellow believer, we shall see His face, no longer "married more than thy man's" (Is. 52.14) but shining with the glory of God. (2 Cor. 4.6; Rev. 22.4; 1 Cor. 13.12; I John 3.2).

"When by His grace
I shall look on His face
That will be glory for me."

God has looked upon the face of His only begotten Son, His Anointed and is well pleased. The believer has a “strong and perfect plea” for He it is who makes intercession for us as the one Mediator between God and man.” (1 Tim. 2.5; Rom. 8.27) for He is “touched (is in sympathy with) the feeling of our infirmities and tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4.12-16).

VERSE 10. “For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand (elsewhere). I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

The superscript of this psalm is “For, or of, the sons of Korah” and they were the clan responsible for the keeping of the gates of the Tabernacle and of the Temple. It has been suggested that the writer of this psalm was a Korahite who, away from Jerusalem, had dwelt “in the tents of wickedness” but who, like the Prodigal Son of our Lord’s story, had returned home and was again taking up his duties as a doorkeeper. The House was more enduring than the tent.

VERSE 11. “The Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

The pilgrim writes here what the Apostle Paul was to write many years later, as we saw in verse 6 and Rom. 8.28. The Angel of the Lord had encamped about him; the hosts of the Lord had been with him (Cf. 2 Kings 6.13-17). He is the living God, and He is the God of the living. (John 6.53-57). The psalmist acknowledges Him as his King (Cf. Is. 6); as the God of Jacob; as his Shield and Sun — a reminder perhaps of the wilderness journey of ‘Israel when the Pillar of cloud and of fire was their protection by day and by night. Shade by day and light by night. Cf. Ps. 12.15 — The Amplified Bible renders, “The Lord bestows (present) grace and favour and (future) glory — honour and splendour”, and we are taken immediately to John 1. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth . . . and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” And, as our great High Priest His prayer (John 17) was, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word . . . and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them . . .” The promise of good things is

conditional upon the trust of the pilgrim during his journey, and may not always come during that journey, for "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit . . ." (1 Cor. 2.9-14; Is. 64.4). See the, "all things" of Rom. 8.18-28. "If it were not so I would have told you."

"VERSE 12. "O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee."

So we come to the third Happiness — the Happiness of the HOPE. Herein is the secret of, and the incentive for, the believer's happiness and "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is entered, even Jesus made an High Priest for ever . . ." (Heb. 6).

FATHER'S CHASTENING

God's chastening is in love, because we are sons, sometimes feeling sorrow in His training we wrongly think that chastisement and punishment are the same. Punishment is retaliation, chastisement is disciplinary training. His training of us is that we may become more conformed to the image of His Son. If such chastisement is wisely and lovingly administered, even a young child will understand the discipline in it and turn to his father's way. And that is what God's chastisement is, not punishment, but training in His ways. Our wise, loving Father sees the end from the beginning and seeks to turn us from our waywardness into His paths of righteousness and peace. Many Christians have indeed come to thank God for the pain that threw them so utterly on God's sufficiency, that they have come to know Him personally and intimately in a way they had not known was possible. They praise Him not for the pain, but for His gift of Himself that He gave through it. God acquaints His comforters with grief.

There seems to be the principle in God's economy of allowing us to sense more of His presence and love during the most trying heartbreaking periods. Much as God responded in different ways to each man in his time of deep discouragement, God will respond in a unique way to you when you hit the pit of despondency. He loves you far more than you could ever imagine. How much greater we should value, not understanding all about trials but knowing God in our trial!

— *Anthony Orsini (U.S.A.)*

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

5 — THE REVELATION TO DOUBT

John 20, 24-31

The revelation to the loving heart (v. 11-18), to the lonely Church (v. 19-23), now to a lapsing follower (v. 24-29). It is very encouraging to observe Christ's care for and patience with individuals. Did the Master pay a second special visit to the apostolic company in order to help Thomas? There are four pictures of Thomas in this book. Devotion to the Lord (v. 11-16); Direction from the Lord (14.5, 6); Despair and dereliction of duty (20.24); disbelief (20.25), his defiance is disposed of (v. 26,27) and this led to delight in the Deity of Christ (v. 28).

ABSENT AS A DISCIPLE (v. 24)

We cannot determine why Thomas kept away from the little assembly of waiting disciples but the cause lay in himself. He missed the blessed experience of meeting the risen Lord. The doubt of Thomas sprang from the desperate need and desire to believe. What deep yearnings underlay that "except" of a despondent practical minded soul (v. 25). Being "one of the twelve" he should have been there. Had he lost heart and interest? or just anguish at not going with His Lord to die? (11. 16). How like Thomas we are, we stop away from Assembly gatherings, and brood over things all by ourselves.

ADAMENT IN DISBELIEF (v. 25)

The Lord fulfilled His word and gathered with His own (Matt. 18.20), filling their hearts with joy and their minds with peace. Nursing his doubts, even the marvellous tale of his brethren is not believed. He was not willing to be persuaded, this is far more than doubt, it is disbelief. This obstinate attitude made him blind to all else, he did not want to believe. You get a bit callous and cruel when you become disbelieving, "thrust my hand into His side".

ADORING THE DIETY OF CHRIST (v. 28)

This was brought about by the *Thoughtfulness of the Lord*. For a whole week the Lord was not seen and the silence and suspense must have been strange. Then the Lord appeared in the midst specially for the sake of Thomas. He knew all that Thomas had said in defence of his doubt.

The Tenderness and Condescension of the Lord (v. 27)

The Lord offers what had been demanded, external evidence of the Manhood, will it suffice?

The Test from the Lord, “be not faithless but believing.” What a challenge to his obstinate, unreasonable disciple. What an amazing offer from a charming Saviour, “become” not faithless.

Thomas is rebuked, humbled and ashamed in the presence of His Lord and did not accept the invitation. He bows in adoration to make a confession which no-one had made before. “My Lord and my God”.

This Tribute to His Lord is the greatest confession of all the apostles. This is the only time in the Gospels when anybody claimed for Christ Deity, what worship from a soul on the way to becoming faithless.

Here is the conviction of identity, “My Lord” and the conviction of Deity — “My God”. No “dear Jesus” in apostolic times. He was to them, the Mighty God, God our Saviour, the Unchanging One, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Only Mary (20. 30), Thomas (v. 28) and Paul (Phil. 3. 8), speak of the Saviour as “my Lord”.

The Teaching of the Lord (v. 29)

The Lord Jesus accepts and approves this confession of belief in His Deity. There must have been some disciples who believed in the Resurrection merely on the evidence of others. Jesus had not appeared to every one of His followers and to them and the countless number of believers who have never seen Christ in the flesh, He pronounces this sweet benediction, fulfilling the promise of Matt. 5. 8. Believe it.

THE TRIUMPHANT NOTE OF THE GOSPEL (v. 30, 31)

Only Luke and John give the reason why they wrote their Gospels (Luke 1. 1-4; John 20. 30. 31).

A Definite Purpose.

“This is twofold: (1) to lead to personal belief in the historical “Jesus” as the “Christ” or Messiah (for the Jews) and as the “Son of God” (for the Gentiles). (2) to lead, by believing, to the possession of life in His name” Dr. Griffith Thomas. Verse 30 gives us the signs of the Saviour, the assurance of His authority. Verse 31, salvation in the Saviour through the acceptance of His atonement, the possession of a personal Saviour.

The Variety of Signs.

These must not be limited to proofs of the Resurrection, but as a general reference to the deeds of Jesus during His earthly life. These signs were many in number and different in kind from those related. They qualified the disciples to be competent witnesses and give clear testimony concerning that which they themselves had seen, heard or experienced.

The Voice of Signs.

The signs recorded were not only works of power — but had reference to Christ in His grace, authority and sovereignty. It has not John’s purpose to write a complete “Life of Christ” but to produce saving faith in Him as The Messiah and The Son of God.

The Victorious Saviour (v. 31)

The signs given show the Absolute Supremacy and the All Sufficiency of the Lord Jesus in every realm, the natural, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, eternal.

They convince us of two things;— (1) that Jesus the well-known Teacher and Prophet, is the Christ, the long looked for Messiah and Deliverer of Israel. (2) That He is also the Son of God, the Divine Word and true God (1. 1-3.18; 1 John 4.14,15).

The Valuable Life (v. 31b)

“Continue to believe” not only “that you may come to believe” but the faith may be strengthened. There were many heretics trying to undermine the faith of the Church, these enemies must be repulsed (1 John 4.1-4; 2 John 7.9). The acceptance of the truth and personal faith in the Lord Jesus gives us eternal life (5.24). “In His name” rather than “through” His name. This does not mean through the naming of His name, but through the power of the Person who bears the name, all that He is in Himself.

In this chapter we see the Risen Lord as the Conqueror of death. His power demonstrated (v. 1-10), the Comforter of hearts, His power venerated (v. 11-18): Calming our fears, His power communicated (v. 19-23), Confirming our faith, His power appreciated (v. 24-29), Communicating eternal life, His power propagated (v. 30, 31). May we be captivated by Him as our Centre of achievement, of affection, of association, of adoration and of assurance.

1 PETER 1, 1-11.

by N. McDonald (Scotland)

Peter wrote in a time of anxiety and affliction, distress and difficulty, perplexity and persecution, trial and tribulation. He experienced much of the psalmist in Ps. 34. 1 — blessing and praising; v. 2 — boasting and gladness; v. 3 — magnifying and exalting; v. 4 — seeking and being delivered from all his fears; v. 6 — crying and being saved out of all his troubles; v. 8 — tasting and trusting. These all marked Peter in his everyday life.

His epistles are the answer to Luke 22 31-32, ". . . strengthen thy brethren." What a tower of strength they have been to the saints down through the generations even unto this present day.

There is:

1. EXPOSITION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

God is mentioned six times in chapter 1. In v. 2, 3 it is the *foreknowledge of God the Father*; v. 5 the power of God; v. 23, 25 the word of God. Then in v. 2, 11, 12, 22 it is the *fellowship of the Spirit* and in v. 2, 3, 7, 11, 13, 19 it is the *fullness of the Son*.

2. EXALTATION OF CHRISTIAN DUTY

This is seen in the teaching throughout the epistle on the subject of submission.

Submission to those in authority—2.13; Acts 4.19; Romans 13.1.

Submission in industrial life — 2. 18.

Submission in domestic life — 3. 1.

Submission in assembly life — 5. 5.

3. EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN DEPORTMENT

We might have expected Paul rather than Peter to be the mathematician among the apostles, yet it is Peter who speaks of;

multiplication — 1. 2; 2 Peter 1. 2;

division — 1. 14, 15; 2. 11;

subtraction — 2. 1. This is involved in the laying aside of:

malice — that is our MOTIVES

guile — that is our METHODS

hypocrisy — that is our MIXTURES

envies — that is our MANNERS

evil speakings — that is our MOUTHS

addition — 2 Peter 1. 5.

4. EXPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN DIGNITY

In 1. 3 he speaks of “blessed” meaning to eulogise, to speak well of, praise Luke 1. 64. We ought to speak well of Him for He is the:

God of all Hope — Romans 15. 4, 13;

God of all Comfort — 2 Cor. 1. 3;

God of all Blessing — Eph. 1. 3;

God of all Power — 1 Peter 1. 3;

God of all Grace — 1 Peter 5. 10.

In 1. 4 he speaks of our great inheritance and we can rejoice in the following description:

An inheritance as to our POSSESSION — Deut. 32.9; Ps. 16.5; 47.4;

Incorruptible as to its PERFECTION — 1 Cor. 15.50-58; Phil. 3.20; Rev. 21.4;

Undefiled as to its PURITY — 1 John 3.3-5; Rev. 27, 22. 3;

Fadeth not away as to its PERMANENCE — Ps. 37.18; Thess. 4.16-18; Rev. 1.18, 22.5;

Reserved as to its PURCHASE — John 3. 14-16; 1 Cor. 6.20, 7.23; 1 Peter 1. 18, 19;

In heaven as to its PLACE — Matt. 6.19-22; Mark 16.19; Luke 24.51-52; John 14.3; Acts 1.11;

For you as to its PEOPLE — Ps. 33.12; John 14.2; James 5.7-8.

5. EXPERIENCE OF CHRISTIAN DEPENDENCE

Verse 5 teaches that we are kept or garrisoned by the power of God, see also 2 Cor. 11.32, Phil. 4.7. This is grasped by faith. Anything we get from God, if not mixed with faith will have to be refused, since it will lead to spiritual indigestion, Heb. 4.2. Faith honours God by its trust and God honours faith by its blessing. Faith is not concerned with itself, it is centred in the Lord Jesus who is its object, Acts 20.21. The Spirit is its power, 1 Cor. 12.9, Gal. 5.22. The word of God is its channel, Rom. 10.17 and God Himself is its Originator, Mark 11.22.

There is an intimate relationship between faith and the faith. Faith is the act of believing, the faith is the truth believed; the faith is the food that makes faith strong; the faith is the weapon which faith wields; the anchor which it fastens to its cable; the cheque book which faith signs; faith goes up the stairs which love has built and looks out the windows which hope has opened; faith says I stand in God's will, I rest in God's bosom, I am glad in His joy, I am inspired by His love, I am calmed by His peace, I am moulded by His truth, I am strengthened by His grace, I revel in His fullness, I glory in His Christ, I am satisfied with Himself.

6. EXPANSION OF CHRISTIAN DELIGHT

Note in v. 6-11 Peter uses language such as "greatly rejoice", "found unto praise" and "joy unspeakable".

He speaks of rejoicing yet has distinctive suffering in mind. Heaviness, v. 6, means having been put to grief in distresses, sadness, difficulties, etc. We cannot dodge these things by trying to get around them but we must get on top of them. 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10; Rom. 5. 3. There appear to be three kinds of sufferings.

- (i) *Providential* — Sometimes the hand of God touches us. Job 19. 21; Rom. 8. 18.
- (ii) *Disciplinary* — Heb. 12. 5-11.
- (iii) *Moral* — James 1. 13-15.

These heavinesses and trials come upon us for the trial of our faith in order that there may shine out in us, at His revelation, praise, honour and glory v. 7. Praise is a commendable thing, honour is esteem of the highest degree and glory is really worship.

In Matt. 25. 21 praise is the “well done”, honour is “good and faithful servant” and glory is “ruler over many things”.

In v. 8, 9 Peter is reliving the days he spent with his Lord. In v. 8 there is unspeakable joy, 2. Cor. 9.15 unspeakable gift; 2 Cor. 12.4 unspeakable words.

Verse 10 introduces the great thought of grace, “grace unto you.”

- 1 Peter 5.10 — source of grace;
- Titus 5.10 — subjects of grace;
- Eph. 2.8 — salvation by grace;
- Heb. 4.16 — supply of grace;
- 2 Cor. 12.9 — sufficiency of grace.

Another of Peter’s mighty themes is introduced in v. 11 viz. “the sufferings of Christ”. This we have six times in the epistle, in relation to:

- 1.11—prophecy; 2.11—practice; 3.18—peace; 4.1—pain;
- 4.13—pleasure; 5.1—proclamations.

Our lord Jesus suffered — inwardly, Mark 14.34, 36; physically, John 19.1, 28; Ps. 22.14-16; mentally, Ps. 88.15; willingly, Luke 22.42; vicariously, 1 Cor. 15.3; 1 Peter 2.24; patiently Heb. 12.2; 1 Peter 2.20; silently Isa. 53.7; 1 Peter 2.23; shamefully Ps. 22.6-8; wrongfully, Ps. 69.4; 1 Peter 2.19; expectantly, Isa. 50.7-9; finally, 1 Peter 3.18; affectionately, Gal. 2.20; John 14.31.

The sufferings of the saints also occurs six times in the letter as follows:

- 2.19 — relative to conscience — ie what I feel;
- 3.14 — relative to righteousness — ie what I do;
- 4.16 — relative to Christianity — ie what I am;
- 4.19 — relative to His will — ie what I learn;
- 5. 9 — relative to the devil — ie what I experience;
- 5.10 — relative to glory — ie what I anticipate.

This gives a delightful finish to an epistle taken up with suffering. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen you, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS (1)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

(These articles appeared in 1922 in the Believers' Magazine, and are still up to date).

THE Apostle Paul, in his last letter to Timothy, says, "This know also, that in the last days, perilous—that is difficult—times shall come" (2 Tim. 3.1). These words have been taken by some to mean, that there will be a return of the times of persecution and martyrdom such as characterised the early period of the church's history, when, under the reign of Diocletian, the people of God were persecuted unto death. Satan, the great adversary in those times, stirred up men to exterminate the work and people of God by fire and sword. We do not expect him to return to these tactics again, simply because his attempts in this line have each and all turned out a complete failure. Instead of exterminating the people of God by this means, he increased them. He adopted different tactics in the time of Constantine when, instead of acting as "a roaring lion" (I Pet. 5.8), he assumed the garb of a "beguiling serpent" (2 Cor. 11.3), alluring the people of God into alliance with the world (comp. Rev. 2. 10 with 2.14), which was immensely more successful for the accomplishment of his purpose. We confess that we greatly prefer the "roaring lion" aspect of the devil's work, to that of the "seducing serpent," for it is by craft and guile that he does most of his deadliest work in the present time. This is the "peril" we are taught to expect, not the open opposition and persecution of earlier times. We are in these "perilous times" now. They have come under a guise that many did not expect, and were not prepared to detect. So that they do much of their evil work without being recognised as Satan's instruments, opposing by craft and wile the work of God. And although things are bad enough, they have not yet reached their worst. As the age draws nearer to its close, these perils and difficulties of Satanic origin will increase. Every previous dispensation has ended in failure, the one immediately preceding the present, was the worst of all, for it was the Jewish people who had received "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3.2), that slew the Son of

God, and refused to have Him as their King (Luke 21. 14). Before things on earth reach their worst in apostasy, the true children of God will have been taken out of the world to be with Christ in heavenly glory. But the days will darken, and their perils will increase right on until that hour, in which at His coming, all who belong to Christ will go to their eternal home. With some of these "perils" we will deal in our next paper.

FAITH TESTED

JOHN—was a member of a club, and for a considerable time felt it quite right to be so; he looked upon it as a prudent provision for his wife and family, in the event of his illness or death.

However, after some time, John began to be exercised in his mind as to his position. That word in 2 Corinthians v.1., "Be not equally yoked together with unbelievers," was brought home with power to his conscience. And, moreover, he began to feel that it was very much better to trust in the living God than in the fund of a club or an association.

Wherefore, after much thought and prayer, he sent in his resignation. He did this, not with any thought of condemning other people, but simply because he could not, with a good conscience, continue to be a member of a club.

John was, of course, much blamed by his friends for his imprudent step. Even many of God's people think it quite right to join a club or an association. But John felt that he must, at all cost, obey the word of his Lord. Let others do as they would, he felt that he must walk with God; and he was right.

Some severe remarks were made upon John. Some said, "It's all very well so long as John is able to work; but wait till sickness comes, and we shall see what will become of his faith.

Well, it pleased God to allow sickness to come upon poor John. He was laid aside from work for some time, and all his little stock of money was spent. It was Saturday evening, and there was neither money nor food in the house.

This was a trying moment. John's wife felt keenly to see her

children in want, and in the course of the evening she went out to a provision shop, and got some things on credit. She returned with her apron full, and her husband asked her where she had been. She told him. "Well, my dear," said he, "I am very sorry to have to grieve you; but I cannot go in debt, or the word of God says, "Owe no man anything !" You must take these things back to Mr. _____, and thank him for his kindness in trusting us; but say I cannot go in debt." He further added, "*Tell him we shall send for the things again.*"

In about an hour after, a person, who knew nothing of John's circumstances, but who had heard of his faithfulness to the truth of God, called, and gave him ten shillings, so that John was able, as he had said, to send for the things again, not now on credit, but in the way of God's appointment.

How important and how beautiful is obedience, in all things, to the word of God! The selfsame word that says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," says also, "Owe no man anything." John —obeyed both these holy precepts. He did not reason; he did not attempt to qualify or accommodate the word to his notions; he simply obeyed; and God blessed him in his deed, as He ever does and ever will. "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." "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. —(*selected*).

READING AND PRAYER

George Muller, when young, often found difficulty in prayer, hardly knowing what to pray for, and felt little earnestness, but later on he made a practice of reading the Bible first, and found his heart filled with longings and aspirations; he found prayers and praises put into his mouth, and his whole soul quickened. By faith he built five great orphanages, accommodating 2,000 children, though he had no money himself, and never asked anyone for a penny. He trusted the God of the Bible, Who did not disappoint him, Muller said : "The Word of God is the bread of life, and prayer is the breath of life."

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (12)

by John Heading (Aberystwyth)

(Editor's note—Our dear brother John Heading was a past contributor to this magazine and it was with regret we learned of his sudden homecall. When the "Conversion and Call" series commenced he requested that he be permitted to participate since he stated only the minority serve in a fulltime capacity and the rest like himself in fulltime employment through his life. He wrote this article in Feb., 1990. Our prayers are with his sorrowing loved ones who sorrow not as others).

A little time ago, a student asked the author, (formerly in university employment), why he had never engaged in full-time service for the Lord. The answer was simple: he had never experienced at any time a call in any form whatsoever to serve the Lord in this way. This student believed that there should be far more full-time workers, both working in local assemblies and on the mission field. The apostle Paul knew right from the time of his conversion that he would ultimately be sent to the Gentiles (Acts 22.21; 26.17,20), but he had to wait for ten years before the call came. Moreover, this was no decision on his part; it was Barnabas who brought him to Antioch (11.25-26); the prophets and teachers sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (13.1-4). Both Silas and Timothy had no recorded personal exercise to go forth; this was Paul's choice (15.40; 16.3), though Paul's decision to commence his second journey was his own exercise (15.36). Apollos went into Achaia on his own accord (18.27), and later it is quite clear that he was not moved by Paul's suggestions (1 Cor. 16.12). It appears that Timothy never had any personal exercise as to his service, but always acted upon suggestions from Paul (Acts 19.22; 1 Cor. 4.17; 1 Thess. 3.2; 1 Tim. 1.3; 2 Tim. 4.9). Each believer's call to service has a different basis, and one's whole life may be formed by suggestions and requests from others, in contrast to a personal exercise that is then recognized by a local assembly when qualifications are suitable, and then commendation follows. Some of these remarks do not often

apply to a full-time calling in these days, but they certainly do to a "non-full-time" calling.

By the grace of God, I was converted during my last term in the sixth form at school in Norwich during the evening of Thursday, June 10th 1943. This was both unexpected and sudden, and came without any precious knowledge of the gospel. For years I had been a practising member of the established church; since so-called "confirmation" I had attended "communion" every Sunday, as well as attending two other services regularly, being a Sunday School Teacher, and helping the local vicar in many ways, so much so that he thought I was going to become a parson. I had no real interests except school academic work during the first four years of the war. I had come top in religious knowledge examinations, beating those whom I later knew to be christians. I had even read the Bible through, but with a blinded mind, since I never found salvation in my reading. In fact, I thought that my religious experience was correct, since I had never questioned it. I just absorbed the traditional teaching and practice, and my position was based on complete ignorance, certainly not on rejection of the truth. This was compounded by some useless religious instruction masters at my school in the lower forms. The local vicar was a good preacher, but his messages never reached my heart.

But there was one school master who was different, a naturalized Swede, Mr. S. Welander, the metalwork master from 1933 to 1946 who also taught religious knowledge to some lower forms as well as elementary physics. Even I could see that he was different. His lessons were different. When on firewatching duty with another master, he would never sleep in the smoky common room with the other master; he would always sleep in a large store room attached to the metalwork shop. I knew him well, through being in charge of the physics laboratory, and arranging apparatus for his lessons. He even gave me an evangelical magazine regularly, but my eyes were blind. Once he invited me to a gospel meeting in the old Haymarket Meeting Room in the centre of Norwich, to which I went, abandoning my usual Sunday evening service. Alas, the preacher

spoke on some abstract topic from the tabernacle in Exodus, about which I understood nothing. I might have been saved that evening had the gospel been preached properly.

But the Lord had arranged for a series of "coincidences" for that evening of June 10th. I had left school late that afternoon, and was cycling along the school road, Eaton Road, in the opposite direction than was normal, intending to cycle to the railway station in the east of Norwich where I had an item on order at the bookstall. At the end of the road, a lady appeared running, saying, "Stop, stop; are you going to the station?". This was right the other side of Norwich, but I was going there. She introduced herself as Mrs. Welander; her son was leaving by train for the Midlands, and had forgotten a package. Would I take it to him? Of course I agreed, but not knowing her son, I had to ask in every carriage in all trains at the many platforms, but I failed to locate him. So later that evening I cycled to her home to return the package. Would I visit her husband? He was lying ill in a bed in his summer house at the bottom of the garden, so as a sixthformer I went to pay my respects. Now here was a brother in the Lord who would speak about nothing except the Scriptures. He soon discovered that I was not saved! So he pointed out to me many verses and passages that showed the way of salvation through faith; he explained the meaning of the cross and the death of Christ, something I had never understood before. Not being a rejector, but merely being ignorant, I accepted the truth there and then, and from that evening my life was changed.

But the break with the established church, utterly and absolutely, took nearly two years to achieve. I attended the Bible Readings at the Haymarket Meeting, not understanding very much. I often visited the home of Mr. Welander, and he opened the Scriptures with a view to baptism and fellowship. My roots were too deep in the established church, and I used to discuss this with the local vicar who seemed so convincing that my mind remained uncertain; at least, the nature of my Sunday School lessons changed to a more evangelical nature. Shortly afterwards I left school, ready to study mathematics at Cambridge, but I had to join

the army, training for the electronics side of telecommunications, and complicated indeed it was. All had to be learnt in five months what post office engineers took years to learn. Six weeks in Glasgow allowed me to attend the gospel meetings and Bible Readings at Eastpark Hall, Maryhill, and I was often invited to the home of the late Mr. J. McPhearson. After my training in Catterick, I was suddenly posted to Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, on Saturday, June 20th 1944, being the only technician available to go from my unit in Hitchin. This proved to be the first vital turning point in my life as a believer. I walked down to Southend the next afternoon, and passed Alexander Gospel Hall in Westcliffe, and resolved to attend the gospel meeting that evening. Several other soldiers in uniform were present, and the speaker was directing his message to us. During his address, he did something I have never heard of since; he invited anyone who was a believer (obviously amongst the soldiers unknown to him) to give a brief testimony. I was enabled to give a brief statement regarding my faith and conversion. Immediately after the meeting, an elder Mr. O. Pamment came over to me to invite me round to his home for supper, provided by his wife Mrs. M. Pamment. Little beginnings go a long way; in 1981 I had the sad responsibility of conducting her funeral service in Sidmouth, and in 1989 the funeral service of our brother in Budleigh Salterton.

In his home, Mr. Pamment soon found out my position in the faith, and did everything to encourage me and to instruct me in the Scriptures. As the years passed, I must confess that I found him to be the best-taught and knowledgeable teacher of Scripture that I have ever met—not really a platform or conference man, but in a Bible Reading and in the home; there his experience was particularly used for the Lord and His people. For two months I attended as many meetings as my duties allowed, and although I was not yet baptized, and certainly Mr. Pamment knew and practised assembly truth in its fulness, yet he invited me to break bread on Lord's Day mornings, and I taught in the Sunday School at Westcliffe for several weeks. But formally I was still a member of the "C. of E.", a fact clearly stated in

my army paybook. The opportunity for baptism did not present itself.

In November 1944, before the end of the war, I was posted to Ghent, Belgium, working on telecommunications for four months. There was no assembly in Ghent, yet I was starving for the Word of God. The godly Flemish pastor of the Belgium Gospel Mission had opened his building for meetings for Christians amongst the large number of forces in the city, and two exceptionally godly and able Canadian army padres (not of the established variety) conducted gospel and ministry meetings three times a week. As I look back I can see what an asset they would have been in the assemblies of the Lord's people. I learnt a lot, and often had tea in the home of a believer Msle. G. DeClercq who spoke Flemish and French, who with her elderly mother attended the Mission. I corresponded with her in French each Christmas until she became so elderly, frail and ill that she no longer could write, and I presume she passed into the Lord's presence about 1987. But her letters were always full of Christ and His return.

Suddenly I was moved to Bruges, no longer working on telecommunications, but waiting for my next posting which would be to Hamburg as soon as the war ended. I was disappointed at the move, but this brought matters to a climax. There were smaller evangelical services held in the Y.M.C.A., but alas, Sunday church parades were compulsory. The sermon delivered on Easter Sunday, April 1st was a perfect disgrace. For me that was the last straw. After much consideration, I resolved to adopt the army procedure for "changing one's denomination." I judged the established system to be corrupt in unbelief, and today this is even more so, with corrupt immoral practices and unscriptural church procedures being introduced and regarded as the norm. How evangelicals in the system can remain there I cannot assess. So I had to write a letter to the company officer, passing it through the company sergeant major on Monday, April 16th, who threw it down before a clerk asking him to deal with the matter. He proved to be a young man "in the brethren," with whom I became friendly for a

few weeks. I had to have an interview on the 20th with the army padre of the denomination I was leaving. According to my diary, he showed no opposition, stating that he sought to fight against formality and would like changes, and that C. of E. membership was only lip-service on the part of most people. Then on the 22nd I had to have an interview with "the other denomination padre," and had a pleasant talk with him for half an hour. Army rules were that anyone seeking a change had to have six weeks instruction in the doctrine and practice of one's new "denomination." This was, of course, impossible in my position, and in any case I left Bruges on May 9th. But administration was going on behind the scenes, and the matter finally caught up with me in Hamburg in June. My section officer formally deleted "C. of E." in my paybook, and substituted "Brethren" and initialed the change. I have this "proof" of my subsequent position and fellowship with local assemblies before me as I write, a change that took place 45 years ago. One can have no pride in this "written proof," which I have sometimes used as an "exhibit" to show the clear-cut nature of the step I took. I have never had any regret in that solemn step taken so long ago; it was a strange series of events that led to the perception and carrying out of the Lord's will. I was baptized on Saturday, November 17th, when on leave in Norwich from Middelburg in Holland.

Active participation in a local assembly was not possible until I was posted for many months to Paris in 1946. There was only one small assembly in Paris, meeting on the Rue Pierre Semard; this meant a long underground journey from the south-west of Paris to the north-east, as well as long walks each end. No doubt in one's youth one can sustain anything in the Lord's Name. Meetings were in French which I could understand; I met the late Mr. G. Jones (interned during the war) who spoke perfect French with a strong English accent and hence easy to understand—a good expositor of the Scriptures. I also met the late Mr. H. Beattie and his wife, recently arrived from Belfast to learn French for missionary service. I attended as many meetings as my duties allowed, sometimes adopting strange methods

to escape duty so as to be present at the Lord's Supper. I often used to have meals in the flat of an elderly sister Msle. E. Lowinger, with whom I corresponded in French each Christmas, until I had a card announcing her decease in an envelope addressed in her own handwriting. Mrs. M. Beatie, now living in Bury St. Edmunds, will recall this faithful sister of long ago. A photograph of the assembly taken in 1946, including myself, keeps the memory alive with happy recollections of those formative days so long ago. But I had broken completely with the established church, and under no circumstances would I ever want to go back to participate in its false formalism, practices and doctrines. Like Paul, I would never build again those things that I had destroyed (Gal. 2.18).

"All the way my Saviour leads me, What have I to ask beside?"

—(to be continued)

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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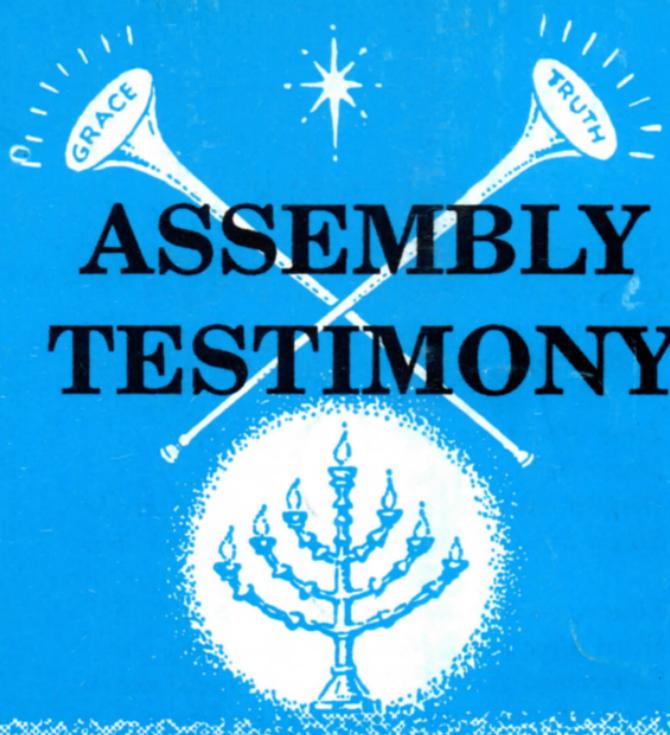
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Contents

**EXPLANATION OF A NEGLECTED CHAPTER
1 CORINTHIANS 7**
by Eric G. Parmenter

VITAL VERITIES by E. W. Rogers

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS
by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD
by J. B. Hewitt

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON
by T. Meekin

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS
by W. J. M'Clure

DEVOTEDNESS
Selected

MY CONVERSION AND CALL
by J. Heading

THE BIBLE

*Blow after blow, attacks the Living Word,
Go after go, against the Spirit's Sword,
Why so attacked? and why the pressure on?
Well Satan knows that God is on the throne.*

*Time after time, along life's history,
Man after man, assails its mystery,
Why so maligned? and charges of all kinds?
Satan himself has darkened all their minds.*

*Line upon line, denotes the very fact,
Word after word, with very quick impact,
Conscience disturbed, produces awful shame,
Reaction to sin and to that Holy Name.*

*Hardened and softened, as each alternate,
Rebellious, Repentant or reprobate,
Changing responses, from each mortal man,
The Living Word, a gift to fallen man.*

*The natural mind, cannot its truth reveal,
Only the Spirit taught, observe its great appeal,
The living Word reveals the way to Heaven,
Through Christ the Lord, the Saviour God has
given.*

*Do let it speak, read it on bended knee,
Ponder its claims, you would more holy be?
"Feed" on it daily, let it be your guide,
Your comfort, solace, strength, whate'er betide.*

—James Neilly.

An Explanation of a Neglected Chapter — *1 Corinthians 7*

by ERIC G. PARMENTER, Basingstoke

Part 1—The Background

During Paul's eighteen months stay at Corinth many of that city were converted under his preaching. When the apostle left Corinth these new converts wanting to live consecrated lives in separation from the world found themselves faced with certain personal issues and with little in the way of New Testament writings were unsure as to what they should do. What these personal issues were can be suggested in the answers given by the apostle Paul.

1. Should young believers marry, and if they do will marriage affect their devotion to Christ?
2. If a believing wife leaves her husband, would she be free to re-marry?
3. Being already married with a family when the gospel came — would it be honouring to the Lord in continuing to cohabit with a partner, an idolater who despises and rejects Christ and His gospel?
4. Should existing religious and social distinctions be altered now they are saved?
5. Was it right for widows to re-marry?

These appear to be issues concerning which the Corinthians sought the counsel of the apostle.

Should Young Believers Marry?

The apostle states a general principle in verses 1 & 2 "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" the word "good" indicates what is expedient or advantageous. The meaning of the word "touch" is to "cohabit with" cf Prov. 6.29, but in view of the low moral state of their society where immorality was common practice among the people — to avoid this sin Paul continues with

"Let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband". Paul was acutely aware of the prevailing moral standards at Corinth, he was equally aware of the real temptation to fornication, and the likely practices of the believers before their conversion, knowing that pre-marital relationships were prevalent among the heathen and more so at Corinth. In our own society also the younger generation considers pre-marital relationships as the norm.

The apostle emphasises that such sexual sins are not to be indulged in by believers, and because fornication presented very real temptations he gives the instruction "let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband". Without quoting Genesis 2.24 he clearly has in mind what God purposed from the beginning, one man and one woman exclusive to each other.

Sometimes the practice of the Patriarchs and Kings of Old Testament scripture is referred to as the basis for having more than one wife. We need to keep before us that in the beginning God had the power to make more than one woman for Adam, but that was not His purpose: His intention was one man and one woman. Paul in Ephesians 5 explains the purpose of God — the husband and wife relationship reflects the mystical union of Christ and the Church.

A Parenthesis

Verses 3, 4 & 5 can be considered as a parenthesis in which he gives sound instruction to those already married. The word "render" in verse 3 means to "discharge an obligation". Whereas the word "benevolence" should be omitted, only the AV text carries it.

Paul is giving instruction to those already married in respect of marital dues, the husband is under obligation to give to his wife her conjugal rights and in the same manner the wife to the husband: As "heirs together of the grace of life," 1 Pet. 3.7, the object of each is not self gratification but in selflessness having a mutual care for each other, the duty to each will be fulfilled, bearing in mind that neither the wife or the husband have control of their own bodies. The woman who marries gives up the full right to her own body and so the man. In view of this the apostle exhorts the married couple in verse 5 not to defraud ie refuse or

deprive each other in the matter of their marital rights; unless it be for a limited time, by mutual agreement in order to give themselves with greater concentration to prayerful exercise before God, then they must come together again. Paul knew the very real danger to which such would be exposed and he was not ignorant of the devil's devices who, if possible, would use the occasion to tempt one or the other to do wrong and sin against God through lack of self control.

Speaking by permission

Some have taken Paul's words in verse 6 to mean that he was speaking outside of the inspiration of God. This is not so for the apostle makes it quite clear that "all scripture is God breathed" (2 Tim 3.16). The word "this" verse 6 looks back to what Paul has said in verse 2. This is confirmed by the word "for" verse 7. The apostle is not just giving his opinion as a private individual, he is writing in the consciousness of his apostolic authority and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He makes reference to his own single state in verse 7 desiring that all might have the power of self control, so in remaining they would not fall to the temptation of fornication. Paul then qualifies this personal desire, not wishing to force his state upon others recognise that each have their own gift of grace bestowed upon them by God. Whether a christian marries or remains single responsibility in the matter is to God alone.

Evidently in reference to the service of God it would be an advantage in some circumstances to remain unmarried.

Younger christians would be wise to seek the mind of God for them in respect of His service before deciding the question—shall I marry or remain single? To remain unmarried in no way makes the christian more holy or spiritually superior to christians who marry; but in relation to serving God it might be more expedient in some cases.

WIDOWS — Verse 8

The apostle considers the widow along with the unmarried and he reiterates — it is good for them to remain unmarried if they can, as he was, but if there is want of self control, if they cannot contain, rather than burn with passion or be tortured with ungratified desire it would be better to go ahead and marry.

(to be continued)

VITAL VERITIES (15)

by E. W. ROGERS

Eternal Punishment — Part 2

So far, then, we gather that the term "Eternal punishment" means Punishment which never ceases.

JUDGMENT

Next we have to consider the word Judgment found in Heb. 6.2. It is a word which suggests many questions, e.g.—

Who is the Judge?

Who are they who are judged?

What is the crime, or what are the crimes which form the subject of judgment?

What is the verdict?

What is the punishment?

We will answer these seriatim.

THE JUDGE

is clearly God Himself. Abraham called Him the "Judge of all the earth." Solomon says it is He "who will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or evil." It is He with whom the writer to the Hebrews says "we have to do," or otherwise read "To whom we have to give account." The whole tenor of scripture makes it plain that God will judge.

Man has disputed the justice of this, asserting that his difficulties can only be appreciated by one who himself has trodden the same path, and therefore he ought to be judged by a man.

For this reason, *inter alia*, God has designed that all judgment is to be given to His Son, because He is Son of Man, and that He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by that *Man* whom He hath ordained. He will be judged by a Man who by His life here has shown what man's life should be.

WHO ARE THESE THAT ARE JUDGED?

It is not our purpose to broaden the issue by speaking of the final doom of Satan nor of the judgment of angels, in which saints

are to take part. But concisely answered, those who are to be judged are Unbelievers, amongst others. For confirmation see Rev. 21.8.

The believer in the Lord Jesus has total exemption from judgment, John 5.24, says he will not stand in the dock for trial; Romans 8.1, that there is no judgment awaiting him after death; and 1 John 4.17 that "as He is so are we in His world." The Lord Jesus is on the resurrection side of Divine Judgment, it being all past for Him: and the believer is in a like case.

But the one who has heard the gospel, and refused to believe it, is in the list of those who being judged, will be eternally punished in the lake of fire.

We speak not here of the heathen who have not heard of the name of Christ. They are responsible to God for the witness they have in creation and conscience. The Judge of all the earth will do right in their case. But those whose opportunities have been greater, and whose responsibilities are therefore proportionately increased, will have to endure proportionately increased punishment.

THE CHARGE

It has sometimes been said that Man will not be judged for his deeds, but will be judged for rejecting God's Son. Now this needs to be modified as it does not accord with Scripture.

Time and again we read that man will be judged "according to his works." See in particular Rev. 20.12,13. Again Jude 15 speaks of "all the ungodly deeds and all the hard speeches" which will form the subject matter for judgment. Man has to give account of every idle word spoken and wrong deed done.

It is true that of all things done by man, the rejection of God's Son is the most serious, for it is not only the greatest insult man could give God; it is also the greatest injury man can do himself.

But this, though the gravest, is but one of a long series of grave charges which are brought against the unbelieving sinner.

That "God will bring *every work* into judgment with *every secret thing*, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" is the answer to our third question.

THE VERDICT

The result of this judgment is, to use legal phraseology, that a

conviction is obtained. The person is not charged and condemned, merely, but he is charged, convicted of the justice of both charge made and punishment about to be meted out, and is then condemned. From another point of view "he is condemned already," but we here refer to the ultimate issue of the judgment of the Great White Throne.

It has been rare, but not altogether unknown, for the innocent to be charged, condemned and imprisoned. Such a case occurred in this country not long ago. When justice was done, the prisoner was released and handsomely compensated.

Such a prisoner must have held in his bosom all through the trial and punishment, the conviction that he was right, and his accusers and punishers were wrong. They might charge, try and punish him; but never could they *convict* him, seeing his conscience testified within to his own innocence.

But such a case cannot occur at the Great White Throne, for then God will Judge through His Righteous Son, and the issue will be that all will be *convicted* of their guilt (See Jude 15). None will ever hold it in his breast that God is wrong; he is right; and he does not deserve what he is experiencing.

WHAT IS THE PUNISHMENT?

In dealing with this question we will arrange our remarks under three headings:

- (a) The immediate experience of a sinner who dies in his sins.
- (b) The Great White Throne.
- (c) The Lake of Fire.

Immediately a sinner dies he enters on an experience which is described by the Lord Jesus Himself in the last part of Luke, chap. 16. Read either as history or parable it is terrible.

All is perfectly clear. The departed individual has not ceased to be, but has entered on a new phase of experience in a new, a disembodied state, consciously under punishment, called here by the term "Tortmented."

The locality of the person concerned is termed "Hades" (here the word "Hell" should be so read) — the place of departed and disembodied spirits. It is not heaven. It is not Hell (Gehenna) the lake of fire.

The condition of the person is irrevocable. It is not possible for an alteration to take place. "A great gulf is fixed" — transference to Abraham's bosom is impossible. The condition is hopeless.

It is evident the Lord wished His hearers to understand that it is in lifetime that the issues of eternity are settled, and that once a person passes the thin line which separates this world from the next, locality and condition are eternally settled. Alteration and transference are alike impossible.

This is not an isolated passage suggesting these things. Were it so it would suffice, but the general tenor of Scripture is that once a person dies he enters on a new condition of conscience experience, either of bliss, or of torment — and that once entered upon, it is fixed.

Oh! That God would impress our hearts with the fact that every unbeliever's funeral is a reminder of a fresh addition to the lost who might have been saved if only they had believed the gospel which far too many of us preach but half-heartedly!

"Now is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus ensures the resurrection of every man, believer or unbeliever (1 Cor. 15.21). That the times of their resurrections differ is true, but the fact is universal.

The sceptic may scorn and question the possibility of such an event, seeing that the bodies of the departed have long since corrupted, gone off into gases, or have become chemical constituents of the soil in which they have been placed and such like objections. To all such the reply is "Ye know not the Scripture nor the power of God." Certainly He who called a universe into being by His word and who has since maintained it through countless ages, and who from the dust created man, is able to raise from the dust of His creation.

Raised from the dead they will stand before the Great White Throne, there to be judged "according to their deeds." The Books are opened in which is contained the detailed record of the person's earthly course — "all his hard speeches and all his ungodly deeds." The book of life is opened, also. The *books* contain mention of unbelievers: the *book* of life omits mention of them, and the inclusion in the one, and the omission from the others, constitutes double ground for the infliction of punishment upon them.

THE LAKE OF FIRE

Surely in no part of Scripture appears a more solemn and awful passage than Mark 9.43-50.

He who was full of grace was also full of truth, and He who spake as none other, excelled all in candour, simplicity and faithfulness.

The reader should peruse before a thrice holy God the solemn statements, and allow the words to rest in the memory: "Gehenna, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Listen to what another has written of Gehenna:—

"It was still within less than 30 years of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans that the idol — the hideous ox-headed human figure of Moloch — and its accessories were swept away from the valley by the good Josiah, and the place was so defiled that it could never again be desecrated by the frightful worship. But so deeply had the horrors of the past printed themselves on the popular mind that henceforth the spot bore the name of Tophet — the abomination — the place to be spat upon; and in later times the very words Gehinnom — the Valley of Hinnom — slightly changed into Gehenna became the common name for Hell." And again:—

"After King Josiah had defiled the place it became the open sewer of the city. Fires were kept continually burning to consume the filth and impurity of the place. Worms fed on garbage out of reach of the fire. Vultures gloated in crowds over the horrid scene. Stenchful smoke rose continually from the valley.

"Well might our Lord use it as an emblem of hell, and stamp the usage of the word with the hall-mark of His authority. But let it be carefully noted that the Lord in speaking of Gehenna never referred to the pace outside Jerusalem, but used it to designate that place of eternal torment which is prepared for the devil and his angels, and to which the impenitent will be consigned."

Another scholar has stated that the word "Tophet" means a drum and says: "Drums were continually being beaten in this awful place to drown the cries of the helpless children who were constantly thrown alive on the flames; thus a fit emblem of that awful place where the unsaved must spend their eternity."

A careful analysis of the Lord's words reveal the following facts:—

- (a) The person is in a hopelessly lost condition.
- (b) He is conscious — the worm dieth not.
- (c) The condition is interminable — the fire is not quenched.

Were the person annihilated then one may ask what need is there for "unquenchable" fire?

(d) The very element in which he is, "fire," a term descriptive of Divine judgment and wrath, is the very element which will preserve him in conscious existence therein (see v. 46).

Through the Spirit John calls it the "lake of fire" which burneth with fire and brimstone. Revelation is a book of symbols and the language here, therefore, may be read symbolically. Literally it would denote acute suffering; symbolically it lacks nothing of its horror.

Oh! God save us all from the indifference in this matter. The believer is entrusted with the only effective panacea for sinful man, and the only means of rescue from such a terrible doom. "Sermons" will never save souls, but whole-hearted Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered preaching of the glad tidings of Christ who died to save perishing man will.

(to be continued)

READING WITH A RESERVE

Too often God's people read what comes into their hands with a mental reserve. They are determined not to see anything against their peculiar beliefs or anything that would affect the position in which they are found. They do not admit the possibility that they may be mistaken or that what they sincerely believe to be the truth may after all be only one man's interpretation of the Scriptures. Hence they may read the truth and reject it in order to cling to their traditions which they have learned from their teachers, and not from the Word of God.

May Christians who constantly subject themselves to teachings of any particular party, realise that their minds can be trained to think in a certain groove and to view truth in a certain light, but that light may not be the light of God.

How easy it is for those who have had only one side of things presented to their minds to form the idea that their view is unassailable, when all the time it is not God's truth at all; but only man's reasoning.—*Selected*

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. BOWER, Worcester

1—INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK.

After the death of Solomon the seeds of idolatry, oppression, moral depravity and spiritual decadence — always present in the nation of Israel from the wilderness journey and the Exodus onwards and encouraged by Solomon during his reign, bore their first inevitable fruit, in the division of the kingdom into the two independent kingdoms of Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. From the days of the anonymous prophet who inveighed against the altar set up by Jeroboam the son of Nebat “ who made Israel to sin” to the days of Amos, Hosea and Jonah, each one prophesying in the days of Jeroboam the second who “did evil in the sight of the Lord” was, perhaps, 170 years; years of internecine strife, revolt of tributary nations, invasion by and oppression from surrounding nations then emerging and the reign of evil kings who fanned the flames of growing declension. Two names stand out during this period — those of Elijah and Elisha, prophets whose messages from the Lord were accompanied by signs and wonders.

Amos (the name means “he who takes up a burden and lays down a burden”) came upon the scene as a prophet of woe to the Northern Kingdom which was to survive for about another 60 years. They were enjoying a time of “Indian Summer,” for God, seeing the plight of His people, had used Jeroboam to recover some of Israel’s lost territories and thus enlarge Israel’s borders. This was “according to the word of the Lord” by Jonah (2 Kings 14). The successful campaigns waged by Jeroboam, and the “boom” then being experienced was, it has been said, a time of opulence and ease. They had “never had it so good”. Despite the new found wealth, the nation was rotten to the core; wealthy nobles of Samaria indulged themselves in drunken orgies, singing parodies of the sacred songs of David; urged on by their women folk they boasted of their power and satiated themselves to the full (4.1). This power and pleasure was purchased with the ill-gotten

gains of oppression, the common people being ground down into that which was abject poverty. Their trading was corrupt and unscrupulous; slavery was the penalty for unpaid debts (2. 6, 7); judgment was perverted by bribery (5. 11-13) and, licentious idolatries. This was the world that Amos saw when God "took" him from following the flocks.

Amos the herdsman cum shepherd cum gatherer of sycomore fruit was, as we may say, an agricultural worker, a farm labourer — a real "son of the soil". Some see him in rather a different light as a sheep breeder, a cultivator of sycomore fruit, a smallholder. He was not a "trained" prophet from one of the "schools". Said he, "I was no prophet. I was a herdsman . . . and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and said unto me, "Go, prophesy unto My people Israel." This commission would infer that the word of the Lord was intended for the whole nation (north and south) "My people" are in view.

Amos appeals much to the world of nature and to the rural life.. His eye ranges over the nations. Israel is no longer to be thought of exclusively or in isolation; its destiny is no longer contemplated apart from that of the surrounding nations. Jehovah is God of the whole world and not of His chosen people only. In passing we note that Judah the southern kingdom would go on for about another 150 years.

Joel ended his prophecy with the words, "The Lord dwelleth in Zion" and Amos begins his prophecy with "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem." It is almost as if Amos carries on from where Joel left off. It may be that we forget that not all the prophets were "lone wolves" and when we consider that Amos was probably contemporary with Hosea and Jonah (and perhaps, Isaiah) we may well ask why it was that Israel remained deaf to their pleas? The message of each was an individual one. Together they had one purpose — to bring Israel back to the God they had forgotten.

As we may see from the testimony of Amos, he was unique among the prophets. His message from the Lord came by way of visions and it was short and to the point. Then, or so it would seem, his task was accomplished and he returns to his own humble occupation. These so called "minor" prophets are lessons

in themselves, not only for the day in which they wrote but for the generations following, including ours. It is not too much to see Amos as an ordinary, humble, "man in the street"—an ordinary citizen who was God fearing and therefore hard working and conscientious in his work and truly "honest to God". As he saw the way his own nation and that of surrounding nations was going with the immorality, pleasure seeking, wealth and abject poverty, violence and self first attitude and, worse, the drift away from God he was greatly disturbed and distressed. In N. T. language, his heart failed him for fear of coming events as they cast their shadows.

Then he hears the word of the Lord proclaiming judgments against the nations who, in one way or another, had afflicted Israel. THEY deserved what was coming to them. THEY had multiplied THEIR transgressions beyond measure, nevertheless these judgments against Damascus, Moab and Philistia and Edom were but a prelude, and introduction to the judgments that were building up against the people of God. His chosen people; those whom He had known in a husband and wife relationship; those who had a form of godliness yet whose very actions denied this power. Israel had multiplied their transgressions — not against the nations about them but against God whose law they despised. The voice of God was directed against them not from the outside but from inside — from Jerusalem. The nations would be punished BECAUSE (Moab expected) they had afflicted the people of God. Moab was to be punished because of their treatment of the body of the king of Edom.

(Is this how God views deliberate cremation?)

Israel and Judah would be punished BECAUSE they despised the law of God; evident corruption and perverted justice. Transgression, whether of Israel or the nations, must be punished. God must speak out and act. "All men and all nations are held responsible to God. The Lord does not forget sin, save as it is laid on Christ," "God's special concern is His people."

How difficult it is to remove the beam from one's own eye; how difficult to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to us when our own voices, our own business, our own pleasure, our own way makes so much clamour, demands so much attention. Godliness thus displaced is but a facade.

(to be continued)

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

6—THE REVELATION TO DEFEAT AND DESPAIR

John 21

This revelation of the Risen Lord was to give them something to remember for ever after, "He showed Himself" as Lord of all. Lessons on work (v. 1-14); on character (v.18, 19); and on duty (v. 20-22).

Here is Christ with His disciples mediating, directing and controlling, giving us life (v. 1-14); love (v. 15-17) and light (v. 18-24). The title "Lord" occurs eight times in the chapter and is the message for our hearts.

LORD OF HIS SAINTS WHOM HE LOVES (v. 1,2)

He is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. *His ministry of revelation* — Himself; No one else can save, sustain or satisfy the heart. In this book the Person of Christ is central. He made Himself visible. He had been there all the time, the constancy and the reality of His Love would be memorable. *His ministry of recovery* (v. 2). What variety and unity is seen in these seven saints. The unnamed are not unnoticed, and all loved by the Lord. *His ministry of prevention* (v. 3). A night of failure for them.

LORD OF OUR LABOUR WHICH HE DIRECTS (v. 3-6)

Did they go out of self will? Were they discouraged as they waited for Him? (Matt. 28. 10).

The Lord does care and He wants to control our service (v. 4). It is always morning which Jesus is near; His presence is our sunrise. He is ever watching us and waiting to help us. He is concerned (v. 5). He inquired as to the results. His personal interest in what we do is the very best incentive to faithful service (Mark 6. v. 48). Did the Lord all night long deliberately keep the fish out of their nets? Over much of our service He still writes, night—nothing. His restraining hand would enforce what He had told them; "Without me ye can do nothing" (15.5).

His word of command (v. 6). Here is the true method of work, when and where He orders. Their prompt obedience is commendable and fruitful (v. 6). He always compensates those who do His will.

LORD OF OUR NEEDS WHICH HE SUPPLIES (v. 7-14)

What preparation He had made for them (v. 9). Did the miracle recall to Peter's mind a similar experience in this area which led to his enlistment as a disciple (Luke 5. 1-11). The Lord always meets our need, what rich provision He has for us. Just what those men needed most that morning, Jesus had prepared for them. They came in cold after being on the chill waters all night, and He had a fire for them. They came in depressed and perhaps irritable, they needed a friend and He gave them a welcome and fellowship. They were charmed by the warmth of His own presence and He invited them to break their fast. They were hungry and He provided food for them. What a word of comfort "come and dine". "Fire of coals" (v.9) occurs here and in 18. 18 only. At the one Peter thrice denied his Lord; at the other he thrice confessed Him.

The Lord's provision is appropriate "all our need", it is abundant, (v.6, v.8), it is assured "come and dine", and should be accepted and appreciated; be sure to thank Him for everything.

This was no ordinary meal and there was a hush over the meal silent worshipping hearts in His presence (v.12, 13). It reminded them of another miracle and meal, when He multiplied what the lad gave that day (6. 9) Both a picture of what will be hereafter (Matt. 25. 34; Rev. 19. 9).

LORD OF MY LOVE WHICH HE SOLICITS (v. 15-17)

Peter is welcomed, warmed and fed before he is challenged by the Lord, "lovest thou Me more than these?" Jesus remembered the words of Peter (Mark 14. 29). This reminder which Peter is given of his previous self-confidence leads him to speak modestly in what follows.

The love of which Christ spoke was something absolute, heavenly, eternal and Peter had not reached to the pure heights of such love. He raises now no question of comparison with others, he was sure of personal affection (v. 15c).

The word of Commission (v.15d) "Feed My lambs" Provide the little ones with that which is needed for their support (1 John 2.12).

This fisher's work was to be followed by the shepherd's work. In the Gospels Peter is the evangelist — the man with the hook, a fisher of men, in the Acts a pastor, the man with the crook — caring for sheep, in his Epistles a teacher, the man with the book — feeding our souls. The second time Peter is given a new charge — "shepherd my sheep", the mature and the vigorous to be guided. (1 John 2. 14), "the fathers".

The third time the Lord uses the apostle's own word for love, lovest thou Me with the affection which will give up all for a friend? Peter leaves out the affirmation which he had made before, and throws himself wholly upon Christ; "Thou knowest that I love Thee".

The Final Commission to a sphere of difficult service, "Feed My Sheep" (1 John 2. 14b). All service to Christ depends upon our personal devotion to Him. Do you really love Him? Is your service for Him sacrificial? (2 Cor. 5. 14, 15). True love will never be idle.

LORD OF MY FUTURE HE DETERMINES (v. 18, 19)

Peter had learned what he was to do for others, what he might ask, would be the issue for himself. His past is described (v. 18a). He was impulsive and independent; he had freedom in his youth. His future is disclosed (v. 18b). It will be marked by surrender and suffering, complete outward bondage ending in martyrdom and glory (v. 19). His present is declared (v. 19c) "Follow Me." Christ glorified the Father by His death. Peter will do the same. Peter is now directed from all service and suffering to a life of devotion and allegiance to His Lord. He is still looking for lovers and followers.

Here is the foundation, the character, the issue of active service for Christ. There must be love, considerate thoughtfulness (v. 22) and self-surrender. This is the spirit of the Master and of the new covenant (1 Cor. 13).

LORD OF MY LIFE WHICH HE CONTROLS (v. 22-25)

All is under the sovereign control of our Master day by day.

Like Peter we are interested in what others do and inquisitive as to what their future might be (v. 21). Peter was fond of meddling and even tried to manage his Master (Matt. 16 v 22). But he had learned the lesson later, (see 1 Peter 4 v. 15). He learned that the Master's will is always sovereign over all, but not always seen by all. Each servant has a special sphere. To Peter it is working, to John it is waiting. We must accept our responsibilities as individuals and serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3. 24; Mark 13. 24). We have a simple duty, a life of absolute trust, and implicit obedience. We have a splendid prospect — "till I come". This should thrill our hearts whether we are called to serve or to suffer, we do so in the expectation of His soon coming again. May we trust in the Lord. (v. 1-14) love and serve Him (v. 15-17), be courageous in suffering or death (v. 18, 19) and exercise patience (v. 20 -23).

It is sometimes more difficult to wait than to work, but it is not an inferior grace.

May we learn that our Glorious Lord is the Indispensable Christ (v. 1-7), the Inexhaustible Christ (v. 8-14); the Interrogating Christ (v. 15-17); the Illuminating Christ (v. 18, 19) and the Incomparable Christ (v. 20-25).

His last words in John Chs. 19-21.

Three Precious Words for the Soul.

“It is finished.” 19.30

Three Gracious Words for the Spirit.

“Why Weepest Thou?” 20.13

Three Cheering Words for the Mind.

“Peace unto you.” 20.19,21

Three encouraging words for the Weary.

“Come and Dine.” 21.12

Three Searching Words for the Conscience.

“Lovest Thou Me?” 21.15

Three Commanding Words for the Will.

“Feed My Sheep.” 21.16

Three Directing Words for the Feet.

“Follow Thou Me.” 21.12

Three Inspiring Words for the Heart.

“Till I Come.” 21.22

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin (Glengormley)

1. THE SON IN THE SHADOWS

The life of Aaron could appeal to us in many ways. However for these few papers there are three aspects which we could profitably consider viz.

1. The SON in the SHADOW
2. The SPEAKER and his SERMON
3. The SAINT and his NAME

1. THE SON IN THE SHADOWS.

i). His Silence at Moses' Concealment

Among all the favoured homes in bible times there must be few, if any, who were so specially blessed as that of Amram and Jochebed. Generally in the best known stories of the Heroes of Faith (and even of secular history) it was left to one member of the family to make a very special impact on the course of world events. However in the case of the family before us, all three of their children were to make lasting contributions both to their own days and the generations to follow.

To have Miriam the prophetess, Aaron the High Priest and Moses the Deliverer all spring from the one home is nothing short of the miraculous ways in which God is pleased to work. We shall first of all consider the home life of Aaron as a son and as a brother before ever the illustrious mantle of priesthood falls upon him and trace without being over imaginative (for little is said in the way of scriptural record) some of the feelings that must have been his in the ordinary round of life. It is in this sphere that great men moulded for God ere He brings them to a place of prominence.

The days of Aaron's early childhood were dark, with the threat of Pharaoh constantly hanging over the heads of Israels' families. The tears of neighbours, relatives and friends would

nothing strange to this three year old and his older sister and so it was in these days that Acts ch. 7 records " in which time Moses was born." It is a big day in the life of any three year old when a new baby is born into the home so why should we imagine that Aaron was different from others. I have observed homes both in riches and poverty where this universal joy is marked. Yet with the pride in the new baby's appearing can come also the feeling of the possibility of being ousted from the special place of attention hitherto enjoyed by the next youngest.

The possible petty jealousies of childhood, common to all, would be magnified by the undoubted special features of the new arrival. —A "fairness" was manifested in the child Moses which may or may not have been physically apparent but was none-the-less appreciated by the loving parents. There would be a treatment of this child as perhaps there had not been in the case of the other two — perhaps unwittingly for we read that " they saw that he was a proper child . . . , he was exceeding fair . . ." Yet there seems to be in this happy household sufficient of the fear of God and respect for the parents wishes that for three months both children contributed to the secrecy surrounding the birth of Moses. What three year old does not like to tell of the new baby and what young girl does not like to be seen walking with or nursing her new charge? In this case personal things are put to the side and made to take second place, whether it be personal joys or personal jealousies, so that God's work might be seen to prosper and the stage be set for the protection and nourishment of a man of God.

— A man who would undoubtedly come to greater prominence than either of the other two, yet lovingly protected he will be. What must Aaron's thoughts have been as he watched the building of the ark of bulrushes? No record is given of this silent observer to all the strange happenings in the land of Goshen. No protest cry is heard as the story is told of its purpose. Was it because he went to bed at night with stories like that of Noah's ark in his mind which boosted his confidence in the God to whom his baby brother is to be commended?

Thus is the character of Aaron being moulded as into his mind is undoubtedly poured the stories of the doings of the great God of Israel and the great things that He is expected to

do for His people. Cannot our children thus be preserved and their characters be still moulded, Timothy-like, who from a child knew that Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation. We pass quickly over the days until at last the door bursts open by a panting sister with the announcement that Pharaoh's daughter has found the babe and the mother's services are being sought as a nurse!

We can somehow imagine the family gathering for prayer that evening as Moses, the threatened one, comes under the direct care of the one who had previously designed his downfall. Had they known the hymn they could have sang it lustily—

“God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm.”

So the boys are together again, for how long we cannot tell. It would be certain that Moses lacked for nothing in that period either in food or raiment but the same could not be said of the other children. It is wonderful to see that in that critical period no seeds of resentment were sown in the heart of Aaron against his brother. It was in the youth of Abel, Joseph and David that such resentment stirred in the hearts of their brethren who were unaware of and uninterested in the purposes of God for the youngest brother but such is delightfully absent in Aaron — the SON.

ii) His Submission when Moses is God's choice.

We come to Moses' move to the palace. On days under the blazing sun as the lash of the taskmaster bit into the flesh of Aaron would his thoughts turn to the youth learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, the favoured prince (as some historical, though not biblical records show) leading out Egypt's armies. Would not the natural mind have been, more than ever, at enmity with God in all this? The apparent injustice of it all! Could Aaron have been blamed for thinking “why not me?”

Especially as the passing of thirty years brought no inkling of exercise from the palace of the expected and hoped for deliverer (at least on the part of his family)

Yes, all too often these are our thoughts and assessments of God's actions. We see others in positions that we judge could

be better occupied by ourselves and there is thereby a hardness begotten within our hearts which in itself renders us all but useless to God in His service. Aaron in home life was above this. We shall see that spirit prevailing through his whole life.

His joys and jealousies can be curbed in the sphere and time of infancy given that God has something that He doesn't want published. He moves in the shadow of a greater SON whose "voice is not heard in the streets". How careless we are with our tongues at times in relation to things that should never be published and often they are only broadcast for our own advantage without respect for the harm that may be done to the people and the work of the Lord.

How striking that this remarkable man Aaron bears no resentment when God takes from his home a brother, and a younger one at that, and puts him in the palace while he himself is left to feel the rod. The advancement of others, sometimes younger, sometimes unfairly, and their subsequent blessing even in material things has created the appetite which gnaws at spirituality and has led men to "bite and devour one another."

Aaron seems to have spiritual insight which Moses lacked at forty years of age, that we need others in the pursuing of the work of God and it cannot be done as an individual. So while Moses could be the great Leader, the man on the mountain, the communicator of Divine truth, he could never be the man for priesthood which exercise necessitated "one touched with the feelings of their infirmities".

Aaron is learning in the brick kilns what Moses could never learn in the palace, and both experiences were vital to the development of the things of God. Brethren, when will we ever learn that no man is bigger than the assembly and we still need one another in the work of the Lord?

iii) His support for Moses' Call

The final picture of "Aaron the SON" we shall consider is in Ex. 4. 14 He has never forgotten the childhood days nor the boy who lay in the ark of bulrushes. He has never doubted that somehow, sometime God's purposes concerning him would be fulfilled.

He seems sensitive not only when NOT to speak but also as

to WHEN to speak. Notice that he makes no advances to Moses at the time when Moses thought "his brethren would have understood" but now at the very time when a bush is burning in the wilderness, and Moses' shoes are off, and the man "mighty in word and deed" has seemingly lost his power in word, —this is the time when Aaron's feet are turned towards the desert to play his part in bringing to the public view one of the greatest of God's servants. We might have thought "if he doesn't come back himself leave him in the desert" or "at eighty now, he is past his best" or then again "he tried it once before and made a bad job if it", but Aaron comes out with the specific purpose of meeting with Moses. Unlike the Cain/Abel meeting, the Esau/Jacob encounter, the Eliab/David greeting or the Ten brethren/Joseph reunion the Lord gives the assurance to Moses —

"when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart"

What a heart is this! Oh for hearts to beat like this man's. This son of Amram and Jochebed, this gold refined in Egypt's furnaces and the bible says that they met "in the Mount of God". It is still the meeting place for men who will be useful to God and His people. Too often our time, our conversation etc. is spent on lower ground and —

"the sorrows of the daily life, the shadows o'er my path which fall,

too oft obscure the glory's light, until I rise above them all."

May the Lord help us in His grace to learn from the life of this man and move with becoming selflessness and true desires for the glory of God so that sanctuary experiences will be ours as they were Aaron's. Speaking FOR God will be done the more powerfully when the time comes for God to use us.

TO CORRESPONDENTS—

We are finalising our records.

Please ensure your 'green slip,' contained in the January/February issue has been returned.

Thank you.

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS (2)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

*(These articles appeared in 1922 in the Believers' Magazine,
and are still up to date).*

OPPOSITION to the spread of the Gospel of God increases on every side, not always, nor chiefly openly, but by craft and wile of the adversary. In relation to spreading the Gospel by means of the printed page, in book and tract distribution, this is very marked. The enormous increase of cheap and attractively got up works of fiction, and magazines for the most part of the same character, cannot fail to vitiate the taste of those who read them, against everything of a wholesome and evangelical character. And we know that it does. News-stands at the railway depots, drug and cigar stores, as well as leading book shops, display these prints in thousands, which tell how widespread is the habit of novel reading. And when we remember that for the most part, these works of fiction are of a debasing character, suggestive of all sorts of evil, and as a rule minimising sin, making heroes of their subjects, who in many instances openly set at defiance the laws of God and of the State, glorifying crime and inciting to vice, little wonder if the novel reading community refuse to receive or to read any message that speaks of God, of sin and its sure judgement, and of eternity. Satan has for long aimed at stifling the spread of God's Gospel by the printed message, and he seems to be in a large measure succeeding, by his ever-increasing spread of godless and impure literature. This is surely one of the perils of these last days, with which all who actively evangelise their fellows are confronted, and have to meet. And what makes it all the more difficult is, that many who bear the Christian name indulge freely in, and by their evil example help to extend this deplorable habit of novel reading. What a degrading effect this must have on their spiritual life inwardly! What a withering blight on their Christian testimony among those of their families, their kindred, and their fellow-workers who know their habit! How inconsistent, for those who profess to be "of the truth," and witnesses *for* it, to be having their minds defiled in reading fiction. The practice is defended by

some, who claim that fiction is part of their educational course, and that they must read fiction. This is a lame and worthless excuse on the lips of one who "belongs to Christ." For the greater number of novel readers, the period of school days has passed, and their excuse is as lame, as if a graduate in medicine who, in order to complete his course, has to spend hours in the dissecting room among the dead, were to continue gruesome work after he got his diploma, as a recreation. No novel reader can lay aside his book of entrancing fiction and take up the Book of God, to find in its pages "green pastures" for his hungering soul! The two do not harmonise, they never go well together. One feeds the flesh while it entertains the carnal mind; the other sustains the new life, and draws the soul Christward and heavenward. The times demand a clearing testimony against Christians dabbling in fiction, and the Christian home a complete cleansing from it.

DEVOTEDNESS

Devotedness is a much deeper, and, at the same time, a much simpler, thing than many suppose. Most think that that if they are earnestly engaged in the Lord's work and looking to Him for guidance and blessing, this is being devoted; but it is much more. It is having Christ Himself as the delight and resource of my heart, and the bent of my mind towards Him. The highest service we can render the Lord is, to *serve His heart*, and that is a service to which few devote themselves. Occupation with Christ, with a view to becoming more intimately acquainted with His character; *studying Him*, that we may learn what pleases Him, *Is very rare* indeed. Many can be found who are occupied *for* Christ, like Martha; few who are occupied *with* Him, like Mary. When we have reached this, we have reached the foundation—stone of true devotedness. This is the Gilgal where the serving one returns to encamp, and whence he issues like the sun to run his course, and like a gaint refreshed with new wine. It is because the saints know so little of this Gilgal in the Lord's presence that there is so much unsanctified activity and really profitless work. If there is zeal and ability, without a knowledge of God's mind where and when to use it, how can there but be a turning to take counsel from nature; and how can we expect that the results flowing from such a source will be otherwise than profitless? — *Selected.*

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (12)

by John Heading (Aberystwyth)

In my last article, I have recalled how the Lord led me unexpectedly to salvation, and then to a complete and absolute break with established religion, finding spiritual reality and truth in fellowship with the Lord's people in local assemblies. I was then aged 21, and 1946 the question of service in any way did not enter my mind. Older brethren, both in Norwich after my special release from the army for university education, and in the assembly meeting at Panton Hall, seemed to me to be the spiritual experts, and service of all kinds was apparently in their capable hands. Only recently have I read the wise words of Spurgeon: "I will give you a little bit of worldly wisdom; it is this, — whenever you do not know what to do, do not do it. But some people, when they do not know what to do, go and do it directly, and get themselves into all sorts of trouble". That advice certainly fitted my life, and I suspect that it fits the lives of most of the Lord's people — self-initiative is absent, except when there is a burning independent exercise for special service granted by the Lord.

From October 1946, I attended all the meetings held in Panton Hall; apart from a personal study of the Scriptures, and a testimony to the truth to friends in college, my service was nil. I had no interest in the many kinds of student activities available in Cambridge; the assembly came first and last, though diligence in academic work ultimately gave me degrees that exceed those of most — the Lord is no man's debtor. I never saw fit to join the Christian Union, because it was obvious to me that it was really a Christian Dis-union (proved by what happened, and happens, on Lord's Day mornings rather than what happened, and happens, on Saturday evenings). I had Christian friends in my particular college, of course, and they

often met in my room for prayer and Bible study, because my room had an electric fire, unlike other rooms with coal fires, and because of coal storage these were banned until the evening. But theological students among them often brought to me their theological problems, and I still correspond with two of them every Christmas. None of the students in the assembly attended the weeknight meetings, except myself and David Gooding (a student of classics, now retired from the chair of Old Testament Greek in the Queen's University, Belfast). He and I were together in Cambridge for six years; I saw him develop exceptionally as a teacher of Scripture, while I remained very much behind. In Panton Hall, I saw how Bible Readings should be conducted, and these were usually under the guidance of Dr. A. Hanton, an able expositor of Scripture.

The Lord opened doors of opportunity in service in His own good time. I was able to take part in work amongst German prisoners of war in Panton Hall, in testimony in a local cafeteria after the Gospel meeting, in summer work with others in nearby villages involving tracting and open-air preaching, in Sunday School work, and in taking services in an old people's hospital each Lord's Day morning and sometimes in the afternoon as well. There were many village and town assemblies around Cambridge, and possessing a motor cycle I was able easily to reach these meetings both for gospel preaching and ministry meetings. An occasional conference also came my way. My occupations were similar in Norwich during vacations, and sometimes there were meetings available every evening of the week in the various assemblies in Norwich. I was able to preach the gospel in quite a number of assemblies round about. All these aspects of service arose by invitation; I never chose anything for myself during the seven years I spent in Cambridge. In the assembly meetings themselves, I usually took quite an insignificant place, though always being present. After all, there were so many active elders and older brethren taking part in worship, in prayer and in the Bible Readings. Like so many younger believers, I was hesitant in the presence

of so much spiritual expertise. All this was preparation under the Lord's gracious foreknowledge and plans.

In 1953 I moved to Woodford Green for my first employment; together with my wife we were of one mind in assembly things. The assembly was large, but one by one invitations came to preach the gospel and to minister the Word of God in many meetings north and south of the Thames. Many of these came because the assembly correspondent Mr. W. Loynes mentioned my name in many assemblies which he visited. The little assembly at Ongar stands out in this connection. I was often invited to speak at a huge lodging house known at Carrington House in Deptford, a place for homeless men. The local assemblies around Woodford cooperated in what was known as the "Loughton Fellowship", namely a large number of council-run old people's homes, and a gospel service was held in every one each Lord's Day evening. This demanded a large number of believers to assist in many ways; I seemed to be in one or another of these homes almost every week. Invitations to speak at conferences also came my way, and I confess that I was always quite outspoken regarding what is called "assembly truth", and we were always grieved when we saw and heard of believers who seemed to have but little time for such holy truth.

In 1960 we moved to Southampton, and found ourselves in fellowship with the assembly at Sirdar Road. There were many good brethren in the smallish meeting; Mr. K. Morris had recently left for Bournemouth, and it seemed in a way that I was replacing him as a teacher in the assembly until his return. I regularly visited other assemblies such as Winchester, Salisbury, Fareham, Portsmouth, Wimborne and Warsash, both for the gospel and for ministry; I used to keep a list of all meetings I addressed, and this list still enables me to look back with happy memories to the times of fellowship spent with the Lord's people over eight years. Opportunities to speak at

many conferences were opened up as well by the Lord.

It was during these eight years in Southampton that I could perceive another side to my service. Leading Bible Readings systematically was one thing, but they entailed a lot of scriptural preparation, and this teaching reached to so few believers relatively speaking. Having already written several mathematics books, I decided to write up in book form the substance of Bible Readings that I was leading. This decision was perhaps the first personal exercise as to service that I ever had to take. So I wrote up in verse-by-verse style an exposition of First Corinthians, followed by Second Corinthians, and these were published by John Ritchie Ltd, and I received a great deal of help and encouragement from our brother Mr. A. M. S. Gooding who used to work for that firm of publishers before taking up full-time work for the Lord.

Early in 1961, the late Mr. C. Gahan of Ilminster took a series of ministry meetings at Sirdar Road. Visiting speakers usually stayed at the home of another brother, but this time it was more convenient for Mr. Gahan to stay in our home. The offering of hospitality often came our way after that, and names such as Mr. W. Trew, Mr. G. Fenn, Mr. H. Beattie, Mr. F. Cundick and Mr. P. Parsons come to mind. During his visit, Mr. Gahan often spoke about the magazine "Precious Seed" for which he acted as secretary, the editor being Mr. J. H. Large. He did not tell me that the committee were facing a difficulty at that time. But later that year, he wrote to me about this difficulty. Mr. Large had intimated that he wanted to give up the editorship; would I be interested in this work? What could I say? I agreed, and joined the committee, taking over the editorship immediately, though this was only announced in the July 1962 issue. Mr. C. Hocking later joined me in manuscript preparation, but I saw each issue through the press, attaining as high a standard as was possible. Later Mr. D. Clapham joined me, but in later years until 1987 I set up all the articles on a wordprocessor, and the printers used my files on disc for direct transfer of all material to their own

machines. I was also enabled to see all the Precious Seed Publications through the press, including five large books. All this took up a lot of time, but since it was done as for the Lord it was time well spent.

As a result of all this, I received an invitation from Walterick Publishers, U.S.A., to submit books to them for publication. By that time, we had moved to Aberystwyth in 1968, and having conducted Bible Study Meetings and Bible Readings on the Acts and Chronicles, I wrote two expository works on these Bible books. The assembly in Aberystwyth was small, but with many students in fellowship over the years. I devoted my teaching efforts in the assembly, and am thankful to know that my teaching was appreciated. It thus came about that I wrote up other series of studies, and this time I had to take a personal initiative to do so, one trusts according to the Lord's will. Thus books on Revelation, Daniel and Luke were published by Everyday Publications, Canada, and Hebrews and Daily Bible Readings by Gospel Tract Publications, Glasgow, who are also publishing an exposition on Mark as I write this article. The invitation to write long expository works on Matthew and John for volumes in "What the Bible Teaches" was particularly solemn, but I gladly embarked on this service in the Lord's Name, and I still seek to help the editors of this series of books in various ways.

During these years, I was exercised to write a large number of articles for magazines such as "Precious Seed", "Assembly Testimony", "Believers' Magazine", and others. The possession of a typewriter since 1950 and more recently a wordprocessor enabled me to do all this writing; with a pen I could have done almost nothing. My mind seems to work through the tips of my fingers!

My life became rather different from others who seek to serve the Lord. Although I made long journeys to speak at many conferences on Saturdays, yet I always felt it my responsibility to return to Aberystwyth afterwards, so as to be present at the meetings on the Lord's Day. Since the

assembly was small, I felt that this was necessary. Indeed, except for an illness now and again, I never missed one meeting of the assembly, and this policy taken before the Lord meant foregoing even holidays for about twenty years. But it had been a joy to help saints in the systematic study of both Old Testament and New Testament books. I have always believed that a verse-by-verse approach is far more rewarding spiritually than a haphazard jumping about through a passage or chapter. Younger believers learn by this approach, since if the Lord remains absent it will be their responsibility to continue a teaching ministry in years to come.

A word of warning. Do not accept every invitation in service, since one may not be equipped or gifted for it. The subject of overseership may be mentioned: "If any one aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work" (1 Tim 3: 1 J.N.D.). I have been invited to be an elder exercising oversight in an assembly. But I have said "No". Firstly because it might appear that intellectual and academic expertise may be thought of as being a suitable qualification, and secondly because that touch of pastoral care needed in dealing with the problems of individual souls was not something that I possess. The idea of merely being an elder sitting on a committee taking decisions for others to work out did not appear to me to have any scriptural basis.

As one looks back by way of summary, I can see that I started in a way of almost nothingness, but by taking a stand on the unique position of the assembly revealed in the Word of God, He gradually opened unexpected avenues of service based on a serious study of the Scriptures after my conversion. As any believer gets older, no doubt physical and mental strength mean that service must of necessity become more restricted. Hence there should be much time devoted to His service in the days of health and middle-age, even though one may be in fulltime secular employment.

What had motivated my service throughout all the years of my working life? "Let all things be done unto

edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26); "we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying", (2 Cor. 12:19). Younger believers who read this can see how the Lord uses many different ways to lead in many forms of service, even though they are in fulltime employment. The article has been written to encourage them to prepare their hearts and minds for future service, watching for the Lord's guidance, and realising that invitations to service from others is the norm rather than the exception, the exception usually being to fulltime service both at home and on the mission field.

(Editor's note — Our dear brother John Heading was a past contributor to this magazine and it was with regret we learned of his sudden homecall. When the "Conversion and Call" series commenced he requested that he be permitted to participate since he stated only the minority serve in a fulltime capacity and the rest like himself in fulltime employment through his life. He wrote this article in Feb., 1990. Our prayers are with his sorrowing loved ones who sorrow not as others).

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Contents

EXPLANATION OF A NEGLECTED CHAPTER

1 CORINTHIANS 7

by Eric G. Parmenter

VITAL VERITIES by E. W. Rogers

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD

by J. B. Hewitt

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. Thropay

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS

by W. J. M'Clure

DIVINE CARE by B. Avery

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by T. Thompson

SORROW TURNED TO JOY

John 16.20

*In this lonely vale of sorrow,
There's a light beyond the dale;
Though our footsteps seem to falter
His deep love can never fail.*

*In affliction's darkest hours,
When bowed down by anxious care;
With no light beyond the shadows
Sweet to know He's always there.*

*Clasp the hand of Him who careth,
Strong and mighty is His arm;
Upholding all in every trial
There's no cause to be alarmed.*

*Nightly scenes may round us gather,
Soon will pass the midnight hour;
Daylight comes, the morning breaketh
Springing forth like Sharon's flower.*

*Lift your eyes oh weary traveller,
Tears and sorrow t'will soon be past;
What Eternal weight of glory
Will be ours when home at last.*

—R. Magill, Belfast

An Explanation of a Neglected Chapter — 1 Corinthians 7

by ERIC G. PARMENTER, Basingstoke

2 — If a wife leaves her husband is she free to re-marry?

The commandment of the Lord verses 10-11. The question of taking out a Bill of Divorcement is indicated and the apostle gives his answer. Regarding divorce Paul says "I command yet not I but the Lord" confirming that his command is in perfect accord with what the Lord taught when He was here (cf Matt 5 v 32, 19 v 6, 9: Mark 10 v 10-12, Luke 16 v 18.) "let not the wife depart from her husband" ie the wife is not to be unfaithful, under any circumstances to her marriage covenant, neither is she to depart from her husband under any pretence, "but, and if she depart let her remain unmarried." (verse 11) Paul is not countenancing such departure, but where it has already happened he is commanding the wife what she must do in that situation (a) Remain unmarried: (b) Be reconciled to her husband. Under no circumstance was she to divorce her husband, rather let her acknowledge her fault in leaving him, ask his forgiveness and confirm her willingness to live with him. It might be a humbling experience to own her mistake, yet she is to spare no effort to re-establish normal relations with the man who was still her husband, " and let not the husband put away his wife" the husband is not to divorce his wife, but receive her again in peace.

The Divided Home — verses 12 - 16

When the call of God came in the gospel through Paul the preacher, one partner responded to the call and was saved, but the other partner would have nothing to do with the gospel and continued in idolatry. What now is the position of the believing husband or wife? In answering the question the apostle said "but to the rest speak I not the Lord" verse 12. Two questions arise from Paul's statement :

- (1) Who are referred to by “The rest?”
- (2) What did the apostle mean when he said “speak I, not the Lord?”

“*THE REST*” Paul is not here introducing the idea current in some quarters: Because the marriage took place before conversion, and now either the husband or the wife have become converted, that the marriage is null and void and they can separate and are free to divorce and re-marry.

The saying “marriages are made in heaven” is not a scriptural one and in no way refers to believers marriages only.

Genesis 2 proves unequivocally that marriage is a divine institution, inviolate, unalterable and fixed by God. It is not a temporary contract but a permanent and exclusive union of one man and one woman until dissolved by death. It was ordained of God for mankind before the descriptive words “believers” and “unbelievers” were in force, and throughout scripture its permanency is binding upon all who enter upon it.

The last book of the Old Testament confirms what is stated in the first book. Malachi 2 v 14 speaks of marriage as a covenant: Verse 15 the prophet makes reference to the beginning — “and did not He make one?” ie one woman for the one man, then he plainly states — “for the Lord, the God of Israel hateth putting away”.

The first book of the New Testament opens with the Lord’s own teaching and again when answering the Jews, said “have ye not read” and immediately quotes Gen 1 v 27: 2 v 24: Nowhere does scripture differentiate between the marriages of believers and unbelievers, God recognises both.

What then is the meaning of Paul’s words “but to the rest” The situation addressed by the apostle is one where the gospel has been received by the husband, whom he now refers to as “a brother”, but has not been embraced by his wife (v 12) and vice versa in verse 13. It is to this situation the apostle refers where the unsaved partner is pleased to continue the marriage relationship the christian husband is not to “put away” ie divorce his unsaved wife, and the christian wife is not to “leave” her unsaved husband. Note the expressions “put away” and “leave” are the same.

The instructions given in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah do not apply nor is separation called for. Christianity requires no believers to turn away from the unbelieving partner and nowhere is it intended to overthrow the natural relationships of life.

SANCTIFIED The apostle gives his reasons in verse 14 — “for the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife . . .” the word “for” points out the needlessness of separation and shows the disastrous consequences if the idea were entertained that the conversion of husband or wife makes the marriage void, if that were the case the children of the marriage would be unclean. The word sanctified has no reference here to moral or spiritual status, but in God’s sight the husband and wife are “one flesh” and by continuing in the marriage relationship — it is sanctified to them: The husband though an unbeliever is sanctified in the person of his wife for the lawful enjoyment of marital privileges. The proof of this is seen in the logical sequence “else were your children unclean” the point Paul is making is, that to leave the unconverted spouse would be tantamount to saying that the marriage was no longer valid, and this would expose the children to the stigma of being unclean or illegitimate, but that is not the case, “now are they holy” ie your children are legitimate offspring, God reckons them being born in lawful wedlock.

Speak I not the Lord

What is the meaning of Paul’s expression? The idea that the apostle is drawing an antithesis between what is inspired and what is not is altogether without foundation.

The apostle is indicating that whereas the Lord in His ministry had given clear commandment on the subject of divorce, He had said nothing in His teaching which took in the wider issues raised by the Corinthians. Paul would now give his judgment and under divine inspiration answer the questions raised and so resolve their particular problem and such is preserved in the New Testament for the guidance of believers throughout the Church age.

“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart, a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases” verse 15. This verse

has been used to teach that desertion is a valid ground for divorce, upon examination we will find out the apostle's intention.

Desertion is nowhere in the New Testament given as ground for divorce. In the preceding verses Paul has gone to some lengths to make plain that neither divorce or separation is required when a husband or wife is converted — "but if the unbelieving depart . . ." ie if because you have become a christian your spouse has deliberately left and separated from you; the situation must be accepted, committing the matter and all the ensuing circumstances to God, then wait and see if God will work in his heart that he might return.

NOT UNDER BONDAGE "A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases" this has been construed to mean that the deserted partner is free to re-marry, the former marriage tie having been automatically severed by the act of desertion. If that were true Paul would be guilty of contradicting what he had said earlier. The apostle's meaning is, that the believing wife is not to have recourse to litigation in order to compel her husband to return, neither in her anxiety should she use every effort to get him back. For if he was forced back, "what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" There is no guarantee that would be the case "but God hath called us in peace". Personal circumstances in these situations may be difficult but continuing in an atmosphere of peace and leaving the whole matter to God is Paul's judgment for the believers in such cases.

In verse 17 an additional reason is given why divorce or separation should not be sought after " as God hath distributed to every one, so let him walk". Where conversion has taken place, either with the wife or husband although a radical change has taken place spiritually, no steps are to be taken to alter the marriage relationship, "and so ordain I in all the churches", confirming that Paul's judgment in these matters carries apostolic authority not only in Corinth but such teaching was obligatory in all the Churches and reaches down to the present time. — (*to be continued*)

VITAL VERITIES (16)

by E. W. ROGERS

Eternal Punishment — Part 3

Objections, however, have been raised by those who believe not, and it may serve a useful end to name at least three of them in order that the reader may be forewarned thereof, and thus be forearmed there against.

OBJECTION I

It has been alleged that this doctrine lacks valid authoritative support. Now if the Bible be rejected as God's word, then clearly, this doctrine does lack support, for apart from His revelation in the matter nothing reliable or authoritative is known. But once the Bible is accepted as valid then abundant support is found therein.

Not only did the Lord Jesus teach it as in Mark 9.; Luke 16.; John 5., etc., but Paul, Peter, James, John and Jude all refer to it.

Paul speaks of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" and like phrases.

Peter speaks of the day of the Lord and man's liability to perish, though God's wish is that he should not.

James speaks of the "fire of Gehenna."

Jude speaks of "the judgment of the great day."

John speaks of the "lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone."

The anonymous author of the Hebrews epistle speaks of "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries."

OBJECTION II

It has been alleged that *eternal* punishment is not commensurate with *temporal* sin: that sin committed during the brief span of man's life cannot merit eternal punishment. But this objection is invalid because it pre-supposes a right apprehension

of the gravity of sin which God alone can estimate.

A crime against an infinite Person is an infinite offence meriting an infinite punishment.

To slap one's own child in the face would hardly call forth anyone's comment: to do the same thing to another person's child would be a more serious affair, to do the same thing to a policeman would be still more serious; whilst to do the same thing to the King would be a grave insult calling forth severe punishment. The dignity of the person gives gravity to the crime.

Furthermore, in nature one may sin which, in its performance, takes but a small fraction of time, but in its consequences lasts for, it may be, a whole life-time. None argue against this: It is a hard indisputable fact; it is a law of the God of Nature.

Besides which, who is the creature, the thing formed, that he should say to the Creator, the One who formed him, What doest thou? in the matter of the duration of punishment as in other matters.

Added to which, it may be observed that there are degrees of punishment. Not all suffer alike during eternity. He who knows the privileges, circumstances, environment, upbringing, etc., of the individual, knows rightly how to apportion punishment.

Lastly, it may be remarked that since man is an eternally existent being (his birth being the commencement of eternal existence) it follows as a necessary issue that nothing but eternal punishment can possibly be for the one who fails to avail himself of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. No neutral position is possible; it is either salvation or wrath. "Believers" will accept unquestioningly God's utterances.

OBJECTION III

It has been alleged that this doctrine is incompatible with a God of Love. But to this we may reply, that God is both Light and Love concurrently; and He has not lavished His love on man irrespective of righteousness but consistently therewith. This enables God righteously to accept the believing sinner, and the knowledge of this gives the sinner rest. Had God not satisfied His righteous claims, but dispensed mercy regardless thereof, it might ever be held as a contingency that could occur, that justice

would put in a claim despite mercy, and force the issue against the believer. But such a possibility is not existent, for justice has been met, whilst mercy can flow consistently therewith.

God is righteous as well as merciful, and the one who will not have love and mercy must have the execution of judgment without mercy.

What would one think of a monarch who, through kindness, failed to deal punitively with rebels in his realm? or a father who, loving his children, permitted them to do as they liked all unchecked? And is God below this standard? Will He allow His law to be despised, His word to be condemned, and His rule to be ignored, without rising up to Judge the offenders?

God has gratuitously provided a way of escape and it is for all to avail themselves of it on the simplest condition, i.e., faith. How then shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

* * * * *

We should now mention those things taught by false teachers, which altogether lack Biblical support.

ANNIHILATION

Those who teach this error cite such passages as 2 Thess. 1.9, "eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord" and again Matt. 10.28, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in Hell," assuming the word "destruction" means annihilation. But in neither case is this so, as an examination of their use in the New Testament will clearly show.

The word in 2 Thess. 1.9 means "disaster or ruin" and the word in Matt. 10.28 translated "destroy" means "spoil," "mar" or "to render unfit for its original purpose," as a broken cup is rendered unfit for its original purpose of containing liquid. So the man who is "lost" (as this word is also translated) is rendered totally unfit for the original purpose for which God created him. The reader can readily check that this is so by the use of an English-Greek Lexicon.

Further the doctrine of annihilation is contradictory to the whole tenor of Scripture, which reveals that the believer is destined to eternal bliss whilst the unbeliever suffers "eternal death" and all are included in one class or another. If some object that

body and soul united could not eternally exist in the lake of fire, they should recall the bush which was not consumed; and the three men in the fiery furnace, preserved despite its fierceness. They also should note that the "beast" and the "false prophet" after being there for a thousand years are still spoken of as there (Rev. 20.10) from which it follows that if they can survive its flame for one thousand years there is no logical reason why they should not survive eternally.

The references in 1 Cor. 15. to the last enemy "death" being destroyed constitutes no difficulty if regard is had to the context. The word "destroyed" means here "to put out of action" (it is a different word from that in 1 Thess. 1.9, and Matt. 10.28), and refers to the time when death will no longer hold men's bodies, when soul and body will no longer be separate, but both united will be disposed of by God according to his own revealed plan. Death and Hades will be superseded by Gehenna.

UNIVERSAL SALVATION

It would seem too evident to need emphasis that this is an unscriptural doctrine. What surely can Rev. 21.8 mean if all ultimately will be saved? Is the lake of fire remedial? If so, where is the hint in Scripture to that effect? Paul says that "God will have all men saved," but negatively, Peter says, "God willeth not that one should perish"; that is His wish. It is not His counsel that so it shall be. In His ways He has placed man on his own responsibility. Manifestly the plain teaching of the Bible is that some will be saved eternally and some will be lost eternally.

PURGATORY

This is a doctrine invented and propagated by money-making priests with intent to exploit ignorant souls and constantly to hold them in mental suspense for the sake of base gain.

Clearly the time of "testing: is in life; not after. Probation is now: final issues are settled at death, not probationary ones. Whatever 1 Peter 3. 18-23 means it certainly cannot teach the general doctrine of purgatory for all, since that passage only relates to those to whom Noah preached, and who in his days were disobedient.

1 Cor. 3. lends no support to the theory. "Saved so as by fire"

is not indicative that the person undergoing a period of suffering is saved out of it, but that though his lifework may be consumed by the fire of judgment he himself is saved despite it.

Neither Hades nor Gehenna are remedial; they are final; once entered the person is hopelessly lost. May God imprint these words on our hearts by His Spirit.

Finally, ERRONEOUS VIEWS CONCERNING THIS DOCTRINE AFFECT THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

We ask the annihilationist: Was our Lord Jesus annihilated when He died? For verily He was Man.

We ask the Universalist: If all men ultimately will be saved why then did Christ die at all? What made His death imperative?

Of the one who claims limited and not eternal duration of punishment, we enquire: Was not the Lord Jesus an infinite substitute for sinners? For we have seen that sin is an infinite offence against an infinite God demanding infinite punishment, or in the alternative an infinite substitute. And logically if the punishment be finite, and of limited time, then the substitute equally must be finite, which means he is man and not God, which is a lie.

May God in His mercy spare writer and reader from any error on this profound and mysterious doctrine and give constant grace simply to bow to what is written, seeking to understand those things which are revealed, and leaving the rest to a Just God and a Saviour.

II CORINTHIANS 12, Verses 7—9

THE REASON—Lest I should be exalted above measure.

THE RESISTANCE—I besought the Lord thrice.

THE REPLY— My Grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

THE RESOLVE—Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the Power of Christ may rest upon me.

—James Neilly.

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. BOWER, Worcester

2 — AMOS INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Chap. 1. 1-2

From Tekoa in the wilderness (2 Chron. 20.20;) Amos came in much the same way as John the Baptist came some centuries later with this personal word of introduction to himself; the subject of his message, Israel; the time of his message — two years before the earthquake (Zech. 14. 5;) — and the message, “Jehovah will roar” (as a lion, or as thunder). (See Is. 42. 13; Joel 3. 15;) The linking of Jeroboam with Uzziah; Israel with Judah; is a further indication that “My firstborn” (Israel) is both subject and object of his message. Of the earthquake the historian Josephus records that it struck upon the day that Uzziah wilfully offered incense (2 Chron. 26. 16, 21;) and that the Temple was damaged and there was a landslip of half the mountain top. Did Amos know “two years before the earthquake” that the Lord would roar in that particular way? May we assume, as some do, that this introduction by Amos, “Jehovah will roar” was an early warning? In years to come history would repeat itself. The message of Zechariah was, “God has placed His Name in Jerusalem; from Jerusalem His voice will be heard.”

JUDGMENTS UPON THE NATIONS SURROUNDING ISRAEL. 1.3 - 2.31

Not now the words of Amos, but “Thus saith the Lord.” This was the oracle of Jehovah and would preface every individual message to the eight nations named in the two early chapters. “For three transgressions and for four” is a strong term used of repeated rebellion and sin against lawful authority. The sins are, directly or indirectly, all against God Himself. Compare the words of the Decalogue and the numerical Proverbs. “I will not turn it back” or revoke My judgments. They, upon whom His judgments would fall, had “gone too far.” God does not forget . . . “BECAUSE.”

In the histories of the six Gentile nations Amos addresses, we

see something of the permissive will of God for, as in the case of Pharaoh for instance (Ex. 8. 15; see Rom. 9. 17;), God raised up men and nations in order to fulfill His divine purpose. Compare Daniel's words to Nebuchadnezzar the "head of gold" (Dan. 4:). In the measure by which evil men or nations overstep the mark when being used by God as His instruments of judgment and overstep the mark by their affliction of the people of God, so will they be judged. Israel is the "apple of His eye" He who touches Israel touches God Himself. (Lam. 2. 18; Zech. 2. 8;) Damascus threshed Gilead with iron. Philistia and Tyre carried away the whole captivity to Edom. Tyre and Edom, "brothers" to Israel by pledged word, kindnesses received or by birth and race made slaves of their 'brothers' or tearing them as might a beast of prey. Ammon and Moab, Kinsfolk to Israel — killing the as yet unborn; Moab insulting the dead. These nations would perish by the fires of Divine wrath.

UPON DAMASCUS. (Syria). Chap. 1. 3-5;

Refs: 1 Kin. 15.20; 19.15-17; 20.1-43; 2 Kin. 5.1; 8.7-15; 8.28-29; 10.32-33; 13.3,4-7; 14.26; 16.9; 2 Chron. 16.4; Is. 8.4; Jer. 49.23-27; Ez. 27.16-18; These references record more than a century of bitter affliction of Israel. The culminating sin of Damascus was that they threshed Gilead with threshing instruments (or sledges) of iron. Some read "threshed the pregnant women of Gilead." This was truly barbaric, in human treatment. Jeroboam was able to complete the task begun by Jehoaz but Syria went into captivity to Assyria, The dynasty of Hazael and the palaces of Benhadad were overthrown. Bethaven was the "house of vanity, or pleasure". God has set up; God would take down.

GAZA. (Philistia) Chap. 1. 6-8;

Refs: Jud. 3.1; 2 Chron. 21. 16-17; 28. 17-19; 35, 20; Jos. 11. 22; Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron — four or five Philistine cities Gath, the fifth city is mentioned in Chap. 6. The Philistines, as is well known, were long the thorn in Israel's side, but when they sold their captives to Edom (Joel 3. 4-8;) this was the "last straw" for this one nation, more than others, should have known only too well the greatness of Jehovah. (1. Sam. 5;) In v. 8 we have the title "Adonai Jehovah" — its only occurrence in these judgments, although occurring about 20 times in this prophecy. This is appro-

priate here for the rulers of the five cities were known as "lords", but they were yet to learn more of the greatness of the One who is the Lord God. The destruction of these cities is recorded for us in 2 Chron. 261 Jer. 47; 2 Chron. 35. 20;

TYRE. (Phoenicia) chap. 1. 9-10;

Refs: 2 Sam. 3.11; 1 Kin. 5.1, 12; Is. 23; Ez. 26,27;

Tyre, or Tyrus, was assigned at the division of the land to the tribe of Asher, but it was never possessed by them. The ancient trading "covenant of brethren" was forgotten and this great mercantile city, when given the opportunity, embarked upon a slave trade by means of which Hebrew captives were bought and sold to another "brother" — Edom the cruel. Tyre's reward came when besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and, later, Alexander the Great.

EDOM. (Idumea) Chap. 1. 11-12;

Refs: 1 Sam. 14. 47; 2 Kin. 8. 20-27; 14. 47; 2 Chron. 20. 10-11; 28. 17; Ps. 13. 7; Ps. 83. 4-7.

Edom was the name given to the descendants of Esau the twin brother of Jacob. It was prophesied of him that he should serve the younger twin. (Jacob) and by thy sword shalt thou live and shalt serve thy brother." (Gen. 25. 23; 28, 40;) Israel had been instructed, "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; he is thy brother." (Deut. 23. 7;) but through the following centuries Edom was an implacable enemy perpetuating Esau's rage against Jacob, and taking every opportunity not only to fight against him, but to pursue him with the sword with unrelenting rage. "War and rapine were the only professions of the Edomite". See how the individual Edomite is spoken of in the Scriptures — Esau was profane; Doeg was the slayer of the priests; Hadad the adversary (the Satan) Herod murdered the children of Bethlehem; Antipas murdered John the Baptist; a third Herod killed James "with the sword"; Edom was called "the border of wickedness" and the Lord has "indignation for ever" against Edom. (Mal. 1. 45;) A commentator of a century ago wrote, "it is the very picture of the Evil One and of antichrist; it is the very defiance in the creature of the will and teaching of his God, the All-Merciful who passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage." Teman was a city noted for its wisdom (Jer. 49. 7;) Cf. Obadiah 8 and Job 3.

11;) but it would with the capital, Bozrah, go into oblivion. The kings of Tyre, Edom. Moab and Amon, "I have given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Je. 27. 3, 7;)

AMMON. Chap. 1. 13-15;

Refs: Deut. 2. 19-23; 23. 3-4; Jud. 3. 13; 10. 4-9; 11.4; 2 Sam. 10-12; Neh. 2.19; Zeph. 2.9; Jer. 40.14; Ez. 21.12-32; 25.10; etc.

The Ammonites were descendants of Lot's younger son by his daughter (Ge. 19. 38;). Israel was not to interfere with them, and they are often seen in league with Moab (Lot's other son by the elder daughter) against Israel and Judah (2 Kin. 24.2;) Even during the wilderness journey the Gods of Ammon and of Moab were adopted by Israel (Amos 5. 21-27;) See Acts 7. 43; These nations not expelled from the land by Israel became the thorns in the flesh of Num. 33, 35; and Jos. 23. 13. Judgment would fall because of the terrible deed of v. 13, but see also Deut. 23. 3-4 and cf. 1 Sam. 11. 2; 2 Kin. 8. 12; 15. 16; Hos. 13. 16. Warfare was to be their destruction and "passed away by a tempest" in the "day of whirlwind."

(to be continued)

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

7—THE REVELATION TO WAVERING WORSHIPPERS

Matt. 28. 16-20; Mark 16. 19, 20;

Luke 24. 50-53; Acts 1. 1-11.

In Matthew 28. 16-20 we see His authority and the wavering worshippers.

THE MOUNTAIN OF APPOINTMENT (v.16)

The disciples were sustained by the living presence and daily comradeship of their Lord. Such fellowship was the direct consequence of the Resurrection. The appearance in Royal Majesty fitly closes the first Gospel of Christ, the King. The end of the narrative answers to the beginning. The adoration of the Wise Men finds its counterpart and completion in the adoration of the

disciples. The mountain was evidently chosen by the Lord with a significant purpose. Most of His authoritatative declarations were made from mountains (Ch. 5. 1; 17. 1; 24. 3; 28. 16; Mk. 3. 13; 6. 36; Acts 1. 12).

Their Association (v.16) Preparation for service means solitude with Christ. They were once more apart from the world and in communion with God. Listening to His voice, learning His will, and living and in His presence as He unfolds His plans for them.

Their Adoration (v. 17a) The majesty of His Person compelled them to worship, they were flat on their faces before Him. They recognised Him and were subdued before Him and satisfied with the sight of the Risen Lord. In the very act of worshipping, some doubted but were soon convinced of His identity and of the reality of His risen life. This word “doubted” only occurs twice in the New Testament and both times in Matthew (See 14. 31). Like Peter frightened and floundering, one moment full of faith, the next moment full of fear (Jas. 1. 6, 7, 8).

His Approach (v. 18a) He had big things for them and would make demands upon them. He came right up to them, came close to allay their fears, assure their hearts and confirm their faith.

Our Lord's body after His resurrection was a “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15. 44). There was identity between body buried, and body raised. Yet there was dissimilarity; it was the same though different and different though the same.

His Authority (v. 18a) The four “Alls” assure us of universal power, “all power”; of unbounded love, “all nations”; of un-wearying watchfulness, “all things”; and of unceasing fellowship, “with you always”. These have aptly been called, “the Marching Orders of the Church”. They are a Divine warrant for all types of Christian service and witness.

HIS SOVEREIGN POWER

“all authority is mine in heaven and on earth”. He must be Master and Lord of life (Acts 2.34-36; Psa. 45. 11b; 2 Cor. 4. 5). The life of Christ in these men was an explanation of Divine power. On the *physical level*, they experienced new and exhilarating energies, enabling them to endure hardship and do exploits for God. It was power on the *mental level*, ill-educated and illit-

erate they had been; but they were given power of initiative and a directness of decision the like of which the world had not seen before.

Power of the *moral level*, they were transformed and enabled to live spotless victorious lives in cities that were dens of corruption. It was power on the *spiritual level*. Wherever they went, other lives were changed, souls redeemed, and mighty miracles of grace were witnessed. The power of Christ in them (Gal. 2. 20; Phil. 4. 13). Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take!

HIS SPECIAL PLANS

“make all nations disciples”. The scope of the work was to be national rather than individual conversion. The presentation of gospel to people of all nations without exception. This world outlook had indeed characterised the life and teaching of the Lord (5. 14; 8. 11; 24. 14; 16. 13). Individual evangelization and discipleship are included in the aim and scope of the Great Commission. Christ does not ask His friends as a favour to bear witness to Him among men. He claims it as a duty. A disciple is a convert consecrated to the will of His Master (John 15. 14; Luke 17. 10).

Baptism was intended as a badge of relationship to Christ, a proof that they were real disciples, learners in the school of Christ. The fundamental thought in baptism is something done to us, a symbolic act of God toward us, our separation from old associations being united to Christ. Baptism is “into” the Name of Trinity, revealing the spiritual meaning of the rite. It means to be brought in God’s own way into fellowship with Him Who has been so revealed.

HIS SOUND PRINCIPLES (v. 20)

This is the substance of our service. Having made disciples and initiated them by rite of baptism the Apostles were to instruct them in everything previously given by Christ for guidance of His followers. The ministry of teaching is most important and sadly neglected among us today. Growth in grace is dependant upon teaching and acceptance of, and obedience to the truth taught.

“Observe” means to guard, to watch over, as the Tomb was guarded (27. 66). The ripest believer had not exhausted the teaching of Christ, nor reached the limit to which he can attain.

Like Paul we must press on (Phil. 3. 14). Our weakness today is we are not observing all, obeying all. We must live as well as preach "Jesus is Lord". (Acts 10. 36; Rom. 10. 9; 1 Cor. 12. 3).

HIS SUSTAINING PRESENCE

"Lo I am with you all the days" Here is our strength for service; the assurance of continuance of His own presence in our work for Him. Study the many and varied references all through Scripture to the power and provision of God's presence.

This is not a promise, it is better than a promise, it is a Fact.

Here is complete equipment for Christian work and this should cheer, inspire and strengthen us wherever we go in His name.

I would always trust my Saviour,
Let Him choose my times and ways,
For the promise never fails me,
"I am with you all the days".

HIS ACTIVITY — THE WILLING WORKERS (Mark 16. 19,20).

The Mighty Acts. The presence of the Lord was realized for He worked with them and confirmed His word through their lips by His divine power. The Ascension is the guarantee of His continual presence with us (v. 19).

"Think of the blessings which are ours today; a righteousness—untarnished, acceptance—unquestioned, peace—undisturbed, life—unending, relationship—unbroken, an inheritance—unfading" Dr. Griffith Thomas.

It is not enough to know that He is with us; we must use His help. There is work to be done as there is blessing to be secured.

HIS ARRIVAL — THE WELCOME IN HEAVEN (Luke 24. 50-53). The Lord had been their Teacher, expounding the Scriptures (v. 44, 45); their Master, explaining His mission and commissioning them to preach and witness (v. 47, 48); their Inspiration, promising power and blessing (v. 49). Now He is their Leader, "as far as to Bethany". What memories must have crowded back as He led them up the slopes of Olivet over towards Bethany. Trace all references to Bethany in the Gospels. This is the scene of His final triumph over sin, death, hell and the grave.

HIS PRIESTLY BENEDICTION (v. 50b) (see Num. 6. 23-27) for the completion of the Aaronic ministry. The implication of the uplifted hands is a fitting close to Christ's ministry in Luke.

HIS GLORIOUS ASCENSION (v. 51b) He ascends as the Forerunner the First-born and the First-fruits, and these forty days give us a glimpse of the nature of His present ministry for us (Heb. 9. 24).

The uplifted hands implies an absolute sufficiency to sustain and satisfy. His blessing shows His transcendent superiority as a priest (2 Cor. 13. 14).

His work on earth is completed, his sacrifice accepted, He is carried up into heaven and sat down (Mk 16. 19); Heb. 1. 3; 8. 1).

THE WORTHY ADORATION (v. 52, 53) His going to the Father was a change of state, it was spiritual. The close of one dispensation and the dawn of another, the last event recorded in the Gospel and the first event recorded in the Acts. The response heavenward was worship and the thrill inward was joy, these two are linked in our experience. They willingly worshipped and obeyed and continued in praise to God. One day He will descend and His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives once again.

HIS ASCENSION — WONDERFUL DAYS OF FELLOWSHIP (Acts 1. 1-11) The Acts records the continuing work of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit, through the Church.

Establishing (v. 1-3) By communicating His will (v. 1). It was preparatory and transitional. "Jesus began to do" during His life on earth, and continues to do from heaven, through His saints (Mk 16. 19). It was practical and powerful, "to do", by His saving work He redeemed the trusting soul. "To teach", by His wonderful words He reaches the obedient saint.

Commanding His apostles to wait until endued with power from on high (v. 4; 2. 33). Confirming His resurrection (v. 3) by proof that His crucifixion was an atoning death.

Encouraging (v. 4-7) by a ministry of instruction. They enjoyed companionship with the Living Christ (v. 4).

They had the promise of a Divine Guide with them and a Divine Power within them (v. 5). A ministry of correction concerning seasons (v. 6, 7). They were preoccupied with a material-

istic kingdom instead of a spiritual kingdom (Rom. 14. 17). One day He will set up His millennial kingdom (Zech. 12. 12; 14. 14). The time is still God's secret, knowledge withheld from them (Matt. 24. 36; Mk 13. 32; 1 Thess. 5. 1).

Enabling (v. 8-11) Here is the Lord commissioning His servants. Their work is mainly witnessing from personal experience (v. 8).

THE POWER

The Holy Spirit is God's provision for powerful testimony. He would come upon them on the Day of Pentecost to (1) baptize all saints (John 1. 29-34); "In" the spirit (1 Cor. 12. 12, 13) is historical and collective and never repeated, it places us in the Body of Christ. (2) to indwell all saints (John 7. 39; 14. 16, 18; Rom. 5. 5; 8. 8, 9). (3) to empower all saints (Lk. 24. 49; Acts 1. 8).

THE PERSONNEL

"Ye witnesses unto Me". A personal experience of Christ and then, personal expression of it (ch. 4. 20). What Christ is and all Christ is, to us, we must show to others, by consistent life, by confession of lip and propagation of truth through literature.

THE PROGRAMME (v. 8c)

The field is the world; three extending circles. The first — "Jerusalem and Judea", the home circle (Luke 8. 39), then our neighbourhood, city and country. The second circle, in Samaria (8. 1-48) reaching the neighbourhood by word and work.

The third circle — "the uttermost part of the earth", with the introduction of gospel privileges to gentiles (Acts 10. 1-48). All is done under divine direction, divine empowerment and divine blessing according to His will.

THE PARTING (v. 9-11)

The Ascension was the climaxing event of the entire career of the Lord. He was carried up (Lk. 24. 51); taken up (Acts 1. 9); received up (1. 9); went up (v. 10). The Ascension is the assurance of the advent to earth. He ascended personally, bodily and visibly, and so He will return (Zech. 12. 10). Our witness will be useful and blessed if Christ is real to us, rules our life, and we respond to His claim and call (v. 8).

• STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin (Glengormley)

2. THE SPEAKER AND HIS SERMONS — Part 1

It is clear that Aaron preached at least five sermons viz.

- i) Cheering hearts in the Work of God —Ex. 4. 29-31
- ii) Challenging by the Word of God —Ex. 7. 1-7, 16-18
- iii) Confident in the Wisdom of God —Ex. 12: 1-6, 28
- iv) Complaining about the Ways of God —Num. 12: 1-9
- v) Conforming to the Will of God —Lev. 10: 1-8

How remarkable that when we think of the great preachers of the bible our minds rarely ever turn to Aaron. To our way of thinking, his is the silent ministry of the sanctuary with little or nothing recorded in the way of spoken words. Yet this is the man whose eloquence has reached the ears of Heaven and of God Himself for it is He who leaves on holy record "I know that he speaketh well."

What a lesson for budding preachers or even mature preachers. This is the true oratory the effectiveness of which is recognised in the unseen world. There is no disputing the ability of Paul or the fact that he left his mark upon this unseen sphere for did not the evil spirits themselves bear witness "Jesus we know and Paul we know but who are you?" Acts 19. 15.

The man Moses, mighty in word and deed, has in his wilderness experiences lost all notion of the power of eloquence. For the most part possibly deprived of the privilege of human conversation he is the man to whom God speaks. All God says is "I am" and all Moses can say in reply is "who am I?" Yet for this backward servant God has a voice made ready who can indeed "speak well".

As is remarkable with those speakers to whom Heaven bears witness, Aaron is one of those men who is content to take second place. In our day he who speaks well is everything, not so with God and godly men. Though he will be a voice to Moses he has

no illusions of grandeur as to his position. It is most striking how soon after their encounter in the desert that the scriptures begin "Then Moses and Aaron. . . ." and thus the pattern is set. Moses first, then Aaron, but without Aaron, Moses is nothing and he cannot go. Nevertheless divine order is given precedence and is bowed to.

We are thus beautifully reminded of the ministry of John the Baptist in relation to our Blessed Lord." I am the VOICE of one crying in the wilderness. . . ." and again "He that cometh after me is preferred before me for He was before me" and again ". . . the latchet of those shoes I am worthy to unloose". Yet with holy boldness Aaron will face the elders of Israel and the mighty Pharaoh in his palace "assuredly gathering that the Lord had sent them". Acts 16. 10.

It would be interesting and instructive to take a brief look at some of those more notable 'sermons' preached by this worthy SPEAKER, one of the greatest of which must be on that occasion of Ex. 4. 30.

i) Cheering hearts in the Work of God. Ex. 4. 29-31

"And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses. . . . and the people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."

What a meeting that must have been! Some of us look back to various meetings when we seemed to take fresh courage and with renewed confidence in God we went in the strength of the ministry for many days. So must this meeting have been an encouragement to Israel's drooping spirits. What a message from Israel's greatest orator! Note his attention to the details of his text.— In v. 28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and that is exactly relayed to the people in v. 30. He told them not merely the words of Moses, but that which the Lord had spoken to Moses. It is indeed the ministry akin to that which is recommended in N. T. days. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." 1 Pet. 4. 11.

It is always a privilege to relay God's word to His people. It may not always be the thrilling good news of Ex. 4 as we shall see

in Aaron's sermons but in that it is divine in origin, it carries with it an authority that no earthly communication can muster. He declared ALL the words, not a selection of ministry he thought would be best appreciated but in the spirit of a Paul who "kept back nothing. . . ." and "shunned not to declare. . . all the counsel of God". Acts 20. 27.

ii) Challenging by the Word of God —Ex. 7. 1-7, 16-18.

His preaching in the palace was no less faithful than the ministry to the elders of Israel. Ex. 6.27 records "these are that Moses and Aaron which spake unto Pharaoh". He who had not hitherto enjoyed the liberties of the palace as had Moses, now enters with holy boldness to communicate God's mind to the king. He is seen thus to move in the shadow and spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist as he makes known God's purposes and requirements. Ex. 7. 2 "that he send the children of Israel out of his land".

His sermons to Pharaoh however long or short were three — fold in content. They spoke of —

- a. The punishment of God,
- b. the power of God and
- c. the purpose of God.

Pharaoh was left in no doubt after listening to this preacher that his God was a God to be reckoned with, that His power knew no bounds and that His purposes in salvation were foremost in His mind. Do all our gospel preachers of today leave these kind of impressions on the minds of their hearers?

One fears that we have become half apologetic in our style and presentation and we hear presented such a watered down version of the claims of God that such would be barely recognised in heaven. Well might God say of this man "I know that he speaketh well!"

iii) Confident in the Wisdom of God —Ex. 12. 1-6, 28

I should like to have heard Aaron's sermon on the Lamb in Ex. 12 as he with Moses communicates the requirements of God in this respect. Oratory is at its best when its focus is on Christ! Nothing more delightful to the heart of the saints than to hear a good clear presentation of the Lamb of God. The people seemed than at their most responsive. —They "went away and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they."

We sometimes hear that practical ministry is secondary to devotional ministry and thereby some practical application of the truth of God is avoided. Brethren, when will we learn that there can be nothing more guaranteed to have a practical effect upon our lives as Christians than a longer look at the perfect Servant.

Rather than making a ministry of the presentation of Christ an excuse for not touching practical things, it should be the very lever in the Spirit's hand to touch off fresh challenges to the heart.

(to be continued)

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. THROPAY (California)

1—INTRODUCTION

Paul was a prisoner at the time that he wrote this letter. He refers to his imprisonment in chapters 3:1; 4:1, and 6:20. His letter to the Colossians, the Philippians, and to Philemon were also written while he was in prison. They are therefore called the "Prison Epistles" of Paul.

Some believe that this was a circular letter to be distributed to various churches. They base this on two arguments: 1) The words "in Ephesus" do not appear in three Alexandrian Greek manuscripts. 2) Paul does not mention any individuals by name from the church at Ephesus. It is Paul's custom to mention the names of believers in assemblies where he had worked. However, most manuscripts do carry the name "in Ephesus." No manuscripts carry any other name. It is possible that the letter was written to the church at Ephesus initially. After they had read it, and possibly copied it, they would pass it to the other churches in Asia.

This letter was probably brought to the Ephesian believers by Tychicus (6:21).

Ephesus was one of the great cities in the Roman empire. At the end of Paul's second missionary journey, he spent a weekend at Ephesus with Aquilla and Priscilla (Acts 18:19-22). He promised to return. During his third missionary trip he visited Ephesus and stayed there three years (Acts 20:31). The history of that visit is recorded in Acts 19:1-41. From there Paul continued on his

missionary travels. As he was returning to Jerusalem, he stopped to pay a visit to the Ephesian believers for the last time. He ended with a farewell address to the elders of that assembly (Acts 20:13-38).

This letter is considered to be one of Paul's greatest writings. The purpose of this letter was to occupy the believers with what they were saved TO, rather what they were saved FROM. He takes their minds and hearts into the heavenly realm where they can see the reality of God and His eternal purposes. From that perspective, they can understand better what is happening on the earth.

The theme of this letter is Christ and the church. This is also seen as the heart of the chiastic structure by which the Holy Spirit outlined this book (3:20, 21).

OUTLINE IN CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

- A. OPENING STATEMENTS 1:1, 2**
- B. THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL FULFILLED IN THE HEAVENLIES 1:3-14**
- C. CHRIST, FAR ABOVE ALL, WITH EVERYTHING IN SUBJECTION TO HIM 1:15-23**
- D. EVIL SPIRIT WORKS IN CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE 2:1-3**
- E. BELIEVERS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE HEAVENLIES IN CHRIST 2:4-10**
- F. GENTILES RECONCILED THROUGH CHRIST 2:11-22**
- G. MYSTERY OF THE ONE BODY REVEALED 3:1-19**
- H. THE DOXOLOGY TO THE TRIUNE GOD 3:20,21**
- G UNITY OF THE ONE BODY REVEALED 4:1-16**
- F FORMER GENTILES LIVING RIGHTEOUSLY AS THEY LEARN CHRIST 4:17-32**
- E BELIEVERS WALKING IN LOVE ON EARTH, AS CHRIST 5:1-17**
- D HOLY SPIRIT FILLS THE BELIEVERS 5:18-20**
- C EARTHLY RELATIONSHIPS DEMONSTRATING SUBJECTION TO CHRIST 5:21-6:9**
- B THE MYSTERY OF SPIRITUAL EVIL FOUGHT IN THE HEAVENLIES 6:10-20**
- A CLOSING STATEMENTS 6:21-24**

WORKING OUTLINE

I. The Beauty of God's masterpiece 1:1-3:21

A. Introduction 1:1-2

B. The purpose of the Trinity 1:3-14

 1. The WILL of God the Father 1:3-6

 2. The WORK of Christ the Son 1:7-12

 3. The WITNESS of the Holy Spirit 1:13-14

NOTE: Each of these three sections ends with the phrase "praise of His glory."

C. The prayer of the apostle 1:15-23

D. The position of the believer 2:1-10

 1. His position prior to salvation 2:1-3

 2. His position after salvation 2:4-10

E. The peace of the believer 2:11-22

 1. One New Man united from Opposing races for God 2:11-15

 2. One Body reconciled together with God 2:16-19

 3. One Building framed together around God 2:20-22

F. The promise of God for the church 3:1-13

 1. The mystery of the church 3:1-6

 2. The minister of the mystery 3:7-13

G. The power in the believer — the fullness of God 3:14-21

 1. The strength of the Holy Spirit 3:14-16

 2. The surpassing love of the Son 3:17-19

 3. The supreme ability of the Father 3:20-21

II. The Behaviour of God's masterpiece 4:1-6:23

A. Walking in unity 4:1-16

 1. The proportions of unity 4:1-6

 2. The protection of the unity 4:7-16

B. Walking in righteousness and true holiness 4:17-32

1. Introduction of the old man 4:17-19

2. Introduction of the new man 4:20-32

C. Walking in love 5:1-7

D. Walking in the Light 5:8-14

E. Walking in wisdom 5:15-6:9

1. Spirit filled life 5:15-21

2. Submissive life 5:21-6:9

a. Wives and husbands — picture of Christ and the Church 5:22-33

b. Children and parents 6:1-4

c. Servants and masters 6:5-9

F. Weapons of warfare 6:10-20

G. Conclusion 6:21-24.

(to be continued)

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS (3)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

(These articles appeared in 1922 in the Believers' Magazine, and are still up to date).

There are in our time, three positive hindrances to the evangelisation of mankind, which in our early years of assembling in the Lord's Name for His worship and seeking to spread the Gospel, did not exist. They are the Auto, the Moving Picture Show, and the Gramaphone. Of course, the godless world approve of and will continue these as being wholly to their liking, but the born again people of God are being ensnared and spiritually impoverished by their means, and the enemy finds them serviceable to his purpose of hindering and opposing the work of God. We do not class the Auto wholly with the other two. In

itself, it is a thing of utility, has an economic value, and may be turned to good and proper use in the service of the Lord. But we specially have in view the present day use so largely made of it on the Lord's Day, for purposes of pleasure. Along all roads leading from the great cities and towns, towards seaside, mountain, and river resorts, all on pleasure bent, endless streams of old and young may be seen, all through the summer months, from early morn till late evening, "out for the day," without thought of God, or what is due to the Lord and His Word. We have often thought, as we watched these Autos hastening along, how many of their occupants might have been — as in earlier and better days — under the Gospel's sound, but for the quest of pleasure — rather than of God — which this Lord's Day use of the Auto has so largely increased. And we fear many who claim to be the children of God, are not wholly free in practice from this soul-blighting and God-dishonouring habit, which deprives them of much which God has given them to enjoy in things Divine, and causes the worldling to sneer at their inconsistency, knowing what they profess.

MOVING PICTURES.—In many a country town and village, in days before the "movies" were known, there were not many counter attractions to the nightly Gospel Meeting in hall or tent. Not many were able to run a nightly theatre or concert hall, so the people could be got to hear the Gospel message. If the theatre be the devil's church, the picture house is his "mission," and there he runs a continuous revival, Sunday and Saturday, all the year round, with an ever-changing bill of fare to meet all tastes. And crowds of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, flock to these ever-open doors.

THE GRAMOPHONE.—This invention is a striking proof of Satan's ingenuity and ability to hinder the progress of the Gospel among the unconverted, and in spoiling the spiritual taste of the children of God. We can remember when a canvas tent, in which the Gospel was nightly preached, was an attraction to many in the warmth of summer. But now it is common enough to see groups sitting on the verandahs of their houses, in the shade, listening to popular airs played on the Gramophone, which serves to keep them from being under the Gospel's sound, as God assuredly intends they should be (see I Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9).

DIVINE CARE

by B. AVERY, Malvern

Isaiah 9.6 points forward to the Lord Jesus Christ and informs us, among other things, that "the government shall be upon His shoulder" and we know that in the millenial period this will be so. It is interesting to compare the above verse with Luke 15.5 when reference is made to the "shoulders" of the man who has found the lost sheep. He could easily have laid it on one shoulder, but such is his care for the sheep that had wandered that he places it across both his shoulders. In the first reference we note His governing ability, in the second His gracious affection is clearly visible.

In a similar way we find reference to the Lord's arm in Deuteronomy. Six times we read of His "stretched out arm" and what had been accomplished by it. There is, however, one plural reference in 33.27. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms". The former brings before us the Lord's power, the latter His protecting care for His people. Not one arm, powerful though it be, but in time when we require refuge in the storms of life we are assured He has both arms ready to carry us!

On five of the six aforementioned occasions reference is made also to His "mighty hand". When God is concerned with "making whole" reference is made to both hands in Job 5.18, underlining His concern for the individual once more. Emphasised here concerns formation of character, but a further compassion can be observed in Job 10.7-8. In v.7 the almighty "Hand" is mentioned regarding power and judgment, but in the following verse His "hands" are mentioned regarding the formation of the body. These references emphasise Divine concern for our spiritual and physical needs.

In John 10.25 Christ speaks of His own hand, but as if that was not sufficient in, in the next verse He refers to His faith on hand. What assurance of eternal security for the believer!

These thoughts should comfort and encourage us as we are reminded of the Lord's affection for us, the protection of us, and His assurance given to us.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (13)

by T. Thompson (Alaska)

I was born into a godly, Christian home in 1925 at 118 Roseberry Road, Belfast and was nurtured by the example and simple instruction of my dear parents, Sunday School teachers etc. It is with deepest gratitude to God that I heard the sound gospel preached by sincere and compassionate men that "spoiled" me for any wayward paths of the world in which I walked in disobedience to the love of God, for I was ever touched by the sufferings of Christ and His love to me.

Prayers of my mother helped preserve me from many pitfalls and led me to meet and marry the lovely, pure wife of my youth, Sadie. Some months after our marriage in St. John's Malone Church of Ireland where she was a member, she came home one night soundly saved. Four months later, January 1947 after a time of deep soul trouble I surrendered my stubborn will and the Lord saved me by his grace. Two weeks later we both were baptised and received kindly into fellowship at Victoria Hall, Belfast. Three weeks later we sailed for South Africa.

Just as the course of our life changed from N. Ireland to S. Africa, so the course of our spiritual life changed from "gold to God." On board ship we observed what God had saved us out of for the ship was a world in miniature with sensuality and depravity of the most vile type and on the other hand the hypocrisy of "religious" people and priests mixed up in the same things. I started a Bible reading with the help of two Scotish ministers who were saved and showed it. This was held on the upper deck and up to a hundred attended each night. Our song sheets were copied out by our own hands with such favourites as "A fountain filled with blood," which we sung with power. Arrival in S. Africa with a changed outlook and ambition. We responded to the godly advice of a missionary given a few days after

our arrival "Young man, Johannesburg has two things and you must make your choice 'God or Gold.' Choose God and you will never lack gold. Choose gold and you will leave God." We chose God and put our all in to a little gathering of 8 saints in Rosebank, Johannesburg.

We always kept close to the assembly and actively engaged in S. S. as a teacher. Also commenced a gospel work in the Rand Eplectic Home still carried on 40 years afterwards by my then fellowworker, Oscar Hinds.

Moving about on business brought many contracts in the gospel, beside tracts and door to door visitation etc. When Geo. Knowles (Palestine) visited and gave missionary reports on "WHAT GOD" had done there, we were stirred to yield our whole lives to God for "wherever" He wanted to send us. Shortly after that a business transfer to Cape Town brought me to work tirelessly in the gospel with many beloved brethren of various colours and cultures. Happy as the day was long we thought "THIS" is where God wants us to serve Him. Having seen God's hand in saving many souls and now asked to speak on conferences, it was with trembling and fear that God further showed us ALASKA as the place we were to go through reading a report in an assembly magazine by an aged worker who cried for help for the "neglected northwest."

After about two years of prayerful exercise and writing to Wm. Rae (Scottish) pioneer into Alaska as early as 1921, and also Canada etc., the elder brethren whom I had asked to prayerfully bear my exercise also before the Lord, "all these" concurred and assuredly gathered that God had called us to preach the gospel. Six assemblies in Cape Town commended us and we sailed for Ulster to obtain visas into Alaska, a territory of U.S.A.

Sailing from Africa in absolute faith (Commending assemblies gave no support financially), we arrived almost penniless in Ulster. We sought fellowship in Maranatha Assembly, Belfast for before leaving Africa a "big" missionary/teacher from another clime discounted our call and ungraciously interfered with our going forth. Such things

are to be expected but then it was a great burden in addition to being married with two little boys to care for; hence our "hiding" ourselves from our former assembly that was very missionary minded. This proved a blessing in God's plan for after we obtained the visas, the Maranatha Assembly joined in and commended us to the Lord for His work.

Thirty-six years have passed serving the Lord here and now that Sadie has finished her course with distinction in 1984, God has remained faithful and with dear Marjorie, whom the Lord gave me 2 years ago, we continue to this day thankful for His mercy that enabled us to carry the gospel here and see saints gathered to "HIS NAME." The latest assembly at Indian Valley, after 10 years of pioneering, gathered in 1985 with 8 saints and now there are 20 and good signs of potential growth.

All I can say is "I wish I had given Him more."

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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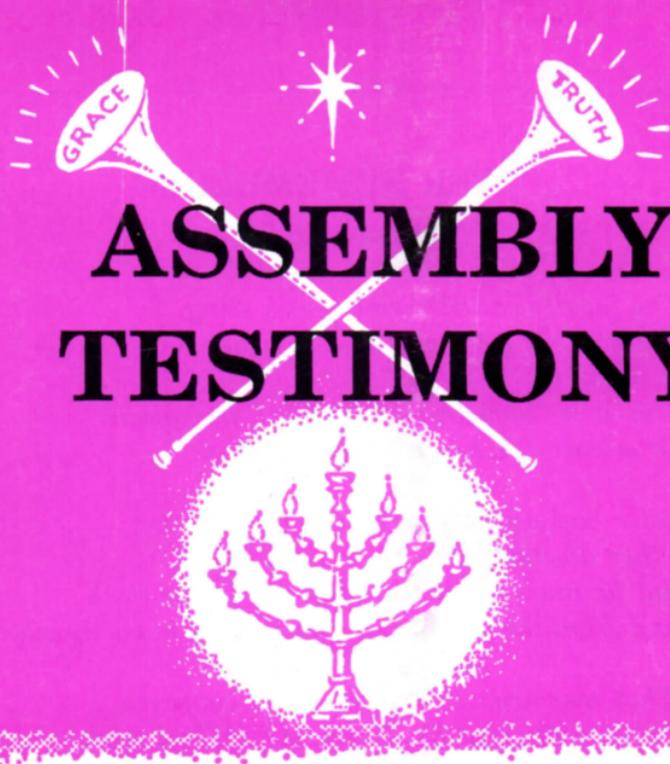
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ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Contents

EXPLANATION OF A NEGLECTED CHAPTER 1 CORINTHIANS 7

by Eric G. Parmenter

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD

by J. B. Hewitt

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. Thropay

VITAL VERITIES

by E. W. Rogers

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS

by W. J. M'Clure

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by A. Aiken

PETER REMEMBERED

Matthew 26.75

*The faculty called memory can sting,
Things that we thought were dead, to life can
bring;
The little "Something," who can it explain?
Or silence it when'er it causes pain.*

*Peter had vowed for Jesus he would die,
Other disciples may their Lord deny;
But he must learn the weakness of the flesh
And from the grain, the empty chaff must thresh.*

*What memories that tender look conveyed,
Piercing the soul by words he just had said;
Sad, sad the night, but sadder still the morn
When to that maid, Peter the lie had sworn.*

*The fear of man has often been the test,
To try our love, our true state manifest;
A little maid can bring a strong man down
And rob him of the glory and the crown.*

*Let us be slow to judge a Peter's slip,
For Satan's wiles the strongest man can trip;
Snares be along our pathway well concealed
The scars they leave are not so easily healed.*

*Then let us think pure thoughts as Jesus did,
And let His word deep in our hearts be hid;
Then memories sweet shall in our closing years
Bring holy joy, and not remorseful tears.*

—R. Hull, Belfast.

An Explanation of a Neglected Chapter
— 1 Corinthians 7

by ERIC G. PARMENTER, Basingstoke

PART 3

THE CALL OF GOD AND ITS EFFECTS, Verses 18-24. The apostle widens his instructions to take in certain distinction found among the believers, some in the religious realm, others in the social. Throughout this section Paul is showing that their conversion does not involve removing outward signs or social position. When the call of God came some of those who were saved had Jewish connections, in that case they were not to remove the outward sign of circumcision and where those who believed were slaves they were not to alter their position, but rather 'use it' to glorify God: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." If liberty for the slave became possible such was to be used verse 21, but all will be governed by their new relationship with the Lord.

The call in verse 22 relates to the time of their conversion, and as being "in the Lord" they were now subject to His authority in all their circumstances; those who were free when they became saved they are now the bondservants of Christ. Note the difference in the titles "in the Lord" — authority which demands subjection "Christ's servant" — emphasises His grace.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE, verse 23. This is a reminder that the ground of their freedom from sin's slavery is the blood of Christ, and whatever their distinctions or positions whether religious or social Christ died to make them His servants, i.e. for them to be at His disposal. Therefore they were not to become the servants of men. Paul makes an important addition in relation to the call of God to what he has said in verse 20, ". . . therein abide with God" — literally "before God." Thus their position may be that of bondslaves, but instead of trying to alter things, they were to live out their lives "before" God in the conscious realisation of His presence knowing that any change they might desire can be left with God and His will for them.

COUNSEL FOR THE UNMARRIED Verses 25-40. Paul now reverts to the question which he was answering in verse 8 to give a fuller explanation as one having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful: The apostle's "I think" verse 26 is not indication some doubt what he is to say, he has perfect confidence in the soundness of the principle to be enunciated.

PRESENT DISTRESS Verses 26-28. Evidently there were circumstances that had a noticeable bearing on what he is saying: Possibly pressures were being felt, therefore "this is good that a man be as he is" ie not to change his unmarried status verse 27. But if marriage is undertaken no sin is committed. Paul is not thinking of wrong doing but what is expedient. Trials and difficulties are often experienced in the responsibilities or married life, but he would spare them, meaning he would not press the point for them to remain unmarried.

SHORTENED TIME Verse 29-30. Paul declares that the time in which their life and circumstances were ordered, had been "drawn together" were "little in amount" and whatever remained of their future life down here was not to be governed by relationships, circumstances or possessions. Marriage relationships, circumstances which cause either joy or sorrow, the fashion of the world, are all transient and passing. The husband is to remember that in the responsibilities and relationships of marital life — his relationship to the Lord was higher and more permanent. Those who would possess goods — the word "possessed" having the meaning of "holding fast" "setting the heart on" — are to consider the transitory nature of such things — they are not to be absorbed with them, but as possessing them, hold everything in trust in the consciousness of their stewardship before God. The phrase "not abusing it" means not to "use it to the full", or not "over-using it" as if it were the great object of living, and the reason the apostle gives is " the fashion or outward form, of the world passeth away".

IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE Verse 32-35. The apostle expresses his desire for the Corinthians in verse 32 "I would have you without carefulness." He would encourage them to live without worrying or being over anxious and then outlines the differences between the Unmarried and the Married. The man

who remains unmarried “careth for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord”. The things, and the pleasure of the Lord occupies him without the distractions of a wife which also may limit his service for the Lord: “But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” There is no suggestion by the apostle that the married man is “worldly minded” yet, in pleasing his wife he becomes involved in worldly matters. There is nothing superior in the single state only that such a man has greater liberty to serve God.

WIFE AND A VIRGIN Verses 34-35. The same principle is applied by Paul to the wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman “cares for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and spirit” ie her consecration to the Lord has not the distractions as that of a wife, for “she that is married careth for the things of the world with a view to pleasing her husband”. The apostle in making these observations has in view the profit of the believers. There was no intention of casting a snare, like a man would cast a noose over a horse in order to catch the animal, the best interest of the saints were before him, in touching things that were becoming, with the ultimate end that whether single or married they might attend upon the Lord without distraction.

STEDFAST IN HEART Verses 36-38. These verses have been the subject of a variety of explanations, some have taken them to mean a father and his unmarried daughter. The word virgin can apply to a man or a woman, the context will generally decide which. The word “her” found in verse 36 and twice in verse 38 is in italics, indicating its absence in the Greek text. Paul has been concerned with the subject of the man and the woman either married, or widowed, which might suggest that this is so throughout. To introduce the father here means the apostle is addressing himself to another question raised by the Corinthians. Seeing the word “virgin” can also be translated “virginity” the interpretation that seems more in keeping with the subject matter of the chapter is, that Paul continues his instruction to the unmarried man, not one who is a father with a daughter of marriageable age. The phrase if “she pass the flower of age” does not refer to the daughter of The

Englishmans Greek New Testament 1550; and J N Darby's translation where the phrase is rendered "if he be beyond . . ." Thus the flower of age is better understood as "If he hath fully attained age." Paul's logic is that if anyone thinks he behaves unseemly to his virginity, having attained to the full vigour of age, let him do what he will, let them marry, for in doing this he sinneth not, verse 36. "But he who stands firm, with authority over his own will, having decided in his heart to keep his own virginity, he doeth well". The apostle in verse 38 sums up the matter — To marry is not sinful — the man does well: But he that remains single does better.

WIDOWS AND RE-MARRIAGE Verses 39-40. Paul in concluding the chapter makes a clear statement of fact in view of the creatorial purpose of God. "A wife is bound for whatever time her husband lives (verse 39 JND) but if her husband be dead ie fallen asleep, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will . . . con-firming that the marriage bond although transient can only be broken at the death of the partner. Then the apostle brings forward an important principle: In re-marrying, the widow is not free to marry of her own choice with no reference to the Lord — As with all who contemplate marrying, the widow is to discern the Lord's will in her choice of partner, "Only in the Lord" expresses the authority of the Lord in the matter of earthly relationships. "But she is happier if she will so abide—after my judgment" and in giving his judgment Paul has the assurance and conviction that such is the mind of the Spirit of God.

AN OBSERVATION

In the light of present day conditions how necessary are godly elders, who in their ministry as overseers are sensitive to when a marriage is under strain, such should be able to provide compassionate and understanding help to avoid a complete breakdown. Young couples are, in many cases, ready to discuss their problems and accept advice and counsel from elders—but is there a shortage of such men among the saints in assemblies today ie to whom the young people can go having confidence in the counsel given that such would be the mind of the Spirit?

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. BOWER, Worcester

Paper 3 MOAB. Chap. 2. 1-3;

Refs: 2 Kings 3 and 13.20; Isaiah 15,16,25; Jer. 48; Ezek. 25. 8-11; etc., Whilst judgment had been passed upon the preceding nations for their treatment of the people of God, judgment comes here because of Moab's treatment of the bones of the king of Edom — an incident not referred to elsewhere. It will be remembered that it was Balak, king of Moab, who influenced Balaam in causing Israel to sin. (Num. 24;) Note Num. 31. 8. We cannot pass over the story of Balaam without reference to his prophecy which had a yet future connotation "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." (Sheth — Tumult.) One by one, God has dealt, and will deal with these "brethren". All were characterized by an inate hatred of Israel; an hatred which persists to this day and is flaring up more vehemently as we, it is believed, draw very near to the "last days". (This is written in the year 1990).

JUDAH. (Chap. 2. 4-5;)

" . . . they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept His commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked." "They have REJECTED the law of the Lord" (R. V.). The sins of the fathers! No reverence and no obedience to the Word of God. And then — "Lies" or false gods, lying prophets, lying teachers, and "modernism". Not new lies, but the old ones dressed up. Historically, Israel had come a long way since the days when they "who despised Moses' law died without compassion under two or three witnesses" (Heb. 10. 28). It could be that as Judah heard the denunciations upon the nations, that they adopted a "holier than thou" attitude and said in their hearts, "Serve them right", but now Amos turns their attention to themselves. The words of Peter (1. 4. 17), "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the

house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Judah, even with the Temple of God in their midst, rejected the law which they professed to keep. Did Judah, as many believers today, regard the Law as having little or no relevance to our day? Had it become "out of date" and "boring"? If out of date (for "times have changed, and we are more enlightened") why bother to keep commandments that they did not revere? They were, in fact, no better than their neighbours, for they too had their "lies" . . Cause and effect! A past generation took care to instil into their children and young believers the dire penalties for adding to or taking from the "blest Word of God" (Deut. 4.2; 12.23;). We may think too of Prov. 30. 5-6; and Rev. 22.18; In these days we add to, or subtract from with apparent impunity. But is it with impunity? Do we shut our eyes to the evidence? Are we content with the lowering of moral standards; the "free" society; lack of obedience to parents and, conversely, lack of parental control. Despite what the Bible teaches, we see an ever increasing disregard for marriage vows etc., — even within the church. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10.12)

ISRAEL (Chap. 2. 6-16)

No doubt but that Israel had the same thoughts as Judah, as they listened to the words of Amos, the man who was "no prophet". For Judah, for Israel, for the nations "the sky was red and lowering" (Matt. 16. 1-4), but they all, as do the nations of the end of the 20th century chose to ignore the very evident "signs of the times." God would not "turn back" His judgments. And will not! Truly, there is " no new thing under the sun (Ecc. 1.9) and as we read this catalogue of the sins of Israel and of Judah we must surely see a parallel with our own times. In vv. 6 and 7a we see the oppression of the poor. A righteous man was sold for silver; a man might sell himself (Deut. 15.12) but not his brother or an insolvent debtor (cf. 2 King 4.1; Neh. 5.5) The case here is of a righteous man sold for a debt incurred through no fault of his own, and of a poor man who was unable to redeem (as some aver) the title deeds of property (cf. Ruth 4.7). It could be, of course, that he simply could not afford a pair of shoes and he was sold into bondage, and not hired as a servant.

Does the phrase "They sold a righteous man for silver" re-

mind us of anything? Was not our Lord sold for thirty pieces of silver? The poor were literally ground down even as the dust of the earth was crushed, and the meek were an easy prey. V. 7b is a picture of the immorality of that day The abominations of the nations about them, though practised before, now come into the open and flourish. The 'maid' was probably the consecrated temple woman (cf. the opening chapters of 1 Samuel.) This open moral degradation was in defiance of the laws of God (Lev. 19. 8,15; 20,11;) and the Holy Name and the Holy Place was defiled. Pledged garments were not returned by sunset as the law required (Ex. 22. 26-7;) (Deut. 24. 13;) If not returned "wherein shall a man sleep?" and, if a man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge. Note that it is at "every altar" (Cf. 2 Kings 21. 5;) It has been suggested that a possible reading of v. 8b is — "In My Temple they offer wine purchased with stolen money." God, has, through the prophet, given a sevenfold picture of life without law, that is within the community of those who claimed to be the chosen people. Yet there is more to follow. Vvs. 9-13 tell us of man's ingratitude. Had not God destroyed the ancient peoples of the Land, the Amorite (2.9) descended from Ham, Noah's younger son upon whom was a curse? (Gen. 9.25;) From Ham came the Canaanites, those nations that were ever at enmity with Israel and among whom were the giants. The Canaanites were, in the main, destroyed, BUT — their gods remained. We may wonder just how it was possible for Israel to forget Egypt and the four hundred years of captivity and bondage and delayed hope; the subsequent deliverance by the "stretched out arm" of Jehovah for did they not have the annual feast of the Passover as an enduring memorial? Generations come and go; ancient events become just "history" or fable and for the Church holy days become holidays; the one time Holy Day now has no significance other than a thought that it has something to do with "religion". Egypt and the wilderness were historial object lessons but, alas, Israel was blind to the purposes of God for their redemption. "If only. . ." The Christian, too, has his object lesson as he meets at the Table of the Lord. Human nature has not changed. Cf. Deut. 8. 18, 18; See how the servants of God were treated — the Nazarites encouraged to break their vows — one little drink will do no harm; prophets were forbidden to prophesy

(Num. 6; Deut. 18. 15-18;) and we see again that times have not changed. Israel's "religion" was now "custom" and they had heaped up their transgressions without measure. God was satiated, not only with their offerings but also by their sin. The picture is a vivid one. An overloaded cart groaning under the harvest (so the A.V.) The A.V. marginal reading (and other versions) portray a picture of Israel being pressed down by God. The harvest of transgression would weigh them down. Isaiah 53 comes easily to mind, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Can we see the "groaning cart" in such verses as seen in Isaiah 53? See John. 11.33,38; Matt. 11.38; Luke. 22.44; John. 12.27; "He took our sins and our sorrows, and made them His very own." THEREFORE the pressure of their sin brought upon them the pressure of judgment and human effort is powerless against it — there was to be "no escape". Having pronounced coming judgments upon the nations and upon Israel and Judah, Amos now follows up with four discourses (chaps. 3, 4 and 5.)

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

8 — GLIMPSES OF HIS PRIESTLY MINISTRY

(Luke 24: Heb. 8. 1,2)

There are many delicate touches peculiar to Luke's gospel that set forth the infinite tenderness and immeasurable compassion of the sympathetic Priest, who came to unveil the very heart of God with all His kindly love. As a priest He represented Mankind before God, and His right to officiate on man's behalf lies in His kinship as Son of Man. His resolve to undertake the work of atonement emerges from His friendship, for Luke displays Him as the Friend of publicans and sinners. By virtue of the resurrection, the Mediator of the covenant became the Minister of the sanctuary (Heb. 8.2). The claims of righteousness are finally met and the comfort of love fully manifest.

His Priestly Suitability v. 1-12

The Conqueror of Death

Now dawns the first Lord's Day of the new creation, and the resurrection floods all the landscape of life with a brilliant light.

These women who sought Jesus "at deep dawn" were rewarded (v. 1). They had anticipated a difficulty (Mark 16. 3), but when they arrived, it was removed (v. 2).

His resurrection was the positive proof of the divine satisfaction in His offering (Rom. 4. 25). Observe, it is now the LORD JESUS (v. 3). The stone was removed not to enable Him to leave the tomb, but to allow others to see He had gone. Divine power removed the Body of Christ.

Luke gives a very condensed account of the first day of resurrection. He selects incidents that took place in the early morning, in the afternoon, and in the evening. The angel's message of interrogation, "Why;" of affirmation, "He is risen"; and exhortation, "remember": was meant to end their perplexity (v. 4) and calm their fear (v. 5). The resurrection ratifies Christ's loftiest claims. He is the first-born among His brethren (Rom. 8. 29), and the first-born from among the dead (Col. 1. 20). He is the first-fruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15. 20), and our Forerunner within the veil (Heb. 6. 20).

His Priestly Sympathy v. 13-24

The Companion on the Highway

After the opened grave comes the opened Scriptures, on the road of glad surprise (v. 13-35). The Resurrection of Christ is a historical fact. It is God's pledge of final triumph for His people. These two disciples were full of gloom. With burdened hearts they were returning home. The value of this story is: 1) Evidential — a proof of Christ's Resurrection; 2) Preparatory — preparing His followers for His complete bodily absence, leading to days of faith, not sight. 3) Symbolic — for when two talk together with Christ as their theme, He draws near.

He lives to serve because He loves and cares, and longs to lead us into the privileges of this new relationship. His intrusion into their lives (v. 15). The Stranger who joined them none other than the Subject of their talk. He chose to remain unrecognised (v. 16).

His interest in their sorrow (v. 17-19).

He showed interest, sympathy, love. He chose to draw out their thoughts in order to clarify their sorrow. His inspiration from their testimony (v. 19-24). Their recital of events was a confession of their faith in Him. A sad outpouring of hearts unlocked by sympathy. Christ still revered, loved, mourned. They had doubts, disappointment and difficulties, hope once aroused, now shattered (v. 21-24).

His Priestly Spirituality v. 25-27

The Communication of Truth

“The Priests lips should keep knowledge” (Mal. 2. 7). His priestly knowledge enabled Him to teach them divine truth. He took them back to their sacred literature, to the things most familiar to them (v. 25, 26). His perfect covenant knowledge qualifies Him to arbitrate in the affairs of His people (Deut. 17. 8-11). His authority is final, and His ability indisputable (Luke 4. 20, 22). They listened to His priestly instruction as He traced the Messianic note in the ritual of the Mosaic economy, the clear statements of the prophets, pointing out the tenor of the Old Testament in its ethical and symbolic character.

How much we have missed through not coming to Him more constantly for instruction (Prov. 8. 34, 35; 4. 5-9) It is God who reveals His Son (Gal. 1. 16).

His Priestly Succour v. 28-33 The Comforter in the Home

They learned — “after Easter, always Easter”. The Lord aroused their interest and tested them by feigning continuance of the journey (v. 28). He accepted their invitation to stay with them. Suddenly the Guest becomes the Host. The frugal meal became a Sacrament, and the home, a House of God. That’s what Christ does wherever He goes. The familiar act brought a revelation of the living Saviour and they were satisfied (v. 30, 31). That changed defeat into victory. Their cup of gladness was now more than full, it overflowed. They were cheered and comforted, their burdened hearts became beaming hearts, (v. 32).

His Priestly Strength v. 34-43

The Centre of the House of God

Their faith was perfected by recognition and sealed by experience (1 John 1. 1) No good thing should ever be selfishly kept, hurry and tell somebody (v. 33). What a welcome at the expec-

tant gathering. Their clear testimony — “He is risen”, complete transformation — “appeared to Simon”. He was the first apostle to see Him (1 Cor. 15. 5). Penitence brought Peter pardon and privilege. The Lord confirmed their story, dispelled their fears, and conferred His peace (36-38). He convinced them He was alive, granting proofs of His identity and reality (v. 39-43). No one would or could have invented this story.

His Priestly Service v. 45-49

The Commissioner of His Servants

These verses are a summary of the forty days ministry between the Resurrection and the Ascension. His gracious assurance (v. 45-48); His glorious Ascension (v. 50-53). The Lord opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, thus fitting them to be His witnesses (v. 45, 48). Preparation of their mind (v. 45), and of their hearts (v. 47), for their work of witnessing. The guilt of sin pollutes, and the power of sin, paralyses mankind. The call of the Gospel is for repentance, and the comfort is the remission of sins (v. 47). The sphere is “all nations”, and the power “in His Name”. Their responsibility “to witness”, and the resources of grace are assured (v. 49). The “promise of the Father” assured them of blessing, “power from on high” would be effective in every aspect of service. The dynamic for evangelism (Acts 1. 8).

His Priestly Sanctuary v. 50-53 He Captivated their Hearts

As the Ark of the Covenant “He led them out” (v. 50; Josh. 3. 3, 6, 7).

Our Glorious Leader, leading to the place of separation and communion — “Bethany”; and benediction (v. 50). His departure indicates redemptive work accepted, and His representative position taken as Priest (v. 51b, Heb. 8. 1).

His priestly benediction (v. 50, 51) includes the Lord’s keeping His grace, and His peace, which are inseparably linked with Himself (Num. 6. 23-27; 2 Cor. 13. 14). The propitiation having been made in the Sin offerings, the Lord can bless and keep. The dedication rendered in the Burnt offering enables the Lord to cause His face to shine and be glorious. The reconciliation effected in the Peace offering, the Lord can give peace.

He ascended as our representative and is still leading us to

victory, interceding for us and blessing us. This is the source of our security and the secret of tranquility.

May we daily recognise not only the suitability of Christ but His transcendent superiority as our Priest (Heb. 8. 1-6).

Like true disciples may we worship, obey, witness and rejoice. Believe the promise of the Prophet (v. 49); enjoy the blessing of the Priest (v. 50); and rejoice in the glory of the King (v. 51-53). Amen.

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin (Glengormley)

2. THE SPEAKER AND HIS SERMONS — Part 2

In the previous paper we noticed that Aaron preached at least five sermons and we looked briefly at the first three. We now come to the last two.

iv) Complaining about the Ways of God.

But Aaron the speaker was, it seems, a man of like passions as we are and it was true in his case as has been true in ours that "he spake unadvisedly with his lips", as did also Moses. The Heavenly Witness to his oratorial ability so profoundly recognised in Ex. 4. is the unseen listener to his voice in Num. 12. 1 when he was with Miriam "spake against Moses" and v. 2 records that "the Lord heard it".

I am sure that Aaron never intended that conversation to be heard in Heaven. It seems to have been in the context of a very private conversation. It does not seem to have been an open full-blooded attack upon the authority of the man Moses but it was heard none the less. It is one of those verses that should cause us to tremble. It makes interesting reading to compare the subject matter that the Lord is said to have "heard" throughout the scriptures. e.g. Num. 12. 1, 1 Sam. 7. 9, Mal. 3. 16, Psa. 34. 6.

What a tragedy that Aaron's able tongue was ever used thus in Num. 12. He who could have profitably filled the ears of the people with good things turns his talents to speaking against the servant of the Lord. These things written aforetime were written

for our learning and it is a great pity that we are not better scholars and that such lessons are wasted on us for much of the time. Is it not still a grief to the spiritually minded to see and hear the talents of able brethren, and saintly sisters too, being put to the service of "the accuser of the brethren", in their attitude to their fellow saints?

Many a platform has been misappropriated to speak against one another and what would have been otherwise profitable ministry has been so salted with offensive overtones that the good of it has been lost to an audience that needed its counsel. In the scriptures there are two kinds of ministries by two kinds of men—there is that which FEEDS the saints "feed the flock of God which is among you. . . ." 1 Pet. 5. 2 and that which EATS the saints "whose word doth eat as doth a canker". 2 Tim. 2. 17

We ought to make sure that in our minds there is that which will be to the upbuilding of the saints, even though it may contain that which may not be naturally palatable. There are times when the medicine can be honeyed for the sake of the children but as the years go by we must learn to 'take it like a man', having in mind its medicinal and nutritional value.

Num. 12. 1 is a solemn reminder that even the most spiritual of men (and God attests to this fact in Psa. 106 where even amidst the recounting of Israel's many failures, Aaron is mentioned by name only as "Aaron the saint of the Lord" v. 16) is subject to the misuse of the tongue. Rightly does James highlight its power in his N. T. epistle when this little member is seen to kindle a great fire.

v) Conforming to the Will of God.

Of all this noble speaker's great moments however none are more striking than that of Lev. 10. 3. The hardest thing for an able orator to do is to be silent. To pass by an occasion for the display of his gift and ability, to miss the chance for an emotional appeal or to show the powerful logic of his reasoning. Yet Aaron rises in our estimation and in that of Heaven as on this memorable occasion on the death of his two boys under the hand of God it is said that "Aaron held his peace."

Powerful indeed is the man who can rise above his own circumstances and personal afflictions to give God the glory and play a part of usefulness in His work. This Aaron manages as from the

brick-kilns he rises to stand side by side with the man who spent his years in the palace. He seems oblivious to the fact that the other seems to have been favoured by God in a special way which he himself did not enjoy. Truly he that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city, Prov. 16. 32.

More powerful even, if such were possible, is he who can rise above family prejudice to take sides with God. It is not true that this is the point in which many a blunder is made in the present time? Impartiality is a boon when seen amongst God's people but the temptation to be partial and have a law for other folks' families and another law for our own is the rock on which many perish.

It was so in the days of Malachi the prophet. Mal. 2. 9 "ye have been partial in the law". The equality of the people is emphasized in the verse following as the marginal reading of "partial" is given "accepted faces". This is out of character with the God viewed continually on the table of shewbread twelve loaves representative of ALL the tribes. It is called "bread of faces". God saw them all as the same, not so with us at times.

Could we have stood silently by as two blackened corpses were carried out, stricken down in the flower of manhood, from whom so much had been expected and in whom so many hopes had been centred? Was not God overreacting? Was not this too stern a measure? Had not others made mistakes without such disastrous consequences? Thus the logical mind would run. Had we been the orator that Aaron was could we not have ably spoken on their behalf and in their defence? Have not at times the guilty been acquitted through the skill and oratory of their counsel?

Aaron held his peace. Bad enough not to speak but not to weep! No uncovered head, no mourning clothes, no funeral attendance, no graveside oration, NOTHING! This is a man in the good of the words we, at times, so glibly sing.—

"Ill that God blesses is our good and unblest good is ill,
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will."

A man can occupy no higher ground than when taking sides with God even when it comes to his own family. Herein failed many of the giants of the Book. —David, Samuel, Eli, and other such and anyone of us could fail on the same point. Aaron has learned that God has one standard for ALL and His holiness and

sanctuary can under no circumstances be defiled. The Tabernacle must not suffer. The Priesthood must not be corrupted even if it means the silence of a father in relation to his own family.

Has not the Devil had great success in this very sphere still in so many places? Family links have prevailed over divine standards. Offence cannot be given to leaders and what they would never have allowed in others they have permitted in their own families. Thus the mouths of good men, and able men, have been stopped, their ministry losing its effectiveness.

Better to be silent in respect of God's ways and judgements than to open the mouth vindictively and have it closed thereafter for effective testimony.

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

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. THROPAY (California)

Paper No. 2

I. THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S MASTERPIECE 1.1-3:21

A. Introduction 1.1-2

Verse 1

-Paul: This name is from the Latin and means "small" or "little." His Hebrew name "Saul" means "to ask" or "pray." Throughout the history of the Jews, it was not uncommon for them to adopt Gentile names while they were under Gentile rule. (Wuest) In the Old Testament, the Babylonians sometimes renamed their captives. Cp. II Kings 24.17, Daniel 1.7,

-an apostle: (apostolos) to send forth on a commission as a representative. Paul was chosen and commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The qualifications for an apostle are mentioned in Acts 1.20-22. They are:

1. He must be a man (Greek — aner — never used of women)
Acts 1.21

2. He must be faithful (“accompanied with us all the time”) Acts 1.21
3. He must be a witness of Christ Acts 1.21,22
4. He must be chosen by the Lord Acts 1.23-26

Paul was a special apostle to the Gentiles Romans 11.13; 1 Cor. 15.9.

1. He was a man 2. He was faithful (Acts 9.27-28)
3. He was a witness of Christ (Acts 9.1-6; 1 Cor. 15.8)
4. He was chosen by the Lord (1 Timothy 1.1)

-of Jesus Christ: This title of the Lord is the one most used in the Gospels. The emphasis is on the name “Jesus,” His name given Him when He humbled Himself to become a Man. The name “Christ,” means “anointed one.” The full title refers to the Man that lived and died on earth as the Anointed One of God.

-by: (dia) “through,” “by means of.”

-the will: (thelēma) The execution of God’s will in grace.

-of God: Paul was the last of the apostles. He could not have qualified if he had not seen the Lord in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus. God, in His gracious design, revealed Christ to Paul in this way so that He could call him to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

-to the saints: (hagios) “Holy ones.” People set apart with God who sets evil apart from Himself by His glory. Every believer is a saint.

-which are at Ephesus: probably where his letter was read first

-and to the faithful: (pistos) the word is in the active voice =“relying, believing, trusting.” Their faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He not only is writing to the Ephesian believers but to all those who are trusting in Christ Jesus.

-in Christ Jesus: In this title, the emphasis is on the word “Christ.” This is His title as risen and glorified. The Anointed One who is now exalted who once humbled Himself.

Verse 2

-Grace: (charis) The unlimited (Romans 11.6), unmerited (Ephesians 2.8), unselfish (II Corinthians 8.9), loving favour of God to the sinner which produces “leaping for Joy” and “thankfulness.”

- to be you:** Paul had enjoyed God's grace in abundance. He was not selfish, however. He was willing that others might enjoy God's grace as much as he did. There is plenty of grace for all to receive an infinite supply because God is "rich in grace."
- and peace:** (eirene) "a state of untroubled, undisturbed, well-being," Cremer. "that which brings into unity," Young. It describes (1) that harmony between God and man brought about through the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5.1) (2) harmony between believers (some of which may have been enemies prior to conversion — Ephesians 2.13-18) produced through faith in Christ. (3) the inward calmness and harmony of spirit enjoyed in the heart of a believer who knows that his God has all things under His control (Philippians 4.6, 7).
- from God our Father and (from the) Lord Jesus Christ:** They are one in what They are able to give, both giving "grace and peace." Thus they are equal in rank and power. The two are the same source of "grace and peace" because They are one God. Yet, They are distinct in their relation to the believers. God is Father, having made them children by adoption (Romans 8.14, 15). Jesus Christ is Lord as Head of the church (Colossians 1.18).

Chiasm of verses 3-21

- A Spiritual blessings in the heavens v3
- B He chose us in Him v4
- C He predestinated us to the praise of His glory v5, 6
- D In whom we have redemption (what we are saved to) v11
- E The mystery of His will v9, 10
- D In whom we have an inheritance (what we are saved to) v11
- C He predestinated us to the praise of His glory v11, 12
- B We trusted (chose) Him v13
- A Spirit's seal — a spiritual blessing on earth v14

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRINITY 1:3-14

1. *The WILL of God the Father 1.3-6*

Verse 3

-Blessed: (eulogētos) Literally, "well spoken of," praised, celebrated with praises; applied only to God, acknowledging His goodness- Mark 14.61; Luke 1.68; Romans 1.25; 9.5

-be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Compare Psalm 45.6,7- Persons of the Godhead address one another as

God-Cp John 5.18 The Lord Jesus claimed that God was His own private, individual Father, in a unique way, thus making Himself equal with God.

- who hath blessed:** (eulogeō) blessings invoked on a person; Luke 6.26; Romans 12.14; (b) to cause to prosper, make happy, to bestow blessings on. Said of God in Acts 3.26; Galatians 3.9
- us:** This includes the writer, the saints at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus
- with:** (en) Literally, “in,” showing the sphere in which we have been immersed.
- all:** (pasē) any and every; of every kind
- spiritual:** (pneumatikos) “Always implies the working of the Holy Spirit.” Alford — Spirit and spiritual occur thirteen times in this epistle. In this letter the work of God’s Spirit upon the human spirit is emphasized. The word “spiritual” in this case is not in contrast to that which is “material” or “body,” but refers to that which proceeds from the Holy Spirit.
- blessing:** (eulogia) (1) “a blessing, benefit, or free gift bestowed.” (2) praise, to speak well of
SPIRITUAL BLESSING ARE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE BENEFITS BESTOWED ON BELIEVERS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. HE HAS IMMERSED US IN THESE GIFTS.
- in:** (en) indicating the sphere from which these gifts come
- heavenly places:** (tois epouraniois) Lit. “The Heavenlies.” God’s dwelling place. See verse 20. This is where the blessings originate and can be enjoyed.
- in Christ:** He is the sphere in which we receive everything. To understand what it means to be “in Christ,” please read Eph. 5.30

Verse 4

- according as:** (Kathōs) “in accordance with the fact that. . .”; “even as,” “being measured and characterized by.”
- He hath chosen:** (eklegō - in middle voice) “to pick out or choose for oneself.”
- us in Him:** The Lord Jesus is the sphere in which we were chosen for God. Notice, it does NOT say that we were chosen “to be in Him,” but that we were chosen “in Him.”

-before the foundation: (Katabolē) from two words meaning “to throw down.” It refers to the creator throwing down the universe when He brought it into existence.

-of the world: (Kosmos) harmonious arrangement and order. This word refers to the universe.

THE CHOICE IS AS ETERNAL AS GOD. HE ALWAYS KNEW WHAT HE EVER WILL KNOW. THERE NEVER WAS A TIME IN GOD’S EXISTENCE WHEN HE FIRST DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING! HIS DECISIONS ARE AS ETERNAL AS HIMSELF.

-that we: stating the purpose for the choice.

-should be holy: (hagios — as v1 “saints”) “Holy ones.” People set apart with God who sets evil apart from Himself by His glory. WE BELONG TO GOD.

-and without blame: (amōmos) without spot, blot, or blemish. Used in 1 Peter 1:19 referring to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. It indicates His absolute perfection of character and life as a sinless Man. The Greek version of the Old Testament uses the word as a technical term to designate the absence of anything amiss in a sacrifice that represented the Lord Jesus. Cp Lev. 22:21. GOD WANTS US LIKE HIS SON.

-before: (Katenōpion - from “Kata,” down; and “enōpion,” in the sight of) Literally means “to see down in.” A searching gaze of satisfaction and delight into the innermost recesses of the believer. It implies a special nearness and fondness.

-Him: God is absolutely holy. His desire is to be able to look at His creatures with scrutiny and see His own righteousness; with every mark and stain of sin removed from us totally. (It is not the scrutiny of man that counts, but the approval of God).

-in love: This phrase stands as a transitional point. God is doing what He just mentioned in the sphere of love. This love has a further goal in view mentioned in verse 5.

Verse 5

-Having predestinated: (proorizō — from “pro,” before, and “orizō,” to declare, to mark out) Hence = to mark out beforehand; to declare beforehand.

-us unto: (eis) with a view towards, for

-the adoption of children: (Huióthesia — from “tithēmi,” to

place; and “huios,” an adult son) Paul uses and illustration from the Roman practice of not only legally adopting a child, but also giving him the legal position of an adult son; a true heir.

IN ORDER FOR GOD TO GIVE US THIS POSITION, HE FIRST HAS TO MAKE US SUITABLE TO BE ADOPTED AS SONS. THIS IS WHY HE MUST FIRST MAKE US HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME UNDER HIS OWN SCRUTINY.

-by: (Dia) through, by means of

-Jesus Christ: the true Son and rightful Heir. He joyfully shares His inheritance. It was His death at the cross that made it possible for us to be adopted by God into His family.

-to Himself, according to the good pleasure: (eudokia) “a term of grace, expressing ‘good pleasure,’ as kind intent, gracious will.” (Expositors) Good will which gives happiness and satisfaction.

-of His will: (thelēma) God graciously executing His decision or will.

Verse 6

-To: (eis) with a view to; for; expressing the purpose of v5

-(the) praise: (epainos — for epi = upon; and ainos = primarily a tale of narration) Came to denote praise, approbation, commendation. — All creation, visible and invisible, will take part in this praise. Cp Psalm 148; Revelation 5.8-14

-of the glory: (doxa) the outshining; brightness or splendour; The outward manifestation of God’s attributes. In this case, it is the bright, shining, splendour of His grace.

-of His grace: as v2 (charis)—God has the attribute of grace. However, His creatures could not intelligently praise Him for it until they saw His grace in action.

-wherein: (en he) “in which,” showing that grace is the sphere or atmosphere in which the following fact took place.

-He hath made us accepted: (charitoō) “to pursue with grace, to compass with favour, to honour with blessings.” (Wuest); To make objects of grace.

-in (en) the Beloved: (agapāo) The Greek word is in the locative case of “sphere.” The locative case indicates location and place. The Father pursues us with grace while we are encom-

passed and surrounded by the One God loves, His Son. God thus treats believers as He treats His own Son. He accepts them as He accepts His own Son and showers them with honour, favour, and blessings only deserved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

VITAL VERITIES (17)

by E. W. ROGERS

REDEMPTION

There were two contingencies which were likely to occur to an Israelite: the one was that, under the necessity of raising ready money, he might have to dispose of his property; and the other was, for the same cause, he might have to forfeit his liberty: he might be compelled to sell himself to another. God, however, in His mercy, made provision whereby such a condition of loss and bondage was not to be permanent, for in the year of Jubilee the property was to be returned to its original owner and the individual was to be granted his former liberty. The legislation touching these matters is contained in Leviticus 25. If, however, in the interim, a person were able to raise sufficient funds he was permitted to redeem his property, and/or to redeem himself. The likelihood was remote, but the law provided for such an eventuality. Note the words of vv. 26, 49: "If he be able," and observe how the R.V. gives them: "If he be waxen rich and find sufficient." It demonstrates the kindness and fairness of God. In spiritual affairs man has lost the possessions with which the Creator originally endowed him, and he also has

FORFEITED HIS LIBERTY

so that he is now a "slave" of sin (John 8. 34 and Rom. 7). God does not desire that that condition should abide for ever. He intends to restore to man his property and liberty, but if anyone could find the requisite sum — the redemption price — he himself is at liberty to take steps to achieve the desired end. Failing his competency so to do an alternative provision was made: one of his kinsmen of the nearness indicated might exercise the right of redemption on his

behalf. But natural relationship in the matter of spiritual redemption is of no avail, for all alike are in the same position and each needs redemption for himself, which manifestly precludes his redeeming another.

A further duty of the "kinsman" was to avenge the blood of one of his relatives who had been slain (see Num. 35. 19). This was not optional: it had to be done.

Thus, three things are predicated of the kinsman-redeemer. (1) He must be a blood relation; (2) He has the right to restore lost property and lost liberty; (3) He must avenge blood. This is the law of the matter.

Now in Ruth, chapter 4, we have a test case. Notwithstanding the case is hopelessly complicated through legal breaches, the kinsman is offered the opportunity of redemption which he declines because of those legal complications. Twice he says: "I cannot redeem it," thus setting forth typically the incompetency of blood relations, in the spiritual sphere, to redeem another. How many parents would redeem their children if they could: and children parents: and uncles nephews, and so on? Who has not prayed long and fervently for the conversion of relations? "I cannot redeem" is heard on every hand, and we have to leave it to another.

Indeed, universal human incompetency in this matter is categorically stated in Psalm 49, 7-8: "None can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him," and the cause allocated is "For the redemption of their soul is costly, and must be let alone for ever" (see R.V. reading). Moses, with the best of intentions, expressed his readiness to be blotted out of God's Book if the people could be spared. Paul, also, expressed his readiness to become accursed from Christ on behalf of his brethren, but in neither case could the offer be accepted because of the ruling of Psalm 49. 7-8. The longest purse and the best will in the world are altogether inadequate for the accomplishment of the redemption of the soul.

If, then, the individual cannot redeem himself, and if (as Ruth 4 shows) no relative can do it, and if indeed (as Psalm 49 shows) no one anywhere can do it. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or shall lawful captive be delivered"? (for law is on the side of the captor). Is the case hopeless? Thank God, no! For listen to the

divine promise: "I the Lord am thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (see Isa. 49. 24-26).

He promises to do what none other can.

But here lies a difficulty. Jehovah is not flesh and blood, yet as we have seen, a requisite of the kinsman is that he must be a blood relation. How, then, can Jehovah be a kinsman in accordance with His promise? That mystery remained unsolved for ages until—in the temple in Jerusalem Simeon took the "babe" in his arms and blessed God because he had "seen His Salvation," and Anna who came in that instant and saw the babe, spake of Him to all that looked for "redemption" but could not understand how it was to be effected. Here, indeed, was Jehovah manifest in flesh—here the problem was solved, and God had become man so that He could be the Kinsman Redeemer.

Another difficulty, however, was not created. How could this babe effect deliverance? How can He take the "prey from the mighty?" In His poverty how could he pay the requisite price?

For in contrast to having "waxen rich" this One, though originally rich, had become poor. Time will reveal.

For when the Lord Jesus had become full-grown man He defined

THE INTENTION OF HIS ADVENT

thus: "The Son of Man is come, not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20. 28). The price to be paid (not to the Devil but to Justice) was His own life—a greater price could never be paid: not silver (as the half shekel redemption money), nor even gold, but His precious Blood. The beneficiaries were many (not all), limited, as the later Scriptures reveal, to those who believe. It is true that "He gave Himself a ransom for—in the interests of—all" (1 Tim. 2. 6), but the actual application of the redemption is only in respect of "many."

Later events revealed how He voluntarily gave Himself to His enemies, Son of God though He was, the then Possessor of deity and all its attributes, and "willingly died in our stead." No man took His life from Him: He had authority to lay it down and so He did. Evidences in support of the voluntary nature of the death of the Son of God are conclusive, though space forbids their enumeration.

He died: He died voluntarily: but because neither its purpose

nor meaning was understood, His death was the temporary end of all the hopes that had been entertained by the godly few who were expecting Redemption in Jerusalem. "We supposed it was He who should have redeemed Israel, and besides all this, to-day is the third day." Their redemption hopes had vanished, but not long for long.

His death, indeed was the very means by which the Kinsman fulfilled His office, as the writer to the Hebrews (ch. 2. 14) explains.

Listen to his remarks:

'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same,' shows that by His incarnation He fulfilled the requisite of blood relationship.

"That through death, He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is the devil," shows that another requisite is fulfilled—He was the avenger.

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage"—so that yet another requisite is fulfilled—He recovered liberty "to the bound."

It is a fruitful way of studying the Scriptures to search out all that they have to say on a particular topic and, if the reader will do this in respect of the matter now under review, he will make many discoveries of detail. He will find that the different words which are used in the Hebrew and Greek throw a great deal of light on the subject. He will learn that Christ has found "eternal redemption" for us: that it is "through His blood"; it involves the "forgiveness of sins": it begins with the soul but extends ultimately to the body, and so on. Pursuing such a research the student will at length exclaim with the heavenly host: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast

REDEEMED US TO GOD

by Thy blood" (Rev. 5. 9). We are not worthy, for we could not redeem ourselves: nor can worthiness be claimed for any other. That honour is reserved exclusively for Christ—the Son of God Who became the Son of Man.

Blessed Redeemer, wonderful Saviour,
Fountain of wisdom, Ancient of Days,
Hope of the Faithful, Light of all Ages,
Jesus my Saviour, Thee will I praise!

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS (4)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

*(These articles appeared in 1922 in the Believers' Magazine,
and are still up to date).*

A MARKED feature of these last days, and one that militates against the Gospel being spread among the people is, the vast increase of so-called

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES, composed largely of the industrial classes. These Societies, in their beginnings, were for men, but they are no longer so limited. The average man and woman belongs to one or more of these organizations, and is zealously engaged in their activities, be they benevolent, fraternal, political, or religious. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings occupy much of their time, so that even were they so disposed, few of them find a spare evening to attend a meeting for the preaching of the Gospel. And it cannot be said, what that occupies them at these Society gatherings is favourable to the progress of the Gospel, or in any way conducive to cause people to think on eternal things. Often the reverse. A spirit of lawlessness, which tends to cast off all fear of God, and thought of man's eternal destiny, pervades most of these associations.

COMMERCIAL UNIONS are another feature of the perils to which Christians are exposed in these last days, in which master and servant have their share. It becomes increasingly difficult for a Christian to act as the Word of God enjoins, and to follow his occupation with a good conscience toward God. The time was, when it was left to a man's own choice whether or not he would be associated in trade relations, with ungodly men, who either made no profession of Christ's Name, or openly opposed the truth. But this is not so now. In very many cases, these trades' unions have become so powerful, that they can dictate to all in the same occupation what they MUST do. And a Christian man's conscientious objections are not now respected. He must "join up," or quit the trade. And the Christian employer must become a member of the masters' union, or suffer the anti-

Christian tactics of the “boycott.” All this tests individual faith, and brings out how far the teaching of the Word of God and the path of true separation to Christ are practically owned, in our time. A walk with God, and in His truth alone can preserve the saint, in the midst of such perils, and keep him clean and clear of their coils.

MODERN REVIVALISM, in its later forms, is a real danger to spiritual life and godliness among the true children of God. In earlier times a Revival was regarded as the work of the Spirit of God, awaking, restoring, and refreshing the saved, and bringing conviction of sin and desire for God’s salvation to the unconverted. But the imitation of both has come in, and become the popular thing. We are now familiar with what are called “drives”—a term used to describe an effort to raise funds for “church work.” and to increase the membership of religious and philanthropic organizations. Their success is reckoned in proportion to the amount of money gained and members added, and the efforts is well organised, with chairman, treasurer, secretary, advertising manager, and their respective staffs. Converts are numbered and announced, success reported, and others encouraged to similar efforts. If only a small percentage of those who “profess conversion” were born again, the circles in which they move would be turned upside down. But the common result of such movements is, that in a very short time, you may as well look for winter’s snow on a July day, as for the converts of such movements. And from this, the difficulties of true Gospel work are vastly increased. For those who are by such means urged into a false profession, are the hardest to reach afterwards, most of them becoming utterly indifferent to eternal things. A genuine Revival comes from God. It is the work of His Spirit. In it invariably the result of deep heart-searching, self-judgement and believing prayer, among the people of God, with room left for God to work through and by means of whom He pleases to use. And when the people of God are right, the unconverted are soon aroused, awakened, and brought to see and own their need of salvation. Then the Gospel comes in “power,” and, as in ancient days, sinners are ‘turned to God’ (I Thess. i. 9), and there is no need to advertise their number, for, as the apostle tells, “they themselves show” what God has done in that place.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (14)

by A. Aiken (N. Ireland)

THE MASTER'S CALL

I was a lad, like Timothy, brought up in early days,
To know the precious Word of God, and all His wondrous ways.
But in spite of parents' teaching — a boy not well behaved!
I learned at home and Sunday School, I *needed* to be saved.

Around me were my family who'd trusted in the Lord,
And in assembly fellowship according to God's Word.
I thought that it was much too soon to think of things divine,
And in my heart, though very young, world's pleasures all were
mine.

Now Satan whispered in my ears, "You've time enough to
think;
That little boys as young as you, are far from Hell's dark brink!
So why not see the world so bright before you settle down,
For after all, if you get saved, school pals will only frown?"

The Devil's lie is oft believed by sinners travelling on —
They never think of God's dear Son, and all He has done.
"My Spirit will not always strive with man," God's Word hath
said:
"The Coming of the Lord draws near" — were thoughts I had in
bed.

'Twas in the month of February, Nineteen Forty Five,
A man from Ballymena town in Carnlough did arrive,
To preach the glorious Gospel in that village by the sea,
That souls be saved for Heaven and for all Eternity.

The Lord Himself was working and poor sinners did repent;
So thankful for the preacher, who by God alone was sent.

His name was Harold Paisley — a sinner saved by Grace
While at work in Ballylumford, a most ungodly place.

He travelled night and morning, up and down the Antrim shore
To earn his daily living — but his love for souls was more.
Each night he preached with power, for he was full of zeal,
And in the meeting every night, God's Presence we could feel.

Christ's Coming was a frightening thought: it made me tremble
too,
To think that I'd be left behind! — For I the Scriptures knew.
Then the Hand of God was moving on sinners pleasure bent,
But Satan's grasp was on my soul — he never would relent.

On February the Twentieth — decision *must* be made!
I saw in John Three and Thirty-six that my sins were laid
On Jesus; on that cruel tree, God punished Him instead.
And through that promise in His Word, I *knew* my soul was
saved.

And oh! the joy that filled my heart, never to know God's
wrath!
For in that glorious Gospel verse, I found God's promise,
'HATH'.
Since then, long years have rolled their course, yet Jesus is the
same,
Unchanging is His promise still, all Glory to His Name!

Then down the Largy Road I went. What joy! I cannot tell!
With every step I took, I said, "Thank God, I'm not for Hell!"
And looking out across the sea, the moon in beauty shone,
With reflection on the water, just like th' Eternal Dawn.

When travelling homeward I said to Dad, "All my sins were
laid
Upon the Blessed Son of God." Said he, "Your fortune's made."
Though many times my feet did slip in early Christian days,
Thank God! I had desires to learn more of His Wondrous Ways.

In March the following year in obedience to God's Word,
I was baptized and raised to walk anew with Christ my Lord.
Now on the first day of each week what privilege is mine,
Proclaiming His Sacrificial death in the bread and wine.

For almost twenty years at work, Shorts was my mission field,
With many hours spent alone, to have God's Will revealed.
Then David Craig came preaching from the prophet Malachi,
Of obnoxious offerings, brought by the House of Levi.

Polluted bread they offered up, upon the altar there;
They kept the good and healthy beasts to use for personal fare.
The governor refused to take the sacrifices brought —
The lame, the sick, even the blind were what Jehovah got.

At last the cross-roads, it was reached — 'which way shall I
now take?
Will life be all for business? or, for His Own Name's Sake?'
The answer came in morn's dark hours, while wrestling with
the Lord —
In Romans Chapter Twelve, I read of 'Presentation made'.

It was a sacred time and place, down by the fireside —
A living sacrifice He sought, and nothing else beside.
The mission field in Africa, was where my heart was keen;
But just like Paul, the preacher, as we read in Acts Sixteen,

The Lord did close that doorway, and I to my knees fell down,
But burdened still for God's Own Work, my plans were then —
Cape Town.

I felt that in a while, the Lord would open up the way
To dear Malawi and its need, to serve Him all my day.

With preparations ready made to sail on Twelfth of June,
The year was Nineteen Seventy — it seemed so very soon!
But God had other plans for me. Said He, "You can't go
THERE."

The burden now was heavier: The greatest question
"WHERE?."

When I approached the elders, all to whom I had appealed,
Said the oldest sitting there, "your place is your own home-field."

Then as that way did open up, the need was, oh, so great!
July the Sixth, Nineteen seventy three — on that very date

I left my work to serve the Lord. Such folly it did seem
Saying 'Goodbye' to colleagues in the Guided Missile team.
And while I serve my Master, may He give me strength and
Grace

To "Occupy until He come", when I shall see His face.

Our service will be perfect then and we His wounds shall see —
The cost of our redemption, through that Man of Calvary.
And as those endless years roll on, we at His feet shall fall,
We'll bring the Royal Diadem and Crown Him LORD of ALL.

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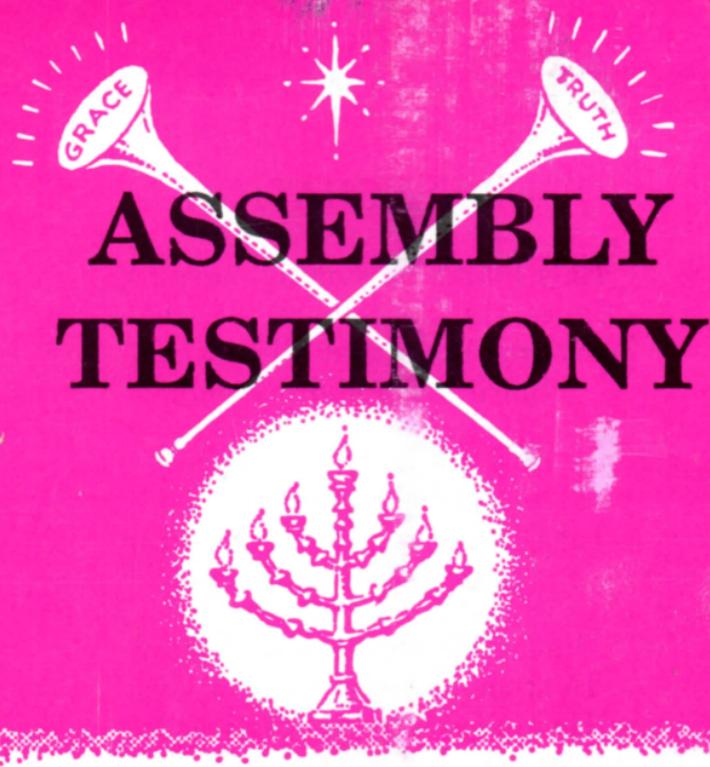
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Contents

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. Bower

THE MINISTRY OF THE RISEN LORD

by J. B. Hewitt

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON

by T. Meekin

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. Thropay

VITAL VERITIES

by E. W. Rogers

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS

by W. J. M'Clure

THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by D. M. Clark

ELECTION AND THE GOSPEL

by H. T. Kimber

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by T. Bentley

CONSECRATION

Holy Flame consuming, burning,
Cause Thy fire to burn the whole,
Let me know that all is taken,
Spirit, body and my soul.

All I am in glad devotion,
I would yield alone to Thee,
Take it thence upon Thine altar,
Take it Lord, entirely.

Bind me Lord, upon that altar,
Hold me there by cords of love,
Then allow Thy fire of pleasure
To consume me from above.

Let no voice be heard to save me,
Let the knife, the fire, descend,
Till at last my all is offered,
A sweet savour to ascend.

Help me rise with priestly fervour,
With the linen breeches on,
Taking to the place appointed-
Ashes - proving all is done.

All consumed and nothing over,
Only ashes, Lord for me,
Thus I cannot ever rescue
All that I have given Thee.

THE PROPHECY OF AMOS

by E. R. BOWER, Worcester

Paper 4

THE FIRST DISCOURSE. (Chap. 3. 1-15;)

In these four discourses that follow Amos proceeds to enlarge upon what he has said in chap. 2. 4-16. The word of God here is against Israel as a whole; against the family that He had redeemed out of Egypt. Paul, writing to the church at Rome said (Rom. 8. 13;) "If God be for us, who can be against us?" These are cheering words, but what if God should ever be against us, as with Israel here? One family is in the mind of God, but that family no longer remembered (or, it was convenient for them to forget) their redemption on the day when Jehovah Himself "passed over" the door and held the destroyer at bay (Ex. 12. 23). The covenant relationship of Israel appeared to be just as much in tatters as was their relationship with the nations about them "You have I known of all the families of the earth: THEREFORE I will visit upon you all your iniquities." (v. 2). Again, God directs the attention of Israel to their unique relationship with Him. Amos was not the first of God's men to reveal the nature of His love for them and, indeed, he would not be the last. Whether in a father-son, or husband-wife relationship the love of God is not in doubt; it has not changed, and will not change. From a purely human standpoint, the wayward son could expect nothing but to be cast off, likewise the wayward wife could expect nothing but a bill of divorce. . . They could expect nothing but the penalty of the Law (Deut. 22. 13-30; 24. 1-5;). Our Lord once said, ". . . whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commiteth adultery." (Matt. 5. 31-32; 13. 3-12;) Not so with our God. Discipline, yes! A day will come when the love of God will win through to the heart of Israel, and she will be cleansed by confession and repentance. Unfortunately at this time, the relationship was not a happy one for "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" In all their relationship, from Abraham

on, God made known to His chosen people, all His ways, His intentions, His counsels and His purposes. Israel was the true confidante of God — “To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” (Rom. 9. 4-5;). As for Israel, so for the Church.

Israel was now in the position of a disobedient son, a son, who had once borne witness to the covenant relationship (Ex. 24;) and when they had entered the Land Moses had set before them in plain words the penalties of disobedience and broken promises. (Deut. 28. 15-68)

“AM I SPEAKING TO YOU IN VAIN?” (vv. 1-6;) Here are seven questions that point to the fact that Israel “My Son” had blatantly defied their Father, God and refused to walk in unity with Him. His warnings were ignored” Jehovah will roar” (1. 2;) but will He roar without a reason? Evil does not come from God. (v. 6;) “Evil which is sin the Lord hath not done; evil which is punishment for evil, the Lord bringeth.” (Augustine).

I AM WARNING YOU. (vv. 7-8) Adonai Jehovah is the title used by God when He speaks of Himself to the Philistines (1. 8;) and used now to Israel. He who roared was Jehovah — the I AM — the covenant God. He is the Lord, the Creator and Ruler of the heavens and earth. Israel could not complain that they had not been warned for as we have seen God did nothing unless He made His purposes known in advance, and through His servants even as Moses, Abraham and many others had done and would do. God had not withheld the “secret things” that belonged to Him. Unfortunately the voices of the prophets had been silenced — not by God — but by recalcitrant Israel who did not wish to know (2. 12;). Nevertheless the prophets were not silent, and would not be silenced for the lion would roar (v. 8;) The figure of the roaring lion is maintained (1. 2; 3. 4;) and it was no empty threat but that at which men trembled. The prophets who heard this awful voice were under compulsion to hasten the passing on of its message. In not doing so they would fail in their duty — a lesson for today! Cf. Jonah. “The Lord hath spoken.” Cf. v. 1. “I WILL TELL OF YOUR NAUGHTINESS! (vv. 9-15;). Philistia (the Greek text

reads "Assyria") the thorn in the side; Egypt from whence Israel had been taken; were called to witness Israel's perfidy. They did not know what it was to be straightforward; they were living lies. Their palaces were maintained by the fruits of their perfidy; their robbery and violence. For this, an adversary (a strengthener) would come up against and plunder the Land. This was fulfilled (2 Kings 17. 3-6;). That which was left would be of little value (v. 12;). In v. 13 God sees His people as sons of Jacob and not of Israel. Those who sought to hide themselves in Samaria or in Damascus would not escape the judgments. Note the plural 'altars' (v. 14) of Bethel (house of God) where Jacob had set up his altar. (Gen. 28;). It was also the place of Jacob's vow. (Cf. 1 Kin. 13. 2; 2 Kin. 23. 15-16;) No refuge would be found at these altars. It has been suggested that vv. 13-15 convey a warning of the earthquake of chap. 1. 1. The words are significant — "The horns of THE ALTAR shall fall to the ground" and houses in town and country would be smitten or struck.

LOOKING TO JESUS

The moment, we look away from Christ, our experience of His fulness ceases. There is no power to overcome.

Things become important for us which, seen in the light of eternity, are of no consequence. Then the deceiving power of sin bewitches us; and if, in our opinion, we are not properly honoured, or respected, if our own self-will, our desire to possess, our own presumed importance, does not receive satisfaction enough, then we slip into sin. We are easily hurt, become loveless, are filled with an earthly mind, or become fretful and anxious. We have lost our sense of proportion, because of not looking unto Christ. The centre of gravity has been changed, and is no longer in God, but in ourselves. We have lost our way, because we have lost sense of direction in Christ.

In this condition, only one thing can help us: Looking afresh to the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and humiliation before Him, and then, continuing stedfastly to keep our eyes upon Him. This purifies and restores us, and only this attitude of mind brings with it growth in grace, and blessed happy sanctification. *Selected*

The Ministry of the Risen Lord

by The Late J. B. Hewitt, Chesterfield

9 — A MINISTRY OF RECOVERY AND RENEWAL John 21

The apostle John contributes the supreme proofs that witness to Christ's Deity. Christ's mediation is portrayed under the title "Son of God", accompanied by the sufficiency, superiority and sovereignty of His relationship and the rights they entail. John's message supplies the widest aspect of a universal ministry. This gospel leaves the Lord with His disciples mediating, directing and controlling. This chapter seems to summarise all. The Life attracting v. 1-14; the Love appealing v. 15-17; and the Light assuring v. 18-25. Eight times "Lord" is mentioned. A fitting title "HE IS LORD".

(A) Lord of labour which He controls v. 1-8

Renewing His Ministry

This is the Lord's seventh appearance in Resurrection. 7 is the number of spiritual perfection. The Lord is acting as "Head of the Church" and is a picture of how He governs His Church in His ascended glory to-day. What He continues to do.

(a) *A Ministry of Revelation* — "He shewed Himself" (v. 14). This unique company were in a crisis. The time is between Passover and Pentecost. The Lord deals with them as a group, reassuring them, eventually controlling them (v. 2). What variety here. The two foremost in failure, the doubter and the denier, are recovered to privilege. The undesignated have a place and the undistinguished a part in this closing unveiling. Do not assume that Peter and the others did wrong in going a "fishing." They failed, as we always do without the Lord.

(b) *A Ministry of Prevention* (v. 3) "that night — nothing". The Lord often disciplines and educates by failure. Have you ever toiled fruitlessly? Yes, even at fishing, the job Peter thought he could do best! It was not lack of faith or experience on his part. There was design in the divine discipline.

(c) A Ministry of Consolation (v. 4) “In the morning Jesus stood on the shore”. They were discouraged, but Jesus was at hand to help. When they obey their Master’s command, how successful they become (v. 6, 11). It is only obedience to the Head of the Church that can make us effective fishers of men (Mark 1 17).

(d) A Ministry of Compassion (v. 5) The Lord is often close by when we are unaware of His presence (v. 4; Luke 24. 16). He does care when things go wrong for us. He is interested in our welfare and loves to hear how we fare down here. Tell Him all your troubles as well as your triumphs.

(e) A Ministry of Direction (v. 6) RIGHT is not contrasted with WRONG, but with LEFT. How readily they obeyed, no why’s or wherefore’s and blessing resulted (Psa. 119. 60). There is nothing mystical in the number of fish caught (v. 11). This scene may prefigure the review of service at the Judgement Seat of Christ.

(B) Lord of Light which He generates v. 9-14

He Resumes His Activity

(f) A Ministry of Preparation (v. 9, 10). Nothing is so quick as love “it is the Lord”. Peter’s zeal and God given strength are impressive (v. 7, 11). What a welcome they had and how sweet their fellowship at breakfast. A fire they never kindled, fish they never caught, bread provided, all by the Master Himself. He presided over this gathering which brought satisfaction to each heart. His general care for His saints inspire us to serve Him.

(C) Lord of Love which He deserves v. 15-17

He Reveals His Ability

“Fire of coals” (v. 9) occurs here and in 18. 18. Peter would be reminded of his failure. The Lord restores and commissions Peter. He humbles Simon by reminding him of his confident boast to love his Master more than the others (Matt. 26. 33). Peter speaks modestly of himself in what follows. The Lord uses two words for “love”. He begins by using “agapan” - commonly used of Divine love. Peter only lays claim to lesser love “phileon”, human love. “You know that I am your friend” (v. 15). On the third occasion our Lord descends to Peter’s own level. Peter was deeply hurt, only His Lord’s “friend” now. As Simon lost self-confidence, the Lord increased His commission. It is far more difficult to minister

to the sheep than to the lambs. The Apostle remembered that when he wrote, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Pet. 2. 25).

(D) Lord of Life which He determines v. 18-22

He reassures His Authority

The Lord describes Peter's past and discloses his future (v. 18). He would die violently but John naturally, which, tradition affirms they did. We can "glorify God" by death as well as by life, and this martyrs have done (v. 14). John's lot was not Peter's responsibility; that is in the hands of the Sovereign Head of the Church (v. 23). Dr. Graham Scroggie writes, "The Church needs four things (1) Trust (v. 1-14); (2) Love (v. 15-17); True love is always sacrificial. (3) Courage (v. 18, 19) and (4) Patience (v. 20-23). It is sometimes more difficult to wait than to work, but it is not an inferior grace.

—(Series concluded)

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• **STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF AARON** •
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• by T. Meekin (Glengormley) •
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3. THE SAINT AND HIS SHAME

For this final study please read Ex. 32. 1-8, 19-29, 35.

It is important to remember that none of God's servants completed their lives without ever having sinned. While the record given may not highlight their failures we can be sure that all could say, ". . . in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. 7. 18. There was only One who came to the end of His days on earth of whom it could be said in all truth "this Man has done nothing amiss." Apart from the faultless testimony of our blessed Lord all others were shamed at some time by the scourge of sin.

It is true that the failures of some of the saints of days of old are better known than others and perhaps we are guilty at times of highlighting such events to a point where much of the excellence of the rest of their life is lost. It had never been the mind of

God however that failure should be ignored, and the Holy Spirit's exercise in recording such is ample proof of this. Therefore while we have considered quite largely the greatness of Aaron in past articles it will be also to profit, I trust, to remember one of the darkest days in the great man's history that he must have bitterly regretted to the end of his life.

Ex. 32 is indeed one of the saddest days in Israel's chequered history and that Aaron should have a part in it, and a prominent one at that, grieves us at heart. We would have wished him on the mountain with Moses and Joshua, and not in the camp with the rebellious people but we are about to see presented one of the truths that Paul preached to the Corinthians, ie "there must also be heresies (crises) among you that they which are approved may be made manifest." 1 Cor. 11. 19.

The crisis in Ex. 32 takes place in the prolonged absence of the man who had scaled the mount. While he was with them all was well but as he delays his return the hearts of the people are tested. We may doubt whether Aaron was in fact in the same mind totally as the people who clamoured for the idol but he nevertheless stands condemned by his own actions and cannot avoid the blame for his involvement.

There are several pointers in the chapter to the cause of eventual shame and failure to which we would do well to take heed and it may be that our noting of them will be something of a preservative lest our feet slip on similar paths.

i). MISINTERPRETATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD.

"As for this Moses, we know not what is become of him". Is it not strange that people who had waited for 400 years for a deliverer and 40 years while God trained him should think it unreasonably long to wait forty days while he is in the mount of God? How could the people ever doubt God, you may ask, after an experience like the Red Sea crossing? Yet there are crises in all our lives when the great lessons of the past are all too easily forgotten, and His abundant provisions in past days overlooked when on some occasion the answer to prayer seems slow in coming. Another has said "God's DELAYS are not DENIALS!"

Delay has always been a great tester to the saints and many and varied have been the reactions to such tests in scripture. eg

- a. In the boat it caused SUSPICION -Mk. 4 “carest thou not that we perish?”
- b. In the home it caused SADNESS -John 11 “if thou hadst been here my brother had not died”.
- c. In the waiting time it caused SLEEP -Mat. 25 “While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.”
- d. In the world it causes SCOFFING -”Where is the promise of His coming?” 2. Pet. 3.

Whatever be the true thought behind the oft studied passage in 1 John 2. the obvious fact is there for all to see -Shame and the thought of His coming should not be seen in the same setting. ie. “That we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming”. Let us not therefore make the mistake that Aaron made and not reckon with the imminent return of the absent man. Surely if Aaron had heard Moses’ footsteps on the mountain he would not have put his hand to the “fashioning” of the calf of Gold. At times we SING but do we really HEAR-

“I can almost hear His footfall on the threshold of the door,
And my heart, my heart is longing to be with Him evermore.”

ii). MISUSE OF WEALTH.

This was the second source of shame in the passage and how it must afterwards have grieved the heart of Aaron. The day would come when Israel would bring of their gold for the building of the tabernacle, and even as the call goes out to the nation Aaron would surely relive the day when he said “break of your golden ear-rings.” The lesson is simple in any language and in any day - What is given to idolatry is lost to God.

Who amongst us will not have been impressed by the philosophy and conviction of Jim Elliott of Equador fame who said “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose?” What was given to the formation of the golden calf WAS lost! See how well Paul comes through the test-

“what things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ . . .” Is this our assessment of earthly things? there are two mistakes that are commonly made amongst us on the ground of economy.-

- a. Judas said “why is this waste. . .?” he would keep OFF the altar that which the Lord LOVED
- b. Saul thought it a waste to destroy all the flocks of Agag- 1 Sam. 15. He would put ON the altar that which God HATED.

Do we not at times keep back that which God would demand from our lives and insist rather on using what God neither needs nor wants in His work - all on the grounds of economy. May we have help to sing and really mean it-

“Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.”

iii). MISCONDUCT BEFORE THE WORLD.

“Aaron made them naked before their enemies.” It is still true that evil communications corrupt good manners and if the heart is not right with God in relation to the absent Lord it will not be long till the life is wrong also. It is this truth which the Lord Himself emphasises in Luke 12. When He speaks of the importance of having “their loins girded and their lights burning. . . Like unto men that wait for their Lord.” For the servant who feels that “my Lord delayeth His coming” begins to beat the others and to eat, drink, etc.

Idolatry and sin have always stripped men but the gospel and salvation have clothed them. The man of Gadara was all the more noticeable for being “clothed and in his right mind”. Men could not see into his mind whether it was now cured but the clothes he wore gave testimony to a change within. Immodesty and immorality go hand in hand and idolatry is a bosom companion to them both. God clothed Aaron to stand before a golden altar and every time Aaron stood there he likely remembered the day he had stripped men to dance before a golden calf.

Immodest dress in our day as in any other is incompatible with holiness of life. It may be custom, style or fashion of the world to be scantily dressed but such behaviour does not become those who “wait His appearing”.

iv). MISHANDLING OF THE WORK.

This is the fourth and final ground of shame we shall presently consider, though others may be found upon a perusal of the chapter. Here was a job in which Aaron could take no pleasure

or pride. What a contrast to the balmy days of Bezaleel when objects divinely planned and with divine help skillfully executed, were displayed to "the praise of His glory". Every sculptured work telling of Christ, all made in answer to the Pattern shown in the Mount! Not so the golden calf. Its only pattern was that of Egypt's idols.

God has ever in mind that His workmen should be "Workmen that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth", as Paul reminded Timothy, but Aaron cannot rise to this standard. His energy and effort have been put into something that is all for the fire. Are we not reminded of the ministry of 1 Cor. 3 in all of this? This calf looked good enough to stand the test of time. It seemed as though it would last the desert journey but its end is near and it is ground into powder and burned in the grinding. Finally it is strewn on the water and the children of Israel are made to drink of it. The fire shall indeed try every man's work of what sort it is and Aaron's work will not stand.

"What did this people unto thee?" God asks through Moses. As to Adam He said "what is this that thou hast done?" as to Elijah "what doest thou here?" Thus will the labours of our hands be examined, the places we have occupied, the motives that led us to act. May we have confidence in all that we are doing remembering the words to the seven churches "I know thy works".

Surely Marah's waters were not so bitter as this draught. They would never forget this taste, but sadly they would not be so easily cured of the malady that produced it—their return to idolatry. It is said that to this day Israel have a saying to this effect, when any terrible catastrophe or judgement comes upon them, that there is always an ounce of the ashes of the golden calf in it.

Thus may we learn from the failure of one so saintly, the high price that must of necessity be paid for mistakes especially in the execution of holy matters for it is not a light thing to assume leadership in the service of God.

"For what shall heal when holy service banes
or who may lead o'er desert plains
Thy loved yet sinful people wandering wide,
If Aaron's hands unshrinking mould
An idol form of earthly gold."

—(*concluded*)

EPHESIANS EXPOUNDED

by A. D. THROPAY (California)

Paper No. 3

2. THE WORK OF CHRIST THE SON. 1.7-12

Verse 7

- In whom:** that is the beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- we have:** literally, “we are having.”
- redemption:** Note the article, “the redemption.” (apolutrosis) a releasing effected by the payment of a ransom; deliverance or liberation procured by the payment of a ransom.
- through:** (dia) by means of
- His blood:** The blood of Christ is the price of the ransom (1 Peter 1.18,19). Through the power of His blood, we are being set free from the guilt and power of sin now. Through His blood, we will be liberated from the presence and contaminating influence of sin when the Lord comes and takes us from this world giving us bodies like unto His glorious body.
- the forgiveness:** (aphēsis) “ a release, the letting them go as if they had not been committed, thus forgiveness, a remission of their penalty.” (Thayer) “The letting go of sin, its dismissal and pardon.” (Expositors)—Forgiveness does not come cheap. It cost the death of the Lord Jesus, God manifest in flesh. God’s forgiveness is free to the receiver, however. Unlike human forgiveness, God’s is final. He will never bring up the wrongs done that He has already forgiven. Hebrews 8.12 says, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”
- of sins:** (paraptōma) literally “a fall beside something,” “a falling aside,” “falling by the way.” (Cp. Kittel, FF Bruce). “It denotes a trespass, a deviation from uprightness and truth.” (W. E. Vine) It is used of Adam’s sin (Romans 5.15,17). “It refers directly to the disruption of man’s relationship with God through his fault.” (Kittel) Hence, “trespasses, or of-

fences.”—When man sinned, he fell from the position of harmony, peace, and fellowship with God that God had originally intended. Anything that disrupts this relationship with God or maintains that disruption is sin. (Note: another word translated sin more commonly is “hamartia,” a missing the mark. The definition for this word is given in 1 John 3.4 “sin is lawlessness” (ie, doing what I want to do). When a person acts independently of God, this is sin). God’s forgiveness covers all sin, regardless of the type.

- according to:** (kata) in accord with; being measured and characterized by; hence, in exact proportion to
- the riches:** (ploutos) wealth; fulness, mighty measure
- of his grace:** as v.2,6 God’s grace is as infinite as Himself.

Verse 8

- Wherein:** (hēs) which
- He abounded:** (periseuō) “To exceed a fixed number or measure; to be over and above a certain number or measure; to exist or be at hand in abundance,” Thayer. “To exist in superfluity,” Wuest. In other words, it means to have far more than enough.
- toward (eis) us in all:** (pasē) every, each
- wisdom:** (sophia) It included the ideas of producing the best end result by using the best means while having insight into the true nature of a thing.
- and prudence:** (phronēsis) “The practical use of wisdom.” (Expositors) “The right use and application of the mind.” (Trench)

Verse 9

- Having made known:** explanatory of verse 8—Wisdom and prudence were given to us to know God’s will and apply it.
- unto us the mystery:** (mustērion) A truth which cannot be known except by divine revelation. A secret hid in God until He reveals it.

- of His will:** (thelēma) God graciously executing His decision or desire
- according to:** (kata) as v.7
- His good pleasure:** (endokia) “a term of grace, expressing ‘good pleasure, ‘as kind intent, gracious will.” (Expositors) Good will which gives happiness and satisfaction.
- which He purposed:** (protithēmi) to set before oneself and so determine. Used three times only in the New Testament. (1) of human purpose Romans 1.13, (2) of divine action Romans 3.25, and here.
- in Himself:** This purpose originated in God’s own gracious Person.
- That in:** (eis) with a view to; indicates “direction towards” showing the aim of His purpose; “unto,”
- the dispensation:** (oikonomia) (1) Administration, management, or arrangement of a house or property—1 Timothy 1.4 and this epistle. (2) Office of administrator or steward 1 Corinthians 9.7.— Here, it refers to God’s management of history called. . .
- of the fulness:** (plēroma) fulness, completeness
- of times:** (kairos) times; refers to the various, successive ages of human history in which God deals with mankind in a particular manner. Some have divided these ages up into the following seven categories: the age of innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, the reign of Christ. The fulness or completeness of these times is when the succession of these ages of earth has come to a close.
- He might gather together in one:** (anakephaliaoð) to head up, to sum up, to bring together various things under one head.
- all things in Christ both which are in the heaven, and which are on the earth even in Him:** This is God’s grand purpose for His Son. Notice that it does not say things under the earth, referring to infernal beings. Although every knee will bow to Him and acknowledge His Lordship whether they are beings in heaven, earth, or hell (Philippians 2.9-11), not every being

will be reconciled to Him. Only those angels who did not fall and those persons who are “in Christ” by the new birth and have their name written in the Book of Life. Revelation 21.27.

Verse 11

- In whom:** referring to the Lord Jesus Christ
- also:** (kai) in addition to what is stated in verses 8, 9, and 10
- we obtained an inheritance:** (eklērōthēmen) This word can be understood in two ways. (1) We were made partakers of the inheritance. That is, the person who is saved is an heir of heaven and all that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. (2) We were made a heritage. That is, the true believers are the inheritance of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- being predestinated:** (proorizō) — from “pro,” before, and “horizo,” to declare, to mark out. Hence the word means to mark out beforehand; to declare beforehand.
- according to:** (kata) in accord with; being measured and characterized by; hence, in exact proportion to
- the purpose:** (prothēsis) The word means to set something in front of a person. The word is translated “shewbread” in Hebrews 9.2. The word shewbread is literally translated, “the bread of setting before.” Like a chart, God has already set before Him on display His eternal plans. We are on His chart. We are part of His plan.
- of Him who worketh:** (energeō) To work in, to operate in; to communicate energy and efficiency. To actively put into operation.
- all things:** (panta) all inclusive. God is actively put into operation. everything that occurs in His universes. Nothing takes Him by surprise. He is in full control of everything.
- after:** (kata) according to
- the counsel:** (boulē) The word implies intelligence and deliberation behind the making of a resolution or decree. (Kittle) It is the purpose behind an action. What occurs in the kingdom of God is the result of God’s complete information. He sees

the total picture. His thinking is complete on every subject and has always been so. He has always known which options are the best for His purposes. They are therefore absolutely correct and unchangeable. God's actions "are not without reason, but for reasons, hidden it may be from us, yet proper to the Highest Mind and Most Perfect Moral Nature." (Expositors)

—**of His own will:** (*thelēma* — as v. 1) Putting His "counsel" or "resolution" into action, graciously, to fulfill His purpose. God is graciously executing His counsel and purpose by the elevation and exaltation of His Son. He wants the Lord Jesus to have the priority and preeminence in everything. Colossians 1.18-20 "that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Verse 12

- that:** (*eis*) "with a view towards." This word indicates direction towards an object or a goal.
- we should be:** indicating what God will ultimately do for every born again christian. However, the context indicates that this verse refers primarily to the believing Jew (See verse 13).
- to the praise:** (*epainos*) commendation and honour paid to another. Literally, it means to "celebrate or praise over" (someone)
- of His glory:** (*doxa*) the outshining; brightness or splendour; The outward manifestation of God's attributes. In this case, it is the bright, shining, splendour of His grace.
- who first trusted:** (*proēlpikotas* — perfect active participle of *proelpizō*) to repose, hope, and have confidence in a person or thing beforehand. This phrase refers to pious Jews in Israel (like Simeon, Mary, Joseph, and the disciples) who cherished a hope beforehand of the coming of Christ. They accepted Him when He came. The perfect tense indicates that their faith has continuing results.

VITAL VERITIES (18)

by E. W. ROGERS

SANCTIFICATION

THE understanding of this doctrine of Holy Scripture would be facilitated if it were borne in mind that *sanctification does not of itself necessarily effect any change* in the thing or in the person sanctified. For example, under the law the seventh day was sanctified, but it was not thereby changed. The Lord Jesus sanctified Himself (John 17: 19), but, of course, He was not thereby changed in any way. That which was put on the altar of the tabernacle was sanctified, but though its use was changed, its substance remained the same. Sanctification is the setting apart of a thing or a person for a specific purpose. Reference to the occurrences of the word in both the Old and the New Testaments will make this clear (see, for example, Matt. 6.9; 23.17; John 10.36; 1 Peter 3.15; and 1 Cor. 7.14).

Sanctification is not a synonym for sanctimoniousness. The scriptures know nothing of the latter but they contain many references to the former. God does not encourage sanctimoniousness in His saints for it emanates from the flesh alone.

Moreover, *sanctification* is not “*sinless perfection*.” The Scriptures make it perfectly plain that, whereas the believer possesses the power within to enable him to overcome the flesh, the flesh in him ever “*lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*,” so that the believer “*may not do the things he would*,” whether such things be good or bad (Gal. 5.17). This conflict continues throughout life.

Sometimes, *Sanctification denotes the act of setting apart for holiness*, and includes also full provision for following after it. True sanctification is always accompanied by holiness, and the Greek word is sometimes translated as ‘holiness.’

Sanctification sometimes denotes the position into which the believer is brought, or it may signify the responsibility which

devolves upon him. The context of the passage in which the word occurs must determine the particular sense in which it is used by the Holy Spirit.

In 1 Peter 1: 2, *the order of the steps is indicated*. The saints were 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God; then they were sanctified in the spirit'; with the view of their 'obedience' to the gospel, as the result of which 'obedience' the 'blood of Jesus Christ' was 'sprinkled' upon them, thus rendering them clean. That is to say, God the Father, in a past eternity, foreknew the man who should be saved, and in accordance with that foreknowledge elected him. Pursuant to this election, the Spirit of God set him on one side, as it were, from the mass of mankind with the view of his hearing and believing the gospel. Upon his obeying the gospel the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ were imputed to him.

Paul refers to the same three steps (2 Thess. 2: 13). "God chose us from the beginning unto salvation, in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth . . . to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sanctification is thus *an integral part of a process* in which each Person of the Godhead is engaged, the grand result of which is the eternal blessing of the believer.

The 'sanctification of the Spirit,' therefore, is a moral prerequisite, from one point of view, for salvation of the believer.

It is also true that the *Lord Jesus is the 'Sanctifier.'* He and His people 'are all of one (Father), for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren' (Heb. 2: 11). His people were sanctified 'by His blood' which was shed outside the gate of Jerusalem (Heb. 13: 12). The Lord Jesus died there because it was His design to set apart His people from the 'Ichabod' system of Judaism which God had abandoned. By that means the saints were separated from religious evil.

According to Paul's statement to the Corinthians 'Christ is made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (1 Cor. 1: 30). 'Righteousness' has to do with the past: guilt is cancelled. 'Sanctification' has to do with the present: holiness is to be pursued. Redemption envisages the future: liberty will be enjoyed. Saints are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus' (see 1 Cor. 1: 2; Acts 20: 32; and Heb. 10: 14). Their standing is

one of holiness because of Him (1 Cor. 1: 30), and they have been 'washed, *sanctified* and *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. 6: 11). For that reason they are called 'saints.' To that position they were 'elect' or 'called' hence they are saints by 'calling.' That privileged position must take expression by their 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor. 7: 1). Position must be accompanied by a corresponding condition: holiness in Christ must be evidenced by holiness in life.

Believers cannot, of course, perfect their position because it has already been made perfect (see Heb. 10: 14). Their position is one of deliverance from evil which has been judicially effected by the Lord Jesus. Believers must, however, perfect their deliverance from evil by practical separation therefrom and must 'cleanse themselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit.'

It is this which is spoken of in Romans 6: 19. Formerly, those addressed had been in the habit of yielding their members unto uncleanness and to iniquity; but in view of their knowledge of the work of the Spirit and their appreciation of the work of Christ they are expected not to continue living in bondage to sin, but to devote their energies in the pursuit of holiness.

Such practical sanctification is effected by diligent application of the word of God on the part of the saints (John 17: 17). The Lord Jesus sets Himself aside for their sake now, whilst He is in heaven, in order that they may be 'sanctified in the truth,' that is, by the action of the word of God upon them. They cleanse their way by 'taking heed to that word.' He who loved the assembly and 'gave Himself for it' now sanctifies it, having cleansed it, through the washing of the water in the word (Eph. 5: 26). By this means the Father keeps them from the evil that is in the world (John 17: 15). "Sanctification" may therefore signify holiness, for holiness is the setting apart from all evil.

The believer is to "abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). There are numerous species of evil. One may appeal to the spirit; another to the soul; and another to the body. For this reason Paul prays that the 'God of Peace' Himself would '*sanctify wholly*' the saints at Thessalonica and that their "spirit, and soul and body might be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The 'wicked person' who assembled

with the saints at Corinth had not kept his body under control: consequently he was made the subject of disciplinary action in order that the spirit might be saved in the day of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5: 5). The believer is in a happy condition when his whole being is sanctified.

Sanctification is mentioned in the Scriptures *in three tenses*. 1 Cor. 1: 2 relates to the past; Eph. 5: 26 relates to the present; and 1 Thess. 5: 23 relates to the future. Sanctification may not only be viewed as a thing already perfected having been brought about "through faith that is in" Christ (Acts 26: 18), but also as a process which is going on in the life of the believer, and also as that which will be brought to completion in the future.

A 'sanctified vessel' is a believer who purges himself from all iniquity (lawlessness) and such complete purgation can be attained only by constant watchfulness. The Lord Jesus never ceases to do His work on behalf of the saints, and the saints should never cease to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. It is only those who are practically sanctified who are 'fit for the Master's use.' (*Series concluded*).

PERILOUS TIMES OF THE LAST DAYS (5)

By The late W. J. M'Clure.

(*These articles appeared in 1922 in the Believers' Magazine, and are still up to date*).

THE Christian man of business, who seeks to conduct his affairs in 'the fear of God,' and to be governed and guided in his commercial life by the principles and precepts of the Book of God, must find his path increasingly difficult in these last days, to "live righteously and godly" (Tit. 2.12), and to maintain "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (Acts 24.10). To all who study to "be approved unto God," and make it their aim to be well pleasing unto Him, He will assuredly "direct their paths" (Prov. 3.6). But those who follow the lead of the world, and adopt ways that are held in honour by those who know not God, will "pierce themselves with

many sorrows" (I Tim. 6.10). Christian masters are urged to adopt ways toward those whom they employ, which are opposed to the will of God, and Christian servants are pressed on every hand to enter associations that exist for the purpose of compelling men to cease work at the call of a majority, and they are usually composed of those who have adopted popular Socialistic or Communist principles, with which those who own the Lordship of Christ, can have nothing in common. Again and again, when things have reached a crisis, and there seemed no way of escape for those whose desire is to do the will of God, we have seen the hand of God overturning all the plans of men, and causing something to happen, which has made a way of deliverance to those of His own who were exercised before Him, as to how to act in the hour of testing. And thus it may continue to be, until the Lord's own are taken up to be with Himself. Then the coming Man, the Lawless One, who will bring the "boycott" to perfection (see Rev. xiii. 16, 17), will let the world know how much of its boasted "fraternity" and "equality" he will recognise.

THE SPIRIT OF LAWLESSNESS—Which the great war accelerated—so rampant throughout the whole world, has found its way into the assemblies of the people of God. And the baneful effect of this is manifest in insubordination to godly rule, and lack of reverence toward those who are fitted to guide in the things of God. The mutual subjection enjoined in I Pet. v. 5 is in many, awanting. The demand for "majority" rule in the assembly of God, the readiness with which division can be effected, and coteries, under the leadership of strong-willed men, who must have their way, can be induced to leave the assembly and "set up" new meetings, tell too plainly how far the lawless spirit in the world has invaded the Church. These all clearly point to our being in "the last days." And to the watching saint, they surely tell, that the end is "at hand," and that before the darkest hour of Satan's power, the "Bright and Morning Star" will appear, and the true people of God taken from the world.—(concluded).

THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by D. M. Clark (Stoney Creek)

The very first reference to God in the Scriptures is found in Genesis 1.1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The word for God in this verse is Elohim, which is the plural of Eloah, the Supreme. In the Hebrew such a word could be in the dual or the plural. The dual means only two but plural means more than two. Hence in the very beginning of the Word we have evidence that there are more than two persons in the Godhead. A second member of the Godhead is identified in the next verse and is revealed as "The Spirit of God", Then God speaks. Genesis 1:3, "And God *said*, Let there be light: and there was light." When God speaks it is His mind expressed in His Word, reminding us of the Lord Jesus Who is the "Word", thus revealing the Third Person of the Trinity.

This is affirmed to us in the New Testament—John 1.1-3, "In the beginning (this is a beginning without a beginning) was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." And in Col. 1.16, "For by Him were all things created, That are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." God the Son was the Creator.

Genesis 1.26, "And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image after *our* likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Note the words "*us*" and "*our*" clearly showing that the Godhead consisted of more than one person. God was not conferring with angels to participate in creation, but was conferring with Himself, for He was about to make man in His image.

Genesis 11.7, "Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Once again the Godhead is conferring together and the expression "*us*" is used. God is a Trinity of persons.

Lord God & LORD God

Before entering upon the scriptures that again show three persons in the Trinity, it is interesting to note that the translators of the Old Testament (KJV) made a distinction between the Lord Jehovah, translated Lord God and Jehovah God translated LORD God. In the first example God is printed with a large capital letter followed by smaller capital letters, this consistently refers to God the Father. In the second example LORD is printed with the large capital letter for "L" followed by smaller capitals. Consistency is maintained as this will be seen to refer to God the Son. We have an example in the following scripture: Isaiah 48.16,17: "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the *Lord God*, and *his Spirit*, hath sent *me*. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel' I am the LORD thy God which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." We can readily identify the three Person — Lord God is the Father — His Spirit is the Holy Spirit — "me" is the Son for the next verse uses the title "Redeemer" confirming that it is the Son.

To have a full testimony as to this statement the following verses will confirm what has been said. Isaiah 61.1,2: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the LORD (as Godhead) hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn:" Here we have the Spirit identified and the Father, and for "me" we can refer to Luke 4. 18,19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Here the Lord Jesus quotes this very scripture and applies it to Himself.

Isaiah 63.8-10: "For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in His love and in His pity he redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His

Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. "In verse 8 we have the God of Israel in His covenant relationship addressing His people. The angel of His presence, in verse 9, speaks of the Son, and again, in verse 9, the Holy spirit is brought before us.

As men we are individuals, this seems to create a difficulty in our understanding that God is One, yet He is a Trinity of Persons. Each fulfills His own Office but none acts independently of the Other. There is but one essence or one mind in the Trinity. As everyday example is the use of electricity. From a common outlet we can obtain, light, heat and power. Each can be defined as to its characteristics, and each performs a different function, and still has a common source, so it is with the persons of the Trinity.

"ELECTION AND THE GOSPEL"

by H. T. KIMBER

The impression given by some concerning this important and precious truth is that God "elects" some people to be saved, and He "elects" some people to be lost. Such may not be directly stated, but it is the logical effect of their teaching. The consequence of this misinterpretation concerning "election" is, in effect, to charge God with denying His own clear and unequivocal declarations in His Word, that the Gospel is for every human being without exception with a view to their salvation by faith. To refute the wrong and harmful teaching of "Limited Atonement", it is simply sufficient to state some of the many divine declaration in the Word of God, as follows:

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?", Ezekiel 18.23.

"The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth," — Psalm 145. 18.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . .", Matthew 28. 19.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16. 15-16.

“For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”, Luke 9. 56.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”, Luke 19. 56.

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations”, Luke 24. 47.

“That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name,” John 20. 31.

“. . . that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. . . that the world through Him might be saved. . . he that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed. . .”, John 3. 16-18.

“He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life,” John 5. 24.

“I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,” John 10. 9.

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call”. “Whereunto He called you by our gospel”. Acts 2. 39 with 2 Thess. 2. 14.

“God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him”, Acts 10. 34-35.

“Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins”, Acts 10. 43.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference,” Romans 3. 22.

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him”. “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed,” Romans 10. 12,11.

“And that He died for all, that they which live should henceforth live unto themselves . . .”, 2 Corinthians 5. 15.

“But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe,” Galatians 3. 22.

“The gospel. . .which was preached to every creature which is under heaven,” Colossians 1. 23.

“God our Saviour . . . Who will have (desireth) all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,” 1 Tim. 2. 3-6.

“We trust in the living God, Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe”, 1 Timothy 4. 10.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” Titus 2. 11.

“The Lord is. . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”, 2 Peter 3. 9.

“And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world,” 1 John 2. 2.

“I am Alpha and Omega. . . I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”. “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, Come ye to the waters. . . Come ye, buy and eat; Yea, come buy. . . without money and without price,”. Revelation 21. 6 with Isaiah 55. 1.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” Revelation 22. 17.

“Election” is indeed God’s sovereign act in wondrous grace. But it is His act for the blessing and ultimate glory of all the redeemed. It culminates in what lies beyond conversion, beyond salvation. Believers, are “elected” for all “the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” 1 Corinthians 2. 9 with 1 Peter 1. 2, and Romans 8. 29.

“The God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus”, does not mock people by instructing us to preach the Gospel to the unsaved and burdened sinners, knowing all the time that some cannot be saved because they are not “elected”!

“Ye shall be witnesses unto Me. . .unto the uttermost part of the earth”, Acts 1. 8.

“Through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins,” Acts 10. 43.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (15)

by Thomas Bentley (Malaysia)

Trusting Christ as a boy of eleven, seven weeks before my twelfth birthday, brought to a realisation the deepest longing of my parents, that for me, early in life, the eternal matter would be settled. This joyous event brought to an end a considerable period of soul trouble that had prevailed for months. Gospel meetings by my late Father and the late Mr. Harold Glasgow were held in the month of June 1936, in a tent on the site now occupied by the Finaghy Hall. These were by no means the first such meetings it was my privilege to attend. My parents wisely exposed me to as much Gospel preaching as was possible, so I knew from an early age the way of God's salvation. At about three years of age I was placed in the ante room used for the infants of the Sunday School in Ebenezer where my first teachers were Mr. Jim Foster and Mr. David Kirk. Often there were stirrings in my heart to know my sins forgiven and to be ready for the Coming of the Lord, a subject that always disturbed my youthful mind. Soul anxiety deepened as nightly I heard the Gospel at the tent meetings just mentioned. One night stands out clearly. Mr. Glasgow spoke on Exodus 12 with such power and conviction, that I was truly awakened. Sleepless nights ensued yet, I shared my concern with no one. Somehow I was shy when it came to this personal issue. The meetings ended on the last Lord's Day of June without me trusting the Saviour, even though I was convicted and deeply concerned.

Nor was this the first series I had sat through when others trusted Christ, and I to my parents' distress, remained unsaved. I recall the year before when Mr David Walker (Scotland) had a tremendous time of blessing in Ebenezer and many of my age group were gathered in. And again in the earlier part of 1936 Mr Walter Norris (Wales) had fruitful meetings in Ebenezer. Later at the Easter conference he

would tell my Father that he had extended the meetings hoping that I would be saved.

The day after the Tent meetings finished I went on holiday. It was my first time to be away from home without the immediate care of my parents. Before I left, bidding my mother goodbye, I asked her what she would like me to bring her from Kilkeel. Naturally I was thinking of a present. Her reply quickly dimmed the very thought of a holiday as again the most important issue of my life rose in all its stark solemnity before me. My Mother's words shattered me. Looking me straight in the eye and with all the affection of a devoted and praying mother, she said, "Nothing Son, other than you tell me you got saved." That arrow went directly to its target. The conviction was ever so real. Thank God, ere the week was out, I was able to send a letter in advance, telling my parents that I had trusted Christ.

It happened on July 1st, a Wednesday evening, around 10.30 p.m. Earlier that evening I had listened to a brother from Romania relate the story of his conversion in which he made repeated reference to Revelation 3:20. With deep concern I read and reread many verses familiar to me, but with no result. Then the verse that came before me with power was the one that had been frequently quoted earlier. In childlike simplicity I saw that all I had to do was to admit the Saviour Who was knocking and asking to come in. I saw clearly there was nothing for me to do, Christ had finished the work on the Cross, all that was asked of me was to believe. That very moment I was conscious of peace, the peace of God within. I realised that I had truly trusted the Saviour to the salvation of my soul. The next morning I was charged with doubt. Somehow the Devil said to me that no one heard what you said last night. Which was true in the human sense. But having known the value of the Word of God in such moments of concern, I quickly turned for my first reading on my first morning as a believer in Christ, to John 5:24 and assurance shone out of the verse and dispelled the clouds of doubt from then till now.

I obeyed the Lord in baptism on January 19th 1939 and later on the 29th I was received into the fellowship of the

assembly gathered to the Lord's name in Ebenezer, Oldpark Road, Belfast.

The call of God came to me when I was 20. It was distinct. It has to be distinct, may I add, else great difficulties that necessarily follow can never be overcome. Here again the Word of God wrought the work. I responded most decidedly to the words of Isaiah 44.8. I refer to this text as the passage of the Holy Scriptures God used to convey His Call. This consummated many years of exercise, backed I must say, by activity in every aspect of work that developed our interests and expressed our desires. Early application to the study of the Scriptures was nurtured by sound teaching and encouraged by those who took more than a passing godly concern in our lives.

A year later God give me direction. My prayerful and indeed practical interests gave me concern for Africa and Argentine in particular. Never did I consider the East in any fashion. But at Easter 1945 the Lord in a very real manner directed my interest to China. I remember bowing devotedly to this clear directive. From this very personal experience with God I felt from that time onward I could speak of China as being the ultimate sphere of my service.

I knew it would be wise and not really a sign of doubt, to seek God's Face for confirmation of both Call and Course. That came in Ebenezer one evening when the late Mr David Walker spoke on the Wednesday of the week he had for ministry in May 1945. Before I went to that meeting, I did something which was my habit, I bowed at my bedside and asked God to bless the ministry to my soul and if He had a word of confirmation, to grant it that night. As he began, Mr. Walker voluntarily indicated he had been strangely led to change his earlier exercise for the meeting. He proceeded to minister on the occurrences of "GO" in Matthew's Gospel. Pausing in the midst of his address Mr. Walker said, "I feel there is a young man in the audience and before he came to this meeting, he asked God for confirmation on his call." I almost fainted. Certainly my face flushed. He added, "young man, allow me to be the Lord's Messenger in the

Lord's message, I say unto you, GO!" I bowed at that moment in utter gratitude to God.

Comforted by God's kindness to my soul I moved for many days in the joy of having come to know the Lord's will. It was a tremendous power in one's life just to rest confidently and yet humbly in the knowledge that God had spoken. I had not expected, however, that though I had received a distinct call, and had been granted a directed course after which had come so manifestly a definite confirmation, that there would be decisive chastisement. Gradually I realised I was after all in God's Hands in a way that somehow I had never known before. Then had not I yielded to Him spirit, soul and body? Could He not treat that offering as He will? It would take me years to discover this and to still believe the "gifts and the calling of God are without repentance".

Later reflecting on this decisive experience I penned words that appear on the flyleaf of this Magazine.

I knew that eventually I must share my exercise with my brethren in Ebenezer. The night I approached a brother in responsibility, I went verily conscious of singular leading, too detailed for this article. But months later I faced refusal and no acknowledgment whatsoever that anything I had said bore traces of being real. A year later the answer was the same. I was wholly cast upon God. Again and again I traced the way He had brought me, making sure I had not missed a step. Then God began to respond to my deeper concern. Where is the evidence of Divine love and am I a true son? It came. What came? you ask. The chastisement came and I was to learn that while I was interested in doing something for God, God was really more interested in doing something in me.

The years passed. Great changes affected my approach in Divine things and in my convictions for God and His truth. China closed long since having been taken over by Communistic hordes. But Malaya was open and in the month of February 1956 my brethren in Ebenezer heartily and without reservation commended me to the grace of God for the work to which He had called me.

My late wife and I with two of a family left Ulster in November 1956 for Malaya as it was then known and from that time until now I have been busily associated with the work of the Lord in this country which is now known as Malaysia.

One of my chiefest mentors, the late and great Mr. Fred Cundick, offered me consoling advice in days when I felt there was never going to be hope of realising the call of God. He said, "Tom, you will not be a year in the work of the Lord when you will realise your probation was too short." I proved the truth of this prophetic statement. I thank God my brethren were used of God to have me wait. I am glad I waited those eleven years. And yet, the probation was too short. God has been faithful and we continue to serve in this land feeling what we have enjoyed for a long time, the value and aptness of Paul's words in Acts 28:31 (RV).

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

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