NEEDED TRUTH

A Magazine for the Teaching of the Word of God
(First published 1888)

VOLUME 87
January to December 1980

If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31, 32)

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Voices from the Past

Where are the dead? (1)

"And Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah" (Gen.25:8,9).

This simple account of the death of Abraham, the friend of God, is full of enlightenment for such as will take the Scriptures as they read. First it is said that he gave up the ghost— that is the spirit, the human spirit, not the Holy Spirit, but "the spirit of man which is in him", as Paul writes in 1 Cor.2:11, which is described to be "the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of the belly" (Prov.20:27). The Lord Jesus, as man, had a human spirit, and on the cross at death, He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and then gave up the ghost or spirit (Lk.23:46).

Abraham gave up his spirit to God. "The spirit returns unto God who gave it", and this is associated with — "The dust returns to the earth as it was" (Eccles.12:7).

Again, Abraham, who gave up his spirit, is gathered to his people. If we follow the Lord's words about Lazarus in Lk.16, we may find help as to Abraham being gathered, and of the service angels perform in connexion with that: "And it came to pass, that the beggar (Lazarus) died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom".

That Abraham is alive, along with Isaac and Jacob, the Lord shows quite clearly in Matt.22:32, and Gen.35:29 and Gen.49:33 corroborate; for of both Isaac and Jacob it is said at death: "And was gathered unto his people".

Then Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham in that cave of Machpelah. The burial has nothing whatever to do with his being gathered to his people. Only the body of Sarah lay in the cave before they placed the body of Abraham therein, and of these burials it is written: "There was Abraham buried, and Sarah, his wife".

It is pleasant to think of these just men of old being gathered with their just forefathers in the place which the Lord called Paradise (Lk.23:43). Paradise was called by the Jews, "Abraham's bosom", and this name the Lord used in Lk.16 to describe the place where Abraham and all the just were; to this poor Lazarus was borne to be comforted after his life of earthly suffering. His name, Lazarus, which means "God, my Helper", shows that his faith was in God; albeit his outward circumstances would have led the outward observer to think otherwise.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
Into the Eighties

As we cross the threshold of another year and another decade, what word from the Lord assures our heart and renews our hope? "HE MUST REIGN" (1 Cor.15:25) Nations may rage and peoples imagine a vain thing, but God's decree remains unalterable:

"Yet I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion . . . I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession".

(Ps 2:6,8)

Towards fulfilment of that pledge God is controlling modern history. The nineteen-eighties we believe will see a further acceleration of events towards the great final climax of the manifest triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ. For each new decade this century has brought a greater speed of change under the momentum of new technology and revolutionary thought.

The "era of the silicon chip" has already dawned. This is expected to have profound effects on industry and communications during the eighties; with far reaching" social results as automation displaces human operatives. Prospects for the eighties are also overshadowed by the energy crisis, and nations strive in fierce rivalry for a share of the world's apparently inadequate oil supplies. There is feverish quest for alternative sources of energy. The spectre of rising inflation brings fear and insecurity to millions. Most sinister of all, immense powers of destruction are at the disposal of nations in the "nuclear club". Super powers eye one another with suspicion, while smaller nations engage in open war. The whole international scene is like a troubled sea that cannot rest.

Nor is the "religious world scene" any less complex. Oriental faiths make their impact felt in the Western world. Strange new cults have made successful appeal to thousands of young people, disillusioned by the hollowness of entertainment and materialism in
affluent societies. Yet the Roman Catholic Church still retains its immense traditional appeal for millions, as Pope John Paul II's spectacular visits to Mexico, Poland, Eire and the U.S.A. have shown. While despite setbacks, the ecumenical movement steadily pursues its aim to bring about the union of Christendom.

So at the outset of the eighties the world situation seems increasingly confused. Yet to the Christian believer certain broad trends in world events are brought into focus when viewed through the "lens" of divine revelation in Scripture. It is rather like the optician's eye tests. He places different lenses in the testing frame, and asks his client to read rows of letters on a chart. By trial and error he arrives at a combination of lenses which is most suitable. At first his client finds letters blurred or even unreadable; but as if by magic, lens adjustments make them stand out clearly, legibly. They have been brought into focus. So the "lens" of God's Word enables the believer, as helped by the Holy Spirit, to discern a pattern taking shape from all the apparent confusion of modern events. Certain developments stand out in bold relief, impressively, confirming that an unseen divine Hand is moulding world events after the counsel of His own will.

Nor has God abdicated this control of the nations in the twentieth century. They are but clay and He is the Potter still. Discerning believers will continue to monitor God's dealings with the nations in a spirit of wonder and expectation — wonder at God's watching over His word to perform it before our eyes; and expectation of the coming again of the Lord Jesus to the air to take from this world all who are members of the Church which is the Body of Christ (1 Thess.4:15-17; Eph.1:22,23). "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry" (Heb.10:37). For this we wait, believing that the Lord's coming to the air is the next event scheduled in the divine calendar of prophetic fulfilment. Nor is this dependant on developments which must precede the rise of the Antichrist and the Lord's return to earth to take His great power and reign. But when we see the pattern of these developments already taking shape, we feel the force of the word:

"When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh" (Lk.21:28).

We pray that, as for the past 90 years, this magazine may continue to be used for the encouragement and instruction of disciples of Christ in doing the will of God for our time — throughout the eighties, or until our Master comes!

"Teach me Thy way, O LORD" (Ps.86:11).
Themes from Hebrews

(1) The Lord's Deity and Humanity (Part 1)

By J. L. Ferguson, of Barrhead, Scotland

The letter to the Hebrews was evidently written to disciples in one or more of the early churches of God, disciples who had been brought up in the Jewish religion until the gospel reached and changed them. In the days of their first enlightenment they were subjected to great persecution, both in their home lives and in imprisonments. They took it all with joy, with minds fixed on the eternal (Heb.10:32-34).

But now, some years later, they were plagued with false teachers who in various places were trying to entangle the disciples again in a yoke of bondage to the law of Moses. Potential danger signs were showing, which called for such warning expressions as drifting away (Heb.2:1), neglecting so great salvation (Heb.2:3), falling away from the living God (Heb.3:12), and, casting away their boldness (Heb.10:35).

Hence then this letter of detailed confirmation of the reality of the "better things" whereby the worshippers were now invited to serve God in the actual heavenly sanctuary rather than in the earthly copies of the heavenly things. Hence this choice treatise on the absolute superiority of the New Covenant, into the blessings of which they had come, over the Old Covenant, from the judgements of which they had been delivered.

It was necessarily, therefore, a letter of contrasts. In relation to the New Covenant stood "Jesus, the Son of God" (Heb.4:14). As the Son of God He had accepted the responsibilities of that covenant before times eternal. As Jesus, He had come to earth to take Manhood to Himself, and thus through death bring the covenant into effective operation in the once-for-all remission of sins; then in His priestly work in resurrection He would lead His people into the rest of God and into the sanctuary service within the veil.

By contrast, in relation to the Old Covenant which could never take away sins, stood the angels through whom it was ordained at Sinai; Moses who mediated it on behalf of the people; Aaron who attended to its Tabernacle service; the law with its ordinances and its need for continual sacrifice; Joshua who brought the people into the land but could never give them rest; the prophets through whom God spoke to the people. They all came into the contrasting review.

Only one comparison was made; that was Melchizedek, who by reason of his remarkable appearance, ministry and then disappearance in the
Genesis record, was viewed by the author as "made like unto the Son of God". It was after his order Christ took His priesthood. But even this one comparison was inadequate. Jesus, the Son of God, stood supreme, howsoever viewed.

Right at the outset, in the first chapter, the author placed before the Christian Jews the glorious Person of the Son of God. First in relation to His own inherent majesty, and then in the excellency of His superiority over the angelic beings.

It was the glory of the Son to reveal the Father. It was His Spirit who guided the prophets as, from time to time, they conveyed the thoughts of God to the fathers of Israel. So He was Himself transcendently greater than all the prophets from the days of Samuel, and all the fathers from the days of Abraham. And when He Himself came down to speak with men, there was absolute finality in all that He said, "God ... hath spoken unto us in His Son".

Well might these Jewish disciples marvel greatly and appreciatively, as we do today, at the sublime dignity of the One who in infinite grace came down to speak to us. Everything in the vast, far-reaching workings of Deity are vested in the Son. By reason of His Sonship He was appointed by the Father, far back in the eternal counsels, as the Heir of all things. It was He who acted for the Godhead in bringing the worlds into being, including, as Alford so aptly puts it, all "the reaches of Space and the ages of Time".

He possessed all the Father's glory; all His divine attributes, His spiritual excellencies, His moral beauties, all the brilliant shining of the Divine Being. All this He was, and radiated. "Of the full Deity possessed, eternally divine", the very nature and essence of the Father found full expression in Him, the Son. As a consequence it was a small matter to Him, who in the beginning "spake, and it was done ... commanded and it stood fast" (Ps.33:9), to maintain in perfect poise the whole universe He had created, as it appears to move forward to some destined end and goal.

In such a setting of majestic Deity, the writer moved swiftly to his climax, portraying the Son, in supreme grace, going to the cross, where in personal mediation He offered Himself without blemish to God, and made purification of sins on behalf of the human race. Then in the glory of atonement made, reconciliation established, He passed back through all the heavens and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high", in confirmation of a completely finished, acceptable work.

Such were the glories of the Son. And more — He was the Only Begotten from the Father. Of none other did the Father ever say: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Heb.1:5). The eternal Spirit is
described as proceeding from the Father; the eternal Son, who was "in the beginning with God", is described as begotten by the Father. Here is the "timeless act" in a relationship between the Father and the Son which is beyond our tiny comprehension.

So not only is the Son greater than those prophets who served as His mouthpiece, and the fathers to whom His word came, but He is also greater than the angels, who were present by His command at the ordaining of the Old Covenant. Angels, though themselves great in power, are ceaseless in the service of their Creator God, as they "fulfil His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word .. . ministers of His, that do His pleasure" (Ps.103:20,21). But as touching the Son, when the Father in due course brings Him to His millennial reign; brings Him in as the Firstborn, that is, the Only Begotten in the glory of complete authority, then the angels will be called upon to worship Him. Yes, greater by far than the angels.

This was the Son, great in His Messianic glory, of whom the prophets had written. The writer of the letter recalled how in Ps.45 the sons of Korah foresaw Him as the coming King, marching in the greatness of His strength, the nations falling before Him. It was King Messiah. Of Him, by the Spirit they wrote: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever". And again: "He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him". Great was the glory of the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel (Heb.1:7-10).

How graphically too the psalmist had written of Him in the "Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed" (Ps.102). He viewed Him as the Creator of a perishable earth and heavens, Himself unaffected by the passing of eons of time (Heb.1:10-12). The incomparable Son of God of whom David, beloved of all Israel in all generations, wrote: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps.110:1). It was Jehovah addressing David's long-expected Messiah. A thousand years later He was to appear — David's Lord come in the flesh as David's Son. David foresaw Him seated glorified at the Father's right hand (Heb.1:13). How infinitely greater must He be than the angels who, before the throne, minister to Him, whom He sends forth on ministries of help to the inheritors of salvation (Heb.1:14).

To the early Jewish disciples the message of this letter, in the richness of its original Greek form, must have come as a powerful anchor to which they could hold fast in the swift drift of perverse teaching. Our own brief paraphrase of the first remarkable chapter may serve to impress us afresh with the choice excellencies of our beloved Lord and Master; and produce within us a reflection comparable to Paul's appreciation of "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me".
The Coming of the Lord
(1) The Rapture of the Church

By F. L. Evans, of Yeovil

Rapture! What vision comes to your mind at the mention of the word? Perhaps the mother's ecstatic pleasure when she sees her new-born baby. Or, possibly, the delight you experienced when you had your first glimpse of a close friend coming down the gangway from the plane after a long stay abroad. Whatever the mental picture, it includes unmistakable happiness and frequently long-awaited pleasure. The word normally conveys these thoughts. It is not strictly a scriptural word, but Christians often use it to describe "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" (2 Thess.2:1).

"Face to face with Christ my Saviour! 
Face to face, what will it be, 
When with rapture I behold Him, 
Jesus Christ, who died for me!" It is in this sense that the term "The Rapture of the Church" has been chosen as the theme of this paper.

Togetherness
This "being together" is the inexpressible joy of the Lord's coming. He Himself made it clear to His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house. He left no reason for misunderstanding. The statement is simple and plain: "I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am" (N.I.V.). Obviously, to Him the prospect was one of real joy.

Paul gives the other side of the picture in his first letter to the Thessalonians. He makes it equally plain that at the Lord's coming all Christians, dead or alive, will together be caught up to meet the Lord. Yes, unquestionably with Him and for ever. These are confident words to give comfort and courage.

"The Master's mighty, quickening voice 
Will make our every heart rejoice, 
And then His face we'll see".
(Jn 14:1-3; 1 Thess.4:13-18; 1 Jn 3:2).

Reunion
What a reunion that will be! Christians of all countries, all members of the
Church the Body of Christ, all since the day of Pentecost. The Lord will act as a mighty magnet drawing to Himself all persons born again throughout this period of grace. Earlier in his letter, Paul had made it plain that Satan had hindered his reunion with the Thessalonians on many occasions. In faith and hope he looked forward to the infinitely greater reunion that the complete hosts of hell will be powerless to prevent. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy" (1 Thess.2:19-20). He gives the distinct impression that at that time there will be mutual recognition and remembering. To him this meant joy and glory.

The Sure Hope
The coming of the Lord for His own is not put forward in Scripture as a dogma or even as an expression of opinion. But rather it is accepted as an indubitable prospect, a sure and certain hope. There is a striking similarity between the statement of the Master Himself and that of His servant Paul several years later.

**The Lord**
I come again
and will receive you unto Myself
where I am
ye may be also
Let not your heart be troubled
(Jn 14:1-3)

**Paul**
The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven
to meet the Lord in the air
with the Lord
so shall we ever be
Comfort one another with these words (1 Thess.4:16-18)

The apostle goes to great lengths to confirm their hope. He warns them against being "quickly shaken" from it, as this would lead to their being unsettled and troubled in mind. False teaching, whatever its source, could seriously erode their joy and undermine their Christian hope (2 Thess.2:1,2).

Changed
The coming will unquestionably be a methodically arranged happening. First, the Lord Himself will come from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. The Christian dead will rise first, to be joined by those still living, to meet the Lord in the air. All of them will be changed — in a flash, when the last trumpet sound is heard (1 Cor.15:50-58).

The earthly likeness will give place to the heavenly one; the natural body to the spiritual body. Corruption is replaced by incorruption,
dishonour by glory, weakness by power. "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep" (1 Cor.15:20). he was the firstborn — the representative, the pattern and the pledge of all to follow. Rapture divine!

"Till I Come"

The Lord Jesus had no intention that the period from His ascension to His coming again should be one of inactivity — a vacuum. It was to be a time devoted to increasing witness to Him, in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses... unto the uttermost part of the earth". Scripture gives explicit guidance as to certain activities which should characterize this vital time. Let us look at three of them.

(a) "For as often as yet eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor.11:26). This simple charge was given to the disciples as a memorial to the Lord until He returns. Shame on me if I neglect to keep such a loving request from the Man of Calvary!

(b) "Occupy till I come" (Lk.19:13 AV). Before the departure of the nobleman to a distant country to receive a kingdom, he gave responsibility to his servants. They were to be up and doing — trading, getting involved. On his return they were rewarded according to the trustworthy manner in which they carried out the charge. Any too many "fringe Christians" today, content to live on the verge, afraid to get involved? In assembly life each disciple should be given the opportunity to feel that he or she really "belongs". If in certain cases some physical or even spiritual activities are impossible, there is a vast scope for commitment to prayer. What beneficial results have accrued from such specific assignments!

(c) "Hold fast till I come" (Rev.2:25). In the Church in Thyatira there were some (unfortunately, not all) who were patiently living the Christ-life of love, faith and hope, and faithfully avoiding misleading teaching. To these the Son of God said: Hold on to what you have till I come. To the overcomers He clearly promised their reward and privileges.

The repeated clarion call of the Captain of our salvation sounds out triumphantly:

"Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to each man according as his work is"

(Rev.22:12).
"That they may all be one"

By A. F. Toms, of Cardiff

A group of Bible students had met together in a friend's home to consider the desire of the Lord Jesus expressed in the above words, which are four times repeated in His prayer to His Father the evening before He died. What one-ness was He praying for? And where was it expressed in the days when the apostles served the Lord? Some have taught that He was referring to the unity of the Church, which is His Body, of which Christ is the Builder and Saviour and Nourisher.

An elderly brother in the group spoke. "I cannot see that it can be the Church, His Body, for in that church all the members are one in Christ; whereas the Lord Jesus prayed (Jn 17:21-23), That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us'. Surely that is different from being in Christ", he said. The brother's point was a good one, and the conclusion he reached is supported by the fact that the Church, His Body, is in Christ's safe keeping. It cannot be marred, for "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt.16:18). If its unity cannot be destroyed the Lord Jesus would obviously not be praying about it.

Further, He was praying for a unity that the world could see and through which the world would know (v. 23) and believe (v. 21) that the Father had sent the Son. The unity of the Body cannot be seen by the world, for no-one knows who are members of it until they declare themselves as belonging to Christ. Its members are scattered throughout the world, and although "fitly framed and knit together", (Eph.4:16), the unity thus produced is something of which the world is not aware.

Quite clearly then it must have been another unity which the Lord Jesus had in mind and for which He prayed so earnestly. We have not far to look to find out what it was, for the Acts of the Apostles makes it plain. When the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and filled the believers, the Lord Jesus began to build His Church, building into it every believing one. Very shortly afterwards those who believed were baptized in water and added to some who were already together, and as a company they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. Here was something additional to the unseen unity of the members of the Body of Christ; a company of baptized believers together to obey the word of the Lord. Here was something which the world could see. They were regularly gathered together and the world could see them breaking bread and engaging in collective prayer. And the world did see them, as is evident from Acts 5, "of the
rest durst no man join himself to them: howbeit the people magnified them; and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:13,14). At the beginning this movement was confined to Jerusalem and from Paul's letter to the Galatians we learn that the gathered disciples were called the church of God (Gal.1:13).

Membership of the Church, the Body of Christ depended solely upon the new birth. Each born again person was baptized by Christ in the Holy Spirit into His Body as 1 Cor.12:13 teaches. But those in the church of God in Jerusalem were disciples who had been baptized in water, added together by the Lord, and were continuing in obedience to the faith (see Acts 6:7). In the Church His Body each member was eternally secure. He could neither be snatched from it, nor wander from it of his own accord, for His word is sure, "no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (Jn 10:28); whereas at death a person ceases to belong to a church of God, or during his lifetime he may wander away in disobedience, thus forfeiting his place, or may have to be put away on account of serious sin.

The Churches of God

Let us briefly trace the progress of the movement described as "the churches of God". These churches grew rapidly both in size and in number in those early days of the Holy Spirit's activity. Persecution scattered the disciples throughout Judea and Samaria and they went about preaching the Word. Philip went down to Samaria and those who believed were baptized, both men and women. In Acts 9 it says, "the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied" (verse 31). Some considered that "the church" in this passage relates to the Jerusalem church in its scattered state, before additional churches were planted. The present writer prefers the view that the singular is used to describe the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria; these churches although many, were integrated into one, and called "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim.3:15). They were walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and in so doing they were a demonstration to the world of the truth of God. Where would men find truth expressed on earth if it were not in the companies of baptized believers who were walking in obedience to the word of the Lord? What a lovely contemplation! Disciples of the Lord Jesus, baptized and added together in churches of God, and those churches in three small provinces linked together in a fellowship of assemblies. As such were they not at
that time the answer to the Master's prayer, that they may all be one? We believe they were.

An expanding movement
And so they continued to be, as the work of God spread to Antioch, through Syria and Cilicia, Phrygia and Galatia, and to the great cities of Asia, and eventually into Europe, as the Word reached Philippi and the cities of Macedonia. In the purposes of God the apostle Paul was raised up to spearhead the work, and the divine record makes it clear that he ever worked to the great mountain-top commission of his glorious Leader, although he himself was not present when the words were spoken. "Go... and make disciples... baptizing them... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you ..." (Matt.28:19,20). Paul preached for decisions, then stayed to teach his converts, and before moving on he built the obedient ones together as living stones into a testimony for God in their town or city. That was the pattern to which he always worked. Preacher, teacher, assembly builder, the different gifts so perfectly blended together in this highly gifted servant of the Lord. In most places he left behind him a building for God, composed of baptized disciples built together to the pattern of the first church of God in Jerusalem. Thus, the saints of the church of God in Thessalonica, for example, are described as being imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea. Does this not answer to the one-ness for which the Lord Jesus prayed? And incidentally, remembering our elderly friend's comment on the Master's words in Jn 17, we notice that the churches of the Thessalonians are said to be "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess.1:1). "Even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee," Can we not discern an association of thought here?

One fellowship
Many churches, but all linked together in a lovely fellowship of assemblies. And because they were one fellowship, reception into a church of God carried with it the privilege of belonging to that fellowship. Letters of commendation were used (see Acts 18:27; 2 Cor.3:1; Rom.16:1,2) whereby disciples commended from one assembly to the fellowship of another were assured of being worthily received. And conversely, because they were one, a person put away from one assembly could not be received in another. When such judgement was carried out it was recognized by all the churches: a necessary result of the unity of the
churches under the authority of the same Lord, bound together by the same faith. "The faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" was the basis of their unity. They were all subject to it because it was the word of the Lord. As new churches of God were founded they were all built to the same pattern, because they were subject to the same teaching. "Even as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor.4:17). "So ordain I in all the churches" (1 Cor.7:17). And of course the same teaching resulted in the same practices, and so Paul went on to write, "if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor.11:16).

Division nipped in the bud

If this is the unity for which the Lord Jesus so earnestly prayed and for which also He died (please note carefully Jn 11:52), it is not surprising that the Adversary repeatedly tried to disrupt it. Acts 15 is a notable occasion when seeds of discord were sown as a result of brethren from Judea introducing wrong teaching among the saints in Antioch. The problem was too thorny to be handled by Antioch brethren alone, and certain men were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders on the question. The chapter is replete with instruction for us today as to how unity is to be maintained. Leaders stood up and gave the lead, and others were in subjection, all under the benign guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that they reached the point where they could say "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (Acts 15:28). Decisions were made which were binding upon all the churches, as Acts 16:4,5 makes plain, with the result that unity among them was preserved. A second principle emerges therefore, that if the unity of churches of God is to be maintained, not only will the same teaching need to be binding upon every church, but the elders among them will require to be united to hold it and to teach it. And this was precisely the case in apostolic days.

A united elderhood

Please notice three cases where elders of more than one assembly acted together. When the disciples in Antioch desired to send a gift to their brethren in Judea, they sent it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. There must have been many churches of God in Judea and how could the distribution have been made unless the elders were acting together? Another delightful example of the same truth is seen in Acts 16:1-3.
when Timothy was sent forth to the work of the Lord by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Tim.4:14). Timothy belonged to the church in Derbe but Paul sought the fellowship of the neighbouring assemblies of Lystra and Iconium before taking him with him. The presbytery or elderhood refers to elders together and who would question the fact that the elders of the three assemblies are referred to? Does it not show clearly the unity of the elderhood in a group of churches?

And in 1 Pet.5:1,2 we have a much larger grouping, for Peter wrote to the elders, not of one province but of five, in what is now present day Turkey, exhorting them to tend the flock of God which was among them. There must have been many churches of God throughout those provinces comprising perhaps thousands of disciples, but they were one flock, and the elders among them one elderhood, so obviously linked together that the one letter was addressed to the whole.

Some believers have taught, and still do, the autonomy of individual assemblies, but where is that seen in the Scriptures? We write in a kindly way, for we love all who are fellow-members of the Body, and the bonds which unite us in Christ are close and precious. We write because we believe that this is a line of truth which is very dear to the heart of the Lord, and we hope that many will read this message and search their Bibles to see if these things are so.

A parable for today
To us it is clear that there was a grouping together of assemblies both in districts and provinces, and also in larger areas, and that within each of these groups the elders functioned together as one. As if to confirm the truth to us the Lord has put a delightful illustration of the principle in His instruction for the building of the tabernacle. "The tabernacle shall be one", He said (Ex.26:6), and the tabernacle was made of ten curtains of the same measure which were joined together, five into one, and the other five into one, and then the two ones coupled together by the clasps of gold. This is a parable from which we are to learn lessons for the time now present, and we would be slow to learn if we did not see that when God joins many into one, He joins a few together, and another few, and then all are joined into a united whole.

Does it not tip with the New Testament pattern of individual churches grouped together in districts and provinces, as witness the churches of Galatia (Gal.1:2) and the churches of Asia (1 Cor.16:19), and the whole fitly framed together, as Eph.2 puts it, into a habitation of God in the Spirit which is called "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor.1:9).
An appeal

Can we not build to the same pattern today? Some ninety years ago there were men who believed they could and that God was calling them to do so. They saw in the Scriptures these truths of the grouping together of assemblies and of the united elderhood, etc., and, in order to give expression to them, at great personal cost they separated from many whom they loved. There was no other way than by separation. It has always been the price of truth. They separated in weakness and humility and in great dependence upon the Lord.

The intervening years have shown that it was a movement of God's Spirit which brought them out to take their stand at that time. In God's mercy the movement which they pioneered has stood the test of time, and the churches of God are still sending out the light of divine truth. Once again we call upon fellow-believers in every place to examine the teaching in the fear of the Lord and to determine whether this was the unity for which the Master prayed. If it is, then with God's help, let us stand together in giving expression to it.

Small Things

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

Christians, above all others, should be able to appreciate the great importance of small things, made and used so much by our Creator. It is interesting to notice in Scripture the element of smallness in many of the divine miracles. Examples include the manna: "behold upon the face of the wilderness a small round thing, small as the hoar frost upon the ground" (Ex.16:14), typical no doubt of the Bread of Life seen in the Lord at His birth in Bethlehem (the house of bread).

In Elijah's day a little cake was made for him by a widow from her small resources of a little oil and a handful of meal. She thought her gesture would empty the barrel and the cruse for good, but her faithful willingness resulted in the divine promise: "The barrel of meal shall not waste (cease, finish, end), neither shall the cruse of oil fail (decrease), until the day that the LORD sendeth rain... ." (1 Kgs.17:14). Elijah, the widow, and her son fed from the same cruse and barrel many days (v. 15). The testimony of a little maid led to the miraculous cleansing of Naaman the leper (2 Kgs.5); The sacrifice of a little boy enabled the Lord Jesus to feed
miraculously more than five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish (Jn 6:9 AV).

God has made for us a brain, a comparatively small organ of the human body whose function and complexity confound the greatest of minds. Scientists tell us that the brain has ten million nerve cells for recording things we learn. "The information travels inside us at speeds of up to 300 miles per hour over a network of nerve fibres 100,000 miles long" states one report. Time fails us to write of the miracle of the tiny dew drop, the blade of grass, the wheat kernel, the ant; all wonderful examples of God's purpose in small things. But certain spiders deserve special mention for they were recently responsible for creating a phenomenon in the U.S.A. which puzzled many people. When they wish to migrate, families of spiders weave huge webs, some 20 feet long, and use them to float to their destinations.

In similar strain, Agur the son of Jakeh was impressed by the wisdom of four things which are little upon the earth (Prov.30:24-28). We too may gain much wisdom in considering God's ways in taking up very small things for the progress of His great purposes.

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings:

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who hath done all things well.
Voices from the Past

Where are the dead? (2)

Neither Greeks nor Jews believed that all men shared the same portion at death. The Greeks spoke of Hades, meaning the underworld, never the place of burial (see the Revisers' Preface to the Old Testament, which says that, "Sheol . . . signifies the abode of the departed spirits"). Departed "souls" is the correct word to use, confirmed as it is by Ps.16:10. "The grave" is a misleading meaning given to the Greek word Hades. The Greeks also spoke of Tartarus, a place beneath, or in association with, Hades, and this was always associated with the punishment of the wicked. The Hebrews also spoke of Sheol, meaning the place of the departed (never the grave), and with it are associated ideas both of bliss (see Lk.23:43 and Acts 2:25-32) and of torment (Isa.14:9-15).

It is pleasant to contemplate the righteous dead of the past dispensations, dead to those they left behind here, but alive on the other side to their people who went before.

In 2 Cor.5 Paul discusses the question of being "at home in the body" as against being "at home with the Lord". The Greek word here for "to be at home" is endemeo (from en, "in" or "among", and demos, "people"), literally meaning "among one's own people", and there is no special reference to place at all. The word shows the Old Testament idea of being gathered to one's own people at death. If we are at home in the body, we are "among our own people" here, and if we leave the body we are "among our own people" with the Lord. If we are absent from the Lord then ekdemeo applies, that is to be absent from one's own people, such as are with the Lord. And if we are absent from the body, we are absent from our own people who are in the body.

While we contemplate the glorious company of the blessed dead, we must not overlook the words which qualify the blessed state that is theirs: "with the Lord", "with Christ". (This does not mean, in Hades. Note the force of Acts 2:25-36. The Lord is in heaven at the right hand of God, and the redeemed dead are with Him). To be with Him is very far better than the best of earthly states. Many of God's beloved ones whom we have known are there, and multitudes of the excellent of the earth whom we have not known, but, wonder of wonders! we shall be with them in either case, whether our feet should have to cross death's chill waters or whether our Lord shall come and we be clothed upon with our house from heaven on the glad day of His presence.

Extracted from "Jottings", by J. Miller.
Suffering, Time and Eternity

"A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Ps.90:4).

"Our light affliction, which is for the moment..." (2 Cor.4:17). The sad plight of the Vietnamese boat people left all right-thinking people with a sense of outrage. Oppressive inhumanity placed the lives of thousands of our fellow men and women in jeopardy. Overcrowded, unsanitary boats were time and again refused permission to land. The hapless refugees were forced again to face the perils of shark-ridden, storm-tossed seas. It is reported that for every survivor who has finally found a country of refuge, several have perished.

Much credit is due to all who have stretched out a helping hand, welcoming, feeding, clothing and accommodating many of the refugees. Coworkers in the Church of God in Melbourne, Australia had opportunity to share a little in giving material relief and providing gospel literature in suitable languages.

Such harrowing tragedies are bound to stir afresh the questions which have been asked in every generation about the long-continued permission of suffering in human experience. In our human helplessness we cry out with the Psalmist:

"How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy Name for ever?" All too readily the natural mind reproaches God for a state of affairs in which disaster, disease and man's inhumanity to man result in such a vast sum-total of suffering.

Scripture guides the believer to view the problem of suffering from God's standpoint. It brings into focus the relatively brief present phase of an eternal divine plan. The present is seen in perspective compared with the compensation of ages upon ages yet to unfold — an eternity of blessing unmarred by any shade of suffering.

Moses, the man of God, was led
by the Spirit in Ps.90 to describe a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years, in the sight of God. The apostle Paul, whose personal quota of suffering has perhaps been unequalled among all Christ's followers, described them as a "light affliction", which was but "for the moment". Through a wide variety of suffering experience, God's saints will find strength and assurance as they view their personal trials in this light. God's word explains other reasons why He allows suffering to cloud the lives of those who love and serve Him. But an understanding of the relative brevity of the longest earthly suffering will greatly help us in our personal trials of faith. One sorely tried Psalmist confessed:

"As for me, my feet were almost gone; My steps had well nigh slipped . . . It was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God, And considered their latter end".

His faith was fiercely assailed, he felt his confidence in God shaken, until he viewed the problem from the standpoint of God's sanctuary. Then he saw things in new perspective. What seemed insoluble became so different against the background of eternal purpose.

To the Christian believer the same applies as he considers the vast spectrum of suffering in a world alienated from God, "It is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith" wrote Solomon 3,000 years ago. Modern media bring powerfully to our notice the daily continuance of this travail. What justification can there be for its continuance? Faith rests firmly on the revealed assurance that divine wisdom and love have all in perfect balance and control. However painfully drawn out it seems to us, as history repeats itself in sad episodes of human oppression and cruelty, God's timing is faultless. When all divine purpose is one day seen in true focus, it will be clearly realized that suffering has been but "for the moment".

Rom.8:22-23 gives striking insight into the present sufferings of the world in general and God's children in particular: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body". Relief is promised to the believer at the return to the air of our Lord Jesus Christ: and the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God when the Lord Jesus is manifested to take His great power and reign.
It was said in Israel that "when Ephraim spake there was trembling". So mighty was Ephraim that when it made a tribal pronouncement the other tribes trembled. But the speakings of Ephraim were basically of no consequence and vapourized as the ten tribes trooped away into captivity.

When God spoke to Israel from Sinai it was altogether different. He spoke through angels and the word was received by Moses for the people. That word proved steadfast for some 1,500 years, powerful in its application in judgement to the disobedient nation. Yet the law of Sinai had to give place to the speakings of the Son of God when He came in Manhood.

So the writer came quickly to the point of his plea. How final and immutable must be the word of the eternal Son, the Lord, in the great salvation which He came to proclaim! By the power of the Holy Spirit His disciples carried far and near their testimony to the things which He taught them. And in approving witness to the new teaching it was God's good pleasure to grant signs and wonders and manifold powers, the Holy Spirit distributing His gifts as it pleased Him. Thus there were tremendous demonstrations of the supernatural in confirmation of the seal of the living God on the teachings of the New Covenant as they began to spread abroad.

Yes, great indeed was the word of the Son, and costly, for that word was also the word of the cross. In the face of the false teachers, only a more whole-hearted attention and adherence to this Word would save the early Jewish Christians from the current drift back to the superseded law of Moses, to the Old Covenant which was vanishing away. Already the drift was in evidence for some were forsaking the assembly gatherings (10:25). A careless neglect of the salvation which had transformed them could only bring upon them very definite divine displeasure.

But who was the Originator of this great salvation? The writer moved on to contemplate its accomplishment, involving the incarnation of the Son of God, His sinless humanity in "the days of His flesh". He became the great representative Man who restored what He had not taken away.

No matter at which period of its existence the inhabited earth is viewed, it never was and never will be under the dominion of angels. Although man is of a lower order than that of angels in the creation of God, it was nevertheless to man that God subjected all things on the earth. Everything was placed
under his dominion, all animals, birds and fish; nothing was exempt. The
writer quotes as his authority the words of David in Ps.8. When David
wrote the psalm he had doubtless the words of Gen.1:28 in mind, in the
days before the Fall.

But the Fall changed everything. Man lost his dominion over earth's
created things, hence the author's point that now things are not only not seen
to be subject to man but the plain fact is that they simply are not subject to
him. But there is One we do see, the mighty representative Son of Man, the
One to whom all creation will be universally subject in the day of His millen-
nial reign. Where the first man failed, God's second Man will restore all.
They said in the days of the shadows, "David brought back all". So will it be
with the Son of man in His day.

Meantime the author continued, "We behold Jesus", that is Jehovah the
Saviour. For a little time He had allowed Himself to be made lower than the
angels. That was during His earthly stay. By the grace of God He had
completed His Father's assignment, then tasted death, in all its suffering
and bitterness, for every man. As a consequence His Father had crowned
Him in resurrection with glory and honour and seated Him at His own right
hand. Thus enabled, God was now bringing many sons to glory, as the great
salvation was being received in simple faith throughout the lands of the
nations. (It should be pointed out that although the writer favours the view of
the post-resurrection crowning with glory and honour there is another
widely held view which is well expressed by J. Miller in his Notes on
Hebrews, dealing with Heb.2:9 — "The usual interpretation is that He was
crowned with glory and honour after death. This is true of the Lord's
glorification in another sense, but here as the Son of Man He was crowned
with glory and honour to suffer. His crowning was because of the suffering
doing, so that by the grace of God, He, and He only, of all the sons of
men, should taste death for every man").

The Son of God had become Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour; the originator of
so great salvation had come in manhood so that He would become per-
fected for priestly work in relation to these sons who were being begotten
through the gospel. Thus, marvel of marvels, the eternal Son was sanctify-
ing sinners. Thus sanctified they became by divine grace children of God; so
that the eternal Son and those who were privileged to become children
through faith in Him, had all the same Father, God. And, grace upon grace,
the eternal Son was not ashamed to call them His brethren, as evidenced
early on the resurrection morning, "Go tell My brethren" (Matt.28:10).

The writer was surely providing a profound reason why any thought of
neglecting so marvellous a Saviour or so great salvation should never be
given a place in the Hebrew Christians’ minds. The Son of God had not
gone to the help of angels when they sinned. But for the sake of the seed of
Abraham He had come sinless into the human stream to lay hold on them
for their help. It had a faint foreshadowing in Isa.63:9, "In all their afflictions
He was afflicted". They shared in blood and flesh; so He would do the
same, but without sin. In the body of His flesh He would be able to experi-
ence the trials to and through which His Father would bring Him; the
temptations which Satan would cunningly lay in His way; the hard things
that sinners would do and say to Him. He would be undergoing what Aaron
had foreshadowed as he shared the rigour and sorrow of the people in the
brick fields of Egypt — training for priestly service.

But more — by reason of His humanity He would be capable of death.
And by means of that death He would destroy the Devil who had the power
of death, an event so faintly prefigured in David slaying Goliath by means of
the giant’s own sword. That death would be retrospective in its benefits as
well as prospective in its blessings. By means of it the Old Covenant saints,
who had lived in constant bondage by reason of their fear of death, would be
delivered from Upper Sheol at His resurrection. And provision would be
made at Calvary of the propitiation for the sins of the people of God, and
indeed for the whole world.

Yet it was matchless grace on the part of the Son of Man that "it behoved
Him... to be made like unto His brethren". Those experiences in the days
of His flesh were perfect training for a priestly ministry in the heavenly
sanctuary, a service beautifully balanced in its faithfulness to God and
mercy to His failing people; a constant ministry of succour for those weary
in the battle with the tempter.

Thus the author developed his theme, as a choice corrective for any
waning joy in the New Covenant, for any dimming love for the Lord Jesus
on the part of those dear early Hebrew Christians. It was a concentration of
thought on the excellency of the Person of the Lord Jesus, whether glorious
in holiness as the Son of God from all eternity, or glorious in lowliness as the
Son of Man in the years of His earthly ministry. Infinitely greater than the
fathers, the prophets, the angels, the entire human race — the Lord Jesus
Christ stands supreme.

And we ask ourselves, in this our day, the question — is that same beloved
Lord Jesus pre-eminent in our lives? Has what He requires of us in com-
munion and service pride of place over our business interests and spare time
pursuits? That is a question for each of us to answer in the secret of His
presence — alone with Him.
The Coming of the Lord

(2) The Believer's Day of Account

By A. F. Toms, of Cardiff

In the heart of Toronto city, high above one of the main highways someone has placed a large neon sign which reads "Christ is coming. Are you ready? Phone Jim...". Whoever Jim may be, he is obviously an opportunist and a man in whose heart the coming again of the Lord Jesus is a lively hope. And God intends it should be that in every believing heart. It is not without significance that in the final chapter of the book of Revelation the Master's promise, "Behold, I come quickly" is repeated three times, as though God would deeply impress the fact upon our hearts before the page of Scripture closes. On the second occasion the Lord Jesus continues, "and My reward is with Me, to render to each man according as his work is" (Rev.22:12). Closely associated therefore with His coming again is the believer's day of account, which is referred to elsewhere as the Judgement-seat of Christ, where our life's work will be assessed and rewards given to those who qualify.

There seems no doubt that this tribunal will take place soon after we are escorted to heaven by the Lord Jesus, because before He returns to earth as Son of man, the marriage of the Lamb will have taken place in heaven, and on that glorious occasion the bride, the wife of the Lamb will be arrayed in fine linen, which is said to be the righteous acts of the saints. By that time therefore the assessment of our works will have been completed, and that which has survived the fiery testing will be for the adornment of the bride, and for the glory of her heavenly Bridegroom. It is a sobering contemplation that during our lives on earth we are making ourselves ready for that glorious time in heaven when a great multitude will cry as with the voice of many waters and of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth" (Rev.19:6). Now is our time of preparation. This fact makes our present subject one of urgent importance to every one who loves our Lord Jesus.

In addition to the above quotation from Rev.22 there are four main references to the Judgement-seat of Christ in the writings of the apostle Paul. In Rom.14, his word "we must all stand before the Judgement-seat of God" (v. 10) is set in the context of instruction regarding the brother who is weaker in faith. There is ever the danger that a brother of stronger faith may despise his weaker brother, and that the weaker may sit in judgement on the stronger. Both attitudes are condemned, for the good reason that each brother belongs to the Lord. The weaker and the stronger are His servants.
and therefore answerable to Him. "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another?" Pertinent question! And one which we do well to remember when we are tempted to criticise our brethren or sisters. The judgement day is coming when each one of us shall give account of himself to God. The Greek word used is logos, a spoken word, and the teaching is that we shall each be required to give account of ourselves to the Lord in words.

In 1 Cor.3 the emphasis is upon the fact that "each man's work shall be made manifest". The Judgement-seat of Christ will be an assessment of our work on earth. Notice the background of teaching against which Paul made this statement. He had laboured for God in Corinth. He came first as a preacher with the message of Christ and Him crucified, and among those who believed he stayed for 18 months teaching the word of God. Before he moved on he had built together into a church of God those who had become obedient to the word. Other servants of God followed him, among whom was Apollos, and they built on the foundation which Paul had laid. They did not lay another foundation, but were invited to build upon the foundation which had already been laid, which was Christ and His teaching. Upon that same foundation we are invited to build today, and it is that which is built which is to be so carefully examined by the Lord Jesus in that coming day of reckoning.

Four words are used in 1 Cor.3:13 to describe the thoroughness of the testing. The word manifest means visible and open to sight. "Nothing is hid, that shall not be made manifest; nor anything secret, that shall not be known and come to light" (Lk.8:17). The day shall declare it, or make it plain, as the word means. Simon Peter, the night he denied the Master, could not hide where he came from. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee" said the people who gathered with him around the fire. His speech declared him, as that day will declare our works, because they will be revealed in fire. "Will it be real fire?" some have asked. Remembering that the eyes of the Lord Jesus are described as "a flame of fire" it seems likely that our works will be proved, or tested, by His all-searching eyes.

Certain it is that nothing will escape His gaze, as He examines us individually. The emphasis in each portion is upon the individuality of the experience. "Each one of us shall give account of himself". "Each one may receive the things done in the body". Fathers and sons, husbands and wives will all appear separately. Overseers giving an account of their responsibility in the charge allotted to them will appear one by one, "for the work of a man shall he render unto him" (Job 34:11). Each will give an account of his own work; no-one will be required to answer for another.

Some in Corinth had taken it upon themselves to judge the apostle Paul. In reply to them, he wrote in 1 Cor.4, "with me it is a very small
thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement... he that judgeth
me is the Lord" (vv.3,4). "Judgeth" is in the Greek an intensive word: to
examine, to scrutinize. It is used of the daily examination of the Scriptures
by the Beroeans when they enquired into the things which Paul taught in
their synagogue. The Lord Jesus will bring to light the hidden things of dark-
ness. Solemn word. Can there be hidden things of darkness in the hearts of
born again people? Yes, it is possible, and we do well to remember that
"there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are
naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"
(Heb.4:13).

Thankfully He will also make manifest the counsels of the heart, the
underlying reason why things were done, sometimes little things and insig-
nificant, but done for His sake. These counsels will also be hidden, hidden
to all eyes but His own. But He will make them manifest and so His
judgement will be based not merely on an assessment of the works which
have been visible, but upon the motives which have prompted them. Surely
that is the point behind the striking statement of the Lord Jesus in
Matt.10:42, that "whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a
cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he
shall in no wise lose his reward". It was given in the name of a disciple, and
for the sake of the Master whom that disciple followed, and therefore it will
not be forgotten in the day of reckoning.

It has been asked whether unconfessed sins will be raised at the judge-
ment seat of Christ. The answer is "No", for all sin was dealt with at
Calvary, whether belonging to the past, present or future of our experience.
We were judged as sinners at the cross, when, thank God, Another bore the
judgement on our behalf. When the Lord Jesus "offered one sacrifice for
sins for ever" God was completely satisfied in regard to sin. So we shall not
be judged for sin as such at the Judgement-seat of Christ. We shall then be
judged as servants, and what we shall meet is the work which we have done
through our bodies, as 2 Cor.5 teaches.

It is true, of course, that unconfessed sin hinders fellowship with God and
that in turn affects our service, so that indirectly we may see the result of it in
works which are burned up. All that answers to wood, hay and stubble in our
lives, will be consumed by the fire, and "if any man's work shall be burned,
he shall suffer loss". The loss will be of reward, not of eternal life. Thank
God for the words which follow, "but he himself shall be saved, yet so as
through fire". Such words preclude any possibility of the believer on the
Lord Jesus being eternally lost. His works may be burned up, but he himself
shall be saved. What could be clearer than that!

2 Cor.5 is one of those portions of Scripture where
God begins where we end, and ends where we begin. At the close of the chapter we learn how we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and the ultimate purpose is that we shall spend eternity in glorified, resurrected bodies. For "we know that, if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens". Between these two great lines of truth with which the chapter opens and closes, there is much teaching regarding our present lives of service. Constrained by the love of Christ we make it our aim to be well-pleasing unto the Lord, and there can be no higher ambition in life than that. Whatever else our days on earth may hold for us, let us make it our primary purpose to live for the pleasure and glory of the One before whose Judgement-seat we shall all one day stand to give account, and that may be much sooner than we have seriously thought.

The Value of The Burnt Offering

By G. Neely, of Vancouver, B.C.

It is ever true of man that he falls far short of the expectation of the Lord who created him; sin saw to that. David puts it succinctly, and Paul repeats it: "There is none that doeth good (righteous), no, not one" (Ps.14:3; Rom.3:10). Yet God desires from among men, worshippers, servants, witnesses, those who will be obedient to his divine command "... in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23,24).

The people of God in the Old Testament were given clear instructions concerning the burnt offering. It is essential to remember that the Lord received nothing from a dead bullock, lamb, goat or pigeon. It was not the animal's death and subsequent burning upon an altar in the exact steps of a procedure which gave God anything from His people. The sweet smell of the burnt offering was not merely the smell of roast lamb. This was not to become just a ritual, a tradition void of all emotion. This ascending offering spoke directly to the loving heart of God about the Lord Jesus Christ who would one day be a burnt offering upon an altar at Calvary "... and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell" (Eph.5:2). Offerings of the Levitical order are types of Christ; and Christ the sum of all the offerings. The great God of heaven demanded broken hearts, contrite spirits and an expression of appreciation to God as His commands were carried out. David writes, in a deeply appreciative, yet sorrowful spirit:

"Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering."
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"  
(Ps.51:16,17).

God's immense satisfaction from the burnt offerings of an already redeemed, devoted people who loved God was unexcelled. Conversely, His immense anger at the heartless, routine slaying of animals without thought to the significance of the offerings brought fearful protests from the mouth of God: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer Me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them" (Amos 5:21,22).

In Amos's time the people had become disobedient, full of iniquity, slaves of habit, and had forgotten that a compassionate, gracious God had chosen them "... not... because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: but because the LORD loveth you...") (Deut.7:7,8).

The burnt offering typifies Christ coming to do the will of God, at total cost to himself, and in spite of the awful suffering which He must endure. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again" (Jn 10:17).

In the bullock, Christ is seen as the worker, the Perfect servant. The bullock did the muscle work, the ploughing, the treading of corn, the hauling of the sheaves from harvest. So Christ is seen as the Pattern Evangelist, Teacher and Pastor. The offerings of the flock portray Christ in the excellence and perfection of His character. He is the Lamb of God without spot or blemish; and, under the symbol of the goat, He is the one who took the likeness of sinful flesh, yet remained sinless.

Might the turtledove, or pigeon, suggest the internal perfection of His character: perfect thoughts, affections and desires; absolute innocence? John emphatically announced "... in Him is no sin" (1 Jn 3:5). It is suggested that in these various animals we see different ways of looking at Christ as the burnt offering and perhaps different levels of appreciation of Him. The turtledove was killed, but not divided and not washed. Perhaps this shows a smaller apprehension of the offering, and greater things are not distinguished. In all the types, however, there are some shortcomings for Christ was absolutely perfect. The bullock, lamb and goat were to be brought outwardly spotless and void of blemish. But the legs and inwards (possibly indicating walk and feelings) had to be washed with water before they were acceptable. The crop of the turtledove had to be plucked away. Everything that could be done to make the offering clean had to be done. There were no short cuts, for these things spoke to God of His only Son.

There are four points which become evident from the burnt offering in
comparison with the other offerings:

(1) It was a sweet savour offering (as were the meat and peace offerings). It was offered on the brazen altar upon which God's fire burned continuously in the court of the tabernacle. In the burnt offering sin is not primarily in view. This deals with what the offerer is before God, not what he has done. The Israelite came for acceptance as a worshipper and as such appears in perfection. In the sin offering he appears as a sinner. Christ is seen in the burnt offering as a spotless Man offering Himself to God for a sweet saviour, not as the "sin offering".

(2) It was an offering for acceptance to secure for the offerer his own acceptance before God. The word atonement (kaphar) implies satisfaction. Jesus Christ found man under the law, and there, in obedience to the law, He offered "for his acceptance". The atonement of the burnt offering is the satisfaction God receives from the perfection offered to Him. It is sweet. The atonement for sin in the sin offering is bitter and such an offering is put outside the camp and burnt (Lev.4:8-12).

(3) Life was taken on the altar. Life was something God gave originally and claimed for His own. It is something He has always claimed but Christ gave Him His life and we are accepted in Him.

(4) Except for the skin (Lev.7:8) the burnt offering was wholly burned on the brazen altar. This distinguishes it from the other offerings. The meat and peace offerings were only partly burned; the sin offering was burned outside the camp. In the burnt offering we see what God requires; not the surrender of a part, even the best part, but an entire surrender of the whole. Christ so perfectly sums up the command to love God with all of the heart, soul and mind. The legs (walk), the head (thoughts), the inwards (feelings) and the fat (energy, vigour) were all totally offered and consumed. Christ also reserved nothing; He surrendered His total Being.

The burnt offering was for God. He got the sweet smell and the satisfaction from it. It is only natural then that Christ should "... do always the things which are pleasing to Him" (Jn 8:29). He could not compromise God's commands to get more followers from among men. He lived for God and died for God. It's no wonder that God put so much value upon the heart of the offerer who brought the burnt offering. It all pointed to Jesus Christ, "... My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17).

Christ is not only our Representative, but He is our Example. He was devoted to doing God's will, not to ritual and tradition. He offered all, not only part. He was an acceptable sweet savour.

In our worship, our service and our witness we must be obedient, appreciative, enthusiastic and loving. God desires quality, not quantity; not our glory, but His.
How can I, Lord, withhold Life's brightest hour
From Thee; or gathered gold,
Or any power?
Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,
When Thou hast given Thine own dear self for me?

Backsliders are restored
By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

Christians can become discouraged and downright pessimistic over the possibility of wayward children of God being restored to a life of fruitful service. They forget the bright ray of hope which the Lord Jesus provides in telling of the father's eagerness to forgive his repentant prodigal son. The words: "... his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Lk.15:20) reflect also the eagerness of our heavenly Father to forgive and restore His repentant ones. "There is forgiveness with Thee", cried David (Ps.130:4). "... return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy ... and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" said Isaiah (Isa.55:7). "Her sins which are many are forgiven", declared the Lord Jesus (Lk.7:47). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", proclaimed John (1 Jn 1:9). What clearer evidence do we need than these remarkable scriptural assurances to confirm God's willingness to forgive and restore?

Proof that backsliders can be restored was vividly portrayed at the bedside of a dying Christian. His father was a godly man who had served his generation well; the son was a baptized disciple but he left the Fellowship of God's Son after a gradual drift away from spiritual things through family tragedy and discouragement. "The seat in the assembly circle is empty long before the person leaves" is a cryptic, yet true statement, and it was so in this man's case. When he left God's people the drift away from the Lord was most perceptible. He was in Christ, but he was not enjoying the abiding life of fruitfulness. His occupation was the dangerous one of a fire-fighter, but it did not seem to occur to him that each day he was but a step away from death; that there was the daily risk of being ushered into the divine presence with so many things unreconciled with His Master. It was that insidious enemy cancer which proved to be the blessing in disguise. Doctors and nurses could not help any more and they sent him home to die. That was
when the message came and we paid our memorable visit. He was happy to be reminded of the love of the Lord Jesus, to be assured that failure and folly could be forgiven. He asked us to read to him from his father's Bible. It was a well worn, well read, well marked book; a cherished heritage. We prayed together, and we returned the following night at his request. That proved to be the last occasion, for he later lapsed into a coma and passed away.

Another wanderer had come home confessing: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in Thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called Thy son" (Lk.15:21). He had known forgiveness and acceptance. It was a joy to give such a testimony at his funeral.

What shall we say of Peter, the tempted, failing disciple who betrayed his Lord? Tears of repentance led to a mighty restoration, God used him to bring thousands to the Lord on the day of Pentecost. "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Lk.22:32 AV); Peter fulfilled this desire of his Lord in a very practical way. In contrast Paul lamented over Demas who "forsook me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim.4:10). The end of Demas' life is hidden from us, but we can only think of it with sadness. There are many known to us who have drifted away from the Lord and His things. Are we praying for them? assuring them of our prayers? sending them a booklet or a little message from the Lord? seeking their restoration in the spirit of the eagerness of our forgiving God? This is a service for God which needs wisdom, compassion; but it is an important work for there is a life at stake, a life that is being wasted. A good start is to tell the wayward ones that we are praying for their restoration; let us tell them also of God's cry to the Israelite who had shamefully left the Lord for a life of sin. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?" (Jer.3:4). It is almost as though God is teaching the backslider, the Israelite idol worshipper, how to pray, by putting into his mouth these wonderful words of pleading and restoration, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth". This might well be the acknowledgement of all our hearts.

Dr Robert Morrison, medical missionary to China, was a living testimony to a Christian mother's ceaseless prayers for her two wayward sons. While she remained in Scotland one son went to the USA, became a heavy drinker of alcohol, and a mocker of Christians. He would wait for the congregation to leave an evangelical church in Chicago and would taunt them with his offers of alcohol. He was considered a hopeless case. But the mother's prayers, and the Spirit's pleading, brought him under the conviction of sin. One night he was awakened out of sleep, and as a trembling sinner he came to Christ. He became one of God's good men, and subsequently returned home to convey to his mother the good news of her
answered prayers for him. Overjoyed, Mrs Morrison invited her son to join with her in continued prayer for the son Robert, also a wayward lad. Unknown to the praying couple Robert was brought under conviction on the deck of a ship in the China Sea. God caused him to review his mother's Christian influence on him as a boy and her continual prayers for his salvation. The Holy Spirit brought him to a realization of his need of Christ and he was born again. Returning to Scotland, he gave himself to the study of the Scriptures and medicine, and he dedicated his life to China as a medical missionary. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen.18:14).

"Be ye doers of the Word"

By J. Taylor, of Crowborough

How easy it is to be a hearer and not a doer! Day by day we hear the words of men in advertisements or propaganda, but unless the subject directly concerns us we are hearers only. In the verse quoted above however we have something on a higher plane. James in Jas.1:22 of his epistle is not speaking of men's words, but the Word of the living God which is not to be lightly regarded. Most of us realize that God speaks to us through His written word brought home to our hearts by the Holy Spirit in various ways. It may be in our daily reading of the Word, or it may be in a word on the calendar, or perhaps in ministry, either spoken or written. When the Lord has spoken to our hearts, telling us of something which we should be doing or which we should cease from doing, the responsibility rests with us to obey Him.

Some writers, in the past, perhaps quite unwittingly have given the impression that when one's life is under the leading of the Holy Spirit one automatically does what is right. While it is perfectly true that the Holy Spirit will never lead one to do anything wrong, right actions are certainly not automatic. The Lord Jesus said of the Holy Spirit that, "He shall guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13). We are still left with a free will to be, or not to be, guided by the Lord. We have heard the word, and so then we have to act. The Lord does not do for us what he has given us the ability to do ourselves.

A little while ago I read, in a magazine a little snippet which seems to illustrate this thought. It ran like this, "Don't waste time asking God to keep you from doing things — don't do them!" This may sound rather crude but it does emphasize the point.

When the Lord has spoken to our hearts can we disregard His word?
"God speaketh once, yea twice, though man regardeth it not" (Job 33:14). So then if we have heard the Lord speaking to our heart let us not be hearers only, or we shall be, as James puts it, "deluding (or deceiving) your own selves". Mary's words at the marriage at Cana seem to sum up all this: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it".

Things to Remember

1. The first day of the week is to God's people the Lord's day.
2. The brother who leads in thanksgiving for the loaf and the cup should be lost sight of; he acts for the assembly.
3. It is our privilege at the Remembrance to worship God "in the beauty of holiness" and praise should come from overflowing hearts.
4. The man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord. It is a comely and beautiful sight for brethren and sisters to be together in praise.
5. In general the thanksgiving should be brief and to the point, especially for the loaf and the cup.
6. Formality should be avoided; a hymn after every giving of thanks may not always be in order.
7. Hymns relating to the Lord's sorrow and sufferings and hymns in which reference is made to our approach to God are appropriate to follow the partaking of the emblems, rather than hymns referring to things in general done by God for us.
8. In our exercise of heart before God we should consider one another also, so that each brother whom the Spirit would use may have opportunity to engage in thanksgiving and may not be hindered by our taking up undue time.
9. Being in the presence of God, the greatest care should be exercised by all to avoid any cause of distraction.
10. In our coming together to remember the Lord Jesus, it is love, personal affection towards Him, that counts with God.

W. S. Lewis, Needed Truth, 1938.
Voices from the Past

The Goodness of God

The goodness of God is everywhere to be seen, and the goodness of God should lead men to repentance (see Rom.2:4). But such as are His children and who walk in His ways may know His goodness in a special manner. In Ps.84:11 we find these words: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly".

This Psalm shows a divinely chosen centre restored to man — the tabernacles of God, which to the godly were what its nest is to the swallow and to the sparrow. To this centre God’s redeemed ones went up to Zion, God’s holy mountain, there to serve Him in happy and holy service, and to walk in uprightness before Him, and to know His goodness in a special way. There they sang:—

"O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: For His mercy endureth for ever" (1 Chron.16:34).

The Lord God is a sun and shield. As sunshine is to all nature, so is the health of His countenance to the upright in heart. He also shields them from all harm. He will give grace and glory. These are gifts. We can no more buy or earn glory than we can earn His grace. Then, as if to show that there is nothing too good for His own, the psalm says: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly". It is in His heart to give, and He cannot and will not withhold Himself from giving: "He giveth more grace". John could say: "Of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace". Grace upon grace, like the waves that roll in upon the shore, one after the other, wave upon wave, from out of the ocean's depth beyond: so grace upon grace is given, rolling upon us out the depths of His eternal love.

Again, we may think of His grace towards us as the gentle showers from heaven, one after the other bringing blessing and fruitfulness, each shower giving evidence that there are more to follow: "No good thing will He withhold". At times we may think certain things would be for our good, for we are short-sighted and of but limited knowledge; but He is perfect, and He will work all things together for good to them that love Him. Let us fulfil our part and walk uprightly, and the Lord will not fail in His. It is not ours, by our own strength, to draw our blessings from the skies any more than it is man's work to bring down the rain. Sufficient is our task to seek, like others have done, to be found "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Lk.1:6) and then the Lord will not withhold Himself from giving to us every good thing.

Extracted from "Jottings", by J. Miller.
Anguish of spirit and cruel bondage (Ex.6:9)

The evidence is undeniable that many thousand fellow-members of the Body of Christ are today knowing deep "anguish of spirit and cruel bondage". They suffer heroically for Christ's sake. We who enjoy freedom to preach the gospel and worship according to our conscience in the light of God's Word should never allow ourselves to forget the afflictions of believers living under the tyranny of oppression.

At intervals, a sensational news item draws fresh attention to the plight of these Christian believers. For instance, last April Georgi Vins, a Baptist pastor, was stripped of Soviet citizenship and exiled to the United States in exchange for two Soviet spies, by agreement between the governments concerned. Two months later all his family were also allowed to join him in the United States. This was rightly welcomed as a remarkable answer to prayer by many who had long been pleading with God for him.

Georgi Vins' release brought further first-hand confirmation of oppressive policies which attempt to grind down Christians who will not compromise by accepting State control of their church services. Vins was himself twice sentenced to imprisonment simply because he preached the gospel of Christ, and insisted that control of the spiritual activities of his church group should be based on God's Word, not on regulations and decrees of the State. He draws a parallel between the trial of the Lord Jesus and the similar methods used by those who interrogate and judge Christians in certain communist courts today. "They use the same methods — slander, falsehood, hatred for God's truth. There is no question of justice. Atheism with power creates tyranny", he says.

Yet despite all this sadness, the glory of God shines out through the magnificent faith of many of these dear sufferers. Their faith rises to say "Thou hast been... a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall" (Isa.25:4). They face their rigorous ordeal in a spirit of patient...
dependence upon God:
"In the fierce hour that trieth the children of men, In the hour of
temptation, Lord, succour us then; Let the weak and the feeble find under
Thine arm, In the blast of the terrible, shelter from storm". May God help
us to a sense of real involvement with our suffering brethren and sisters in
Christ! "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that
are evil entreated, as being yourselves also in the body" (Heb.13:3).
"Christian pity moves our heart through the love of Christ, Others'
woes pierce like a dart, when there's love to Christ... Jesus only
shall we know; and our love to all shall flow In His blood-bought
Church below, For the love of Christ".

Our loving concern for suffering members of the Body of Christ will find
most effectual expression through prayer. For prayer indeed changes
things. With greater earnestness let us seek the seemingly impossible — a
change of policy in the governments concerned so that relief will be brought
to persecuted believers. There is nothing too hard for the Lord!

May we not draw some encouragement to hope and pray for such
changes of government policy from recent developments in China? A great
anti-religious persecution swept that country as communist power prevailed.
During the 1966-69 "Cultural Revolution" Bibles were publicly burned,
church buildings were pillaged, closed down, or turned into warehouses.
Chinese Christians were often tortured or killed if they did not repudiate
their beliefs. They were forbidden to meet together for worship. The work
of God's Spirit nevertheless continued, and many small groups of believers
maintained their secret gatherings over the years. Because of the scarcity of
Bibles they often had to manage with scripture passages painstakingly
written out by hand.

But recently there has been a studied change of policy towards "religion"
by the Chinese Government, in order to promote its ambitious new
economic and social goals. There seems also to be a realization that the
effort to eliminate major religions from China has failed. So the authorities
have "extended the hand of recognition" to China's Christians and other
religious groups. It is early yet to say what degree of toleration this will bring
to Bible-believing Christians. It seems at present likely that the Government
will attempt some measure of control of all religious groups. Nevertheless
there has been a major shift of policy, including a plan to print a revised
edition of the Bible in China.

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Themes from Hebrews
(3) God's House and God's Rest (Heb.3:1-4:13)

By J. K. D. Johnston, of Musselburgh

The early chapters of Hebrews, from which we have been drawing monthly lessons, have brought before us the surpassing glory and greatness of the Son in various aspects. The truths presented to us in chapters 3 and 4 are also seen to be related to the glorious Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parallels and contrasts are drawn between Israel's experience in the past dispensation and the experience of those in the present dispensation to whom the epistle was addressed. Israel were redeemed in Egypt, baptized and separated from Egypt, and constituted the people of God at Sinai on the basis of their obedience to the covenant God made with them. In the outworking of God's purposes relative to Israel Moses played a vital role. He was their apostle, sent to them by God for their deliverance, the mediator of the covenant God made with them, and the channel through whom God communicated His purposes to them. The divine revelation that God gave through Moses had a particular objective; the acquiring of a people for His own possession among whom He could dwell. The faithfulness shown by Moses in supervising the construction of the Tabernacle according to the God-given pattern made the realization of God's cherished desire possible. God had patiently waited for more than 2,500 years of human history to achieve this objective.

Those addressed by the writer of Hebrews had known spiritual experiences that paralleled Israel's, and they formed part of a spiritual house as Heb.3:6 shows. The people of God and the house of God are closely related. In the past dispensation the people provided the material for the construction of the Tabernacle in which God would dwell in their midst (Ex.25:1-8). In the present dispensation those who are constituted the people of God also form His spiritual house (1 Pet.2:5,9). Individual believers are described as living stones, and as such are potential material for the spiritual house, but do not automatically find a place there. Scattered stones or indiscriminate accumulations of stones do not make a house. It is only when stones are built up according to a predetermined pattern that a house is formed; this rule also applies in the realm of spiritual things. Persons, as living stones, must come to Christ, the Chief Corner Stone, and take their place in alignment with Him and in association with other living stones to be built up to form the spiritual house (1 Pet.2:4-7). The tenses used in this passage of Peter's epistle make it plain that the action is a
continuing one. The house of God today is a conditional thing (Heb.3:6) even as the house of God in the past was. The history of Israel demonstrates this. The Tabernacle, constructed in the wilderness, was eventually erected at Shiloh, where it was in the course of time forsaken by God because of serious failure on the part of His people (Ps.78:60). The Temple built by Solomon, and the house built by the remnant were similarly forsaken (Lam.5:20-22; Matt.23:38).

In the spiritual house of God today the authority of Christ is absolute, He is 'Son over God's house', and He serves as high Priest on behalf of the people of God. Our continuing association with Christ as partners in the service of the house of God is, however, dependent upon holding fast our confidence or assurance in relation to these spiritual truths (Heb.3:14).

God, in His dealings with Israel, set apart one day in the week, the Sabbath day, as a day of rest for them (Ex.20:7-11). He also set apart a land, the land of Canaan, as a land of rest for them. Furthermore, He told them that He would choose a place in that land to be the divine centre for their corporate worship and service (Deut.12:5-14), and the place of His rest.

Unbelief prevented the generation that came out of Egypt from entering into God's rest in the land of Canaan. They heard the report of the spies, and heard also the confident exhortations of Joshua and Caleb, but their response was characterized by unbelief and disobedience. They were, therefore, not permitted to enter Canaan, but were turned back to wander and perish in the wilderness. It was the succeeding generation under the leadership of Joshua that entered into the land, but they also failed to possess it fully (Judg. 1:27-36; Heb.4:8). This failure led to the periods of departure and servitude recorded in the book of Judges (Ps.106:34-45).

A brighter day dawned for Israel when David, the man after God's own heart, ascended the throne. He took Jerusalem and the stronghold of Zion from the Jebusites and later had it revealed to him that Zion was the place that God had chosen for His habitation (Ps.132:13,14). Under the leadership of David Israel willingly and obediently embraced the opportunity presented to them to enter into the rest associated with God's house. Thus there was a period of spiritual prosperity in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chron. 29:14).

The record of Israel's failure is set out in the New Testament for the admonition of the people of God of the present dispensation (1 Cor.10:11). Some Hebrew saints had become dull of hearing and retarded in their spiritual development (Heb.5:11-14). The possibility of their falling into the same example of disobedience as Israel because of lack of spiritual diligence was, therefore, very real indeed (Heb.4:11).

We know that in this dispensation history again repeated itself, and the
spiritual house established in the days of the apostles was eventually forsaken by God because of continuing failure and disobedience on the part of His people. They too failed to learn the lessons of history.

God still wants His people to enter into His rest. We are still in the 'today' of opportunity and service. It will be noted that the exhortation, "Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" is given three times (Heb.3:7-8,15; Heb.4:7). To hear the voice of God and obey it, and to continue to do so is vital to the continuing existence of God's house and people, and to the experience of entering into God's rest. To enter into God's rest requires diligence. The entering in is a continuing and progressive action. We may not be fully entering into God's rest although we are numbered among the people of God.

There are several rests referred to in the New Testament Scriptures,

(i) Rest associated with salvation (anapauo — to give rest) (Matt.11:28)
This is a rest for the weary, and it is the portion of the burdened sinner who comes to Christ for salvation. The burden of sin is removed and the sinner is given rest,

(ii) Rest associated with discipleship (anapausis) (Matt.11:29)
This is a rest for the soul obtained through labour. Having been relieved of the crushing burden of sin the believer is invited to take the Master's easy yoke and light burden of service and in doing so he finds rest and refreshment,

(iii) Rest associated with the house of God (katapausis) (Heb.4:3) The two previous aspects of rest are mainly individual experiences but this rest is related to a collective experience. It is this aspect of rest that is under consideration in chapters 3 and 4, a rest for the people of God (Heb.4:9).
It is paralleled with the rest offered to Israel associated with the possession of their inheritance in Canaan, and with the place of God's rest in that land. That rest was related to a collective experience and therefore Joshua and Caleb were hindered for some 38 years from entering into it because of the unbelief of others.

The people of God or God's holy nation to whom the kingdom of God has been given have a present spiritual inheritance which must be possessed by faith and diligent exercise (Matt.21:43; Acts 20:25,32). The kingdom of God, the house of God, the people of God and the rest of God are closely related truths that demand continuing spiritual exercise (Acts 14:22; 1 Pet.2:5; Heb.4:11).

The warning to 'take heed' is a timely one for each of us. There is ever the danger of sin hardening our hearts against the word of God and making us

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The Coming of the Lord

(3) Israel's Coming Confrontation with Messiah

By P. L. Hickling, of Southport

The Background

A future newspaper leading article might read:

"GOOD NEWS FROM ISRAEL — It is a long time since we have been able to write a headline such as this. Since the establishment of the state of Israel there has been tension with her neighbours, and in recent years her strange intransigence in refusing to accept our Leader as head, as the other civilized nations have, has made her somewhat the world's 'problem child'. Happily, this difficulty seems now to have been resolved. Our Leader, to whose wisdom, foresight and generosity we owe the present state of world peace, has now made a solemn and binding agreement with the Israeli government, guaranteeing Israel's territory against attack. We trust that the few who are still resisting our Leader's unification of the financial and religious systems will now be encouraged by his evident benevolence wholeheartedly to support the scheme, which is evidently for the common good".

Thus might the leaders of world opinion express themselves in the period immediately before Christ comes to reign. Scripture teaches that a man, called 'the man of sin' or in allegory 'the beast' will attain world-wide power. He will not initially be a national leader, but will reach his position by smooth talk and a good 'image'. On his way to power he will overcome three national leaders, and once in power his tremendous ability will lead to his recognition as the de facto leader of all nations. From time to time other nations will act autonomously, but such will be the power of the man of sin that he will be able to crush rebellion when it occurs. Although Scripture calls him 'the man of sin' and reveals his evil character, most people will welcome his rule. The chaos and lawlessness of the period leading up to the last days will make people ready to welcome anyone who can impose order on the world. He will be able to organize the financial system of his empire so that no-one will be able to trade unless he has his identity mark. The degree of world-wide control implied by this would have been thought impossible until recently, but the rapid development of computer databases has made it now feasible. The position of Israel will be a problem then, as it is now, but the man of sin, in apparent good will, will make a solemn treaty with the nation, under which they will feel secure.

Parallel with the development of the power of the man of sin, a world
system of religion will develop, initially in cooperation with him. Men will prefer unity, even spurious unity, to truth. The argument 'We all worship the same God, so let us agree to differ on the forms of worship' will carry the day, and men will unite in the nominal worship of the God whose will they ignore. Vast wealth will flow into this Babylon of the future, until the man of sin, and the leaders of the ten nation confederacy which he heads, will feel that their hegemony is threatened. This will lead the man of sin to decisive action to assert his own position.

The Breaking Storm
The man of sin will attack and destroy religious Babylon, and repudiate the covenant with Israel, for his ultimate aim is the recognition of himself as God. It may be difficult, at first sight, to think of a modern ruler making such a claim, but there are trends in present-day thought which lead in this direction. The existence of God is widely denied, and men worship instead the spirit and achievements of the human race. One who represents himself as personifying all that is best in the human race could claim the place of God, and regard as blasphemous traitors those who reject him. The man of sin will enter the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, where some Jews will have re-established worship, and will set up the 'abomination of desolation' in the sanctuary there. This may be either the man himself, or his image, a technological marvel able to speak, installed there by his lieutenant. Here will begin the severest persecution of those who worship God—the 'great tribulation'. Although believers in the Lord Jesus from this present era will have been taken to be with Him, God will have His witnesses, preaching the gospel of the coming kingdom of Christ. Those who believe them will be subjected to severe persecution, and many will lose their lives because of their refusal to worship the man of sin, or take part in his system. The 'gospel of the kingdom' will be particularly directed towards Israel, because God will have resumed his dealings with the Jews as a nation. Scripture mentions 144,000 elect from Israel, who will recognize the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, and preach His coming. Despite their testimony the majority of the Jewish people, feeling secure under the protection of their peace treaty, will reject God's message, but their ease will turn to fear when the 'abomination of desolation' is set up, three and a half years after the making of the treaty, and the man of sin turns on all Israelites, believers and unbelievers alike. The Lord Jesus instructed those who would see the desecration of the temple to leave behind everything and go as refugees into the mountains. The desolate area to the south-east of Israel will be a hiding place for those who obey, and for three and a half years they will be sheltered there. Many Jews will not heed this warning, and against them the man of sin will direct all his forces.
The Great Battle

The small land of Israel will be the focus of the world's greatest display of armaments. However, all will not be harmony between the forces which attack Israel. It appears that the man of sin is himself attacked by forces from the north, but he is able to overcome this threat, and the armies of all nations will join together to crush Israel. The land of Israel will be overrun, and the city of Jerusalem surrounded with armies, who will break into the city, looting its houses and raping its women. A desperate few will hold part of the city, but their defence will be seen as the last stand of a hopeless cause. They will cry to God in their desperation and against all hope deliverance will appear. The heavens will be black, blotting out the sun, moon and stars but the attacking armies will be dismayed by the dazzling glory of the Son of Man, the Messiah. War reporters from the world's television services will train their cameras on the amazing sight, and perhaps by this means, but certainly by supernatural means, "every eye shall see Him." The Lord's feet will touch the Mount of Olives, and as they do so, a tremendous rift valley will open up, giving a way of escape for the beleaguered Jews as the Lord of Hosts turns on His enemies. No human forces will be able to withstand the King of Kings at the head of the armies of heaven. His very word is enough to smite the nations, and with His leadership His armies will utterly destroy the armies of the nations. The battlefield of Armageddon will run with blood, and those who scoffed at the meekness of the Christ will meet the terror of His righteous wrath.

Israel's Reaction

What will be Israel's reaction? With shock they will recognize their Saviour as the One rejected before. Although none will have seen Him previously, recognition will be instant — "they shall look unto Him whom they have pierced." They will see the unmistakable marks of His suffering at the hands of their ancestors, and they will remember with bitterness the words of rejection "we have no king but Caesar," "His blood be on us, and on our children." The trauma will be so great that all thought of public rejoicing at their deliverance will be set aside; even public mourning will be impossible, for none will be able to meet another's eye for shame. Every family will retreat to its private grief before God, for as He pours out "the spirit of grace and supplication" they will make their peace with Him through faith in His Son.

So the great King will take His rightful throne, and begin His thousand years' reign of peace. Resurrected saints from the past will share in this reign, but the Lord will be in the midst of His people Israel again, and they, restored by His grace and power, will serve Him with faithfulness and joy.
The wealth of the nations will pour into Jerusalem, and men shall call it "The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel". We too can look forward to that day with gladness, because Israel's Redeemer is our Redeemer, and we can join with them in saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing".

Scripture references

A Great Work
By David Smith, of Lerwick

When Abraham obeyed to go out of Ur of the Chaldees, he believed what God had said: "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen.12:2); a nation destined to be greater than all other nations. Eventually Abraham's descendants were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt and arrived at Mount Sinai. Here God spoke to them out of the cloud and the thick darkness, and they said, "Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us His glory and His greatness" (Deut.5:24). Although a nation in their own right, yet they did not qualify to be a "holy nation" and a "peculiar treasure" to God on the strength of their numbers. Moses reminded them in the plains of Moab, "The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all peoples: but because the LORD loveth you" (Deut.7:7,8).

Astounding grace indeed that the great God of glory did not choose a numerous people to build for Him a dwelling-place becoming His presence, but He chose the "fewest all peoples". He commanded the law of His covenant, which they instantly accepted, saying "we will hear it, and do it"
(Deut.5:27), whereupon God commissioned them to undertake the most remarkable exercise in their long and eventful history, "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee ..." (Ex.25:8,9) and so, to a divine pattern, the Tabernacle was made. According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. What a noble work to engage that dedicated people as they waited in the desert of Sinai! God's approval of their work was confirmed when "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle". Thus the God of glory, content to dwell within curtains in a portable structure, took up residence among His covenanted people; so Moses could say in truth "the LORD thy God is in the midst of thee, a great God and a terrible".

When Israel eventually reached the land of Canaan, Shiloh in Ephraim was chosen as the Place of God's Name. God still dwelt in the same tent of curtains and sought no loftier building. Never once did He say, "Why have ye not built Me an house of cedar?" (1 Chron.17:6). Sad to relate however, Israel little appreciated the divine Presence in their midst. When the Philistines approached in battle during the days of Eli, his wicked sons foolishly removed the ark from its divinely appointed place and the glory departed. Although the removal of the ark was temporary, not until the days of David was it again given a resting place, this time in Jerusalem where David had pitched for it a tent. It is clear from his words to Nathan that David was not satisfied with this: "Lo, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD dwelleth under curtains". Although the Lord said, "Thou shalt not build Me an house to dwell in" (1 Chron.17:1,4), He approved David's desire, and gave him a pattern for a temple of amazing grandeur. The Lord also gave him a son, Solomon, to arrange the construction of the wonderful building which was, in popular usage, to bear Solomon's name.

From the beginning Solomon realized the immensity of the task assigned to him. "The house which I build is great: for great is our God". Could it be that God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, would dwell with men on the earth? To this question God gave the answer when "the glory of the LORD filled the house" and He said, "Now have I chosen and hallowed this house" (2 Chron.7:16). Solomon finished building the house and also the wall round about Jerusalem, which was equally important, as it enclosed the city and formed a rampart.

But sad days were to come upon Israel. After 416 years the Chaldeans, sent in judgement by the Lord, "burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem" (2 Chron.36:19) and carried away the residue of the people to Babylon.

70 years later a small remnant of the captivity returned to build God's
house. They knew that the LORD hath chosen Zion and desired it for His habitation (Ps.132:13). Although Jerusalem was in ruins it was still the divine centre for the people of God, and there only could they do the will of God in a collective capacity. All the glory of Babylon could not substitute for the glory of God associated with the house of God. They could not sing the songs of Zion in Babylon. "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" (Ps.137:4), they said, realizing that the house of God is the appointed place for the praise and service of God's people.

Back in Jerusalem the remnant proceeded in much weakness to build the house of God and to resume the service of Jehovah, but progress was impeded by adversity and indifference. When the report reached Nehemiah, who was in Shushan, that "the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down", he quickly and humbly sought unto God: "I beseech Thee, O LORD, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God" (Neh.1:3-5). Although evil had befallen Israel, God was still the same. It was the great God as known in former times who prospered Nehemiah in his desire to come to Jerusalem and to "build up the wall". But very soon the subtle hand of the adversary, in the sinister forms of Tobiah and Sanballat, was at work to frustrate and confound Nehemiah's endeavour. When they learned that the wall had been built and "there was no breach left therein" they sent an invitation, "Come let us meet together". Nehemiah very wisely regarded this with suspicion, replying, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down". The greatness of his work was not in the measure of the wall but rather in the purpose for which he laboured, and the value of his work in the sight of God. For God esteems highly any effort made to provide Him a dwelling-place in the midst of his gathered people, however small it might be.

Today many dear Christians sincerely believe that the preaching of the gospel is the greatest work in which they can engage, and anything further such as baptism and church fellowship they regard as a hindrance to that work. God, however, has not left us to decide what is the most important aspect of His work or what to ignore as unimportant. For the Lord Jesus was explicit in the instructions He gave to His disciples before returning to heaven. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt.28:19,20). Clearly these words imply a great deal more than the preaching of salvation by faith. And the Acts and Epistles confirm that those who at the beginning of the present dispensation believed the gospel were baptized in water and added to a church of God, which as a local unit
continued in "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:41,42).

When Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered" (1 Cor.3:6) he referred to the church of God in Corinth which he had been instrumental in planting. It was "God's husbandry, God's building", fitly framed together with the other churches of God extant in that particular period. These formed "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph.2:21). This was a spiritual building, as truly God's dwelling-place on earth as was the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Zion. The pattern for this spiritual house is found in the New Testament and is still relevant.

Although there may be but a small remnant of believers who aspire to conform to this pattern God places a high value on such an endeavour. Apposite are the words of encouragement God gave to the remnant who left Babylon, "Build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified" (Hag.1:8).

The Greatness of Paul

By "Watchman"

"In nothing was I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I am nothing" (2 Cor.12:11). So wrote Paul in reply to his critics in Corinth. His words signify the transparent sincerity of the man, and at the same time uncover the secret of his greatness. On the one hand he was an accredited apostle; on the other, he was "nothing". Always aware of the nobility of the service to which he had been called, yet equally conscious that complete self-effacement was indispensable to the performance of it.

Paul did not indulge in overstatement. There was no mock modesty in the assertion, "I am nothing", it was the sober truth, the self-appraisal of a servant in total slavery to his Master. The Paul we love was not the product of scholarship or self-culture, of intense mental application or mere strength of purpose. If these had been the dominant influences in his training he would have been shaped, no doubt, in the same mould as Gamaliel. The man God fashions must first acknowledge himself to be just what he is — a piece of clay. On the Damascus road the piece of clay that was Saul of Tarsus was taken in hand by the great Master Potter and fashioned into an apostle bearing the image of the Original. The process was severe and
painful; the result exquisite. So complete was the transformation that he
could plead, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1
Cor.11:1).

Paul was badly treated by the Corinthian church. He had been a father to
them, spending himself to the utmost on their behalf. But they were not
worthy of him! There were those who challenged his authority, belittled his
person and cast doubt upon his motives. All this is on record to their shame.
They might of their charity have spared him this needless anguish. We can
trace the hurt as he bares the heartache, "If I love you more abundantly, am I
loved the less?"

A lesser man than Paul might have been provoked to retort in kind. But
like his Master the apostle was content to commit his cause to Him that
judgeth righteously (1 Pet.2:23 RVM). There was no petulance, no self-
pity, no wavering in his love and care for the Corinthian church. "I seek not
yours, but you", he wrote, "and I will most gladly spend and be spent for
your souls" (2 Cor.12:14,15). The greatness of Paul!

"Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises; what are men?"

Shattered lives

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

A large pane of glass intended for a window had fallen and shattered into
thousands of splinters. One moment it was a thing of usefulness, and the
next it was being swept up and dumped as useless. Human lives become
shattered by sin just as easily and quickly; but we must never underestimate
the Lord's ability to renew those lives. Christians sometimes have a
tendency to regard their failing fellows as hopeless, but it is not so with the
Lord. A most encouraging illustration is given by Isaiah for us as well as for
Israel in the earthly days of Messiah. "A bruised reed shall He not break,
and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isa.42:1-3). Many who fit into
these two categories would have met the Lord Jesus in Palestine, but He did
not consign them to the scrap heap. He was in their midst as Jehovah-
Ropheka, the Lord who restores. David rejoiced in this when he wrote in his
shepherd psalm, "He restoreth my soul" (Ps.23:3).
The word bruised indicates a fragile reed, one which cracks into pieces. Is this not what happened to Peter in his denial of the Lord Jesus? And it may be so with us too. "I just fell to pieces" is an oft-quoted confession. We thank God that Peter was restored to strengthen his brethren; and the same has been true with us so that we can be used to restore others. When did I last pray for, or seek out, my brother or sister who had been overtaken in a sin? (See Gal. 6:1). Incidentally, the reed was often made into a pen for writing, or a flute for music. When it became worn or cracked it was thrown away and replaced by another. No attempt was made to restore it. But God's ways are not man's ways, and the divine Restorer is able to make a failing Christian a useful, happy instrument again. Onesimus and John Mark are two who were restored and learned to "burn again" for Him and the testimony.

The prodigal son is still the classic example of man's extremity and God's opportunity. One of Britain's greatest preachers was the worst of reprobates before his conversion. A life of crime, which included gambling and pickpocketing, brought on such remorse that he planned suicide. In the passageway of a rooming-house he was about to kill himself with a revolver when he heard a voice reading in an adjoining room the story of the prodigal son from the Bible. The Spirit used this to prevent the suicide and to bring him to Christ. The former pickpocket, who wore gloves for several years after his conversion to remind him of his once evil practice, was used mightily of the Lord to lead others to the Saviour on both sides of the Atlantic.

The principles of repentance and forgiveness seen in the story of the prodigal son may also be applied to wayward children of God. They may regard themselves as shattered glass, smoking flax, or bruised reeds but scriptural example forbids us to despair concerning them. We must be strengthened by the patience, the expectancy, the forgiveness, and the love of the father in the Lord's parable, and continue to pray steadfastly for them. We must not sin by ceasing to pray for them; we have a responsibility to plead that they will come to themselves, confess their sin, and ask for forgiveness and restoration.

Such was the case with a recent acquaintance of mine. Raised in a Christian home, he was saved, taught in Sunday school, and later youth classes. He was happy in Christian service until one drink of alcohol started him down the slippery slope away from God, home, and friends. "I loved the taste of alcohol" he told me, and the tears appeared as he unfolded his pathetic story. He lost family, jobs, and respectability, but he never lost the assurance that his Christian mother would continue to pray for him. Thank God for patient, persistent, praying mothers! The day the wayward son was
called to the bedside of his dying father he reinforced himself with alcohol to face the ordeal. Too weak to speak, the father pointed to the son and then to heaven. "I knew what he meant", was the comment. Following 8 years of excessive drinking, and 2 years of sobriety after turning to the Lord in repentance, this "prodigal" has returned home. He is alert to the cause of his downfall.

Christians cannot play fast and loose with alcohol any more than with heroin or marijuana. Is there not a solemn warning to us all in the experience of Nadab and Abihu? The warning given to their father Aaron, high priest in Israel, seems to indicate that they were under the influence of alcohol when they offered strange fire (see Lev.10:1-11). Their actions brought shame on their family and their nation. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor.10:12).

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So as we pray for all men, for kings, rulers and those in high place (1 Tim.2:1 -3), let us lay hold on the assurance that the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the watercourses. Shall we not plead with our almighty God that He might move in the Kremlin, in Peking, Bucharest, Tirana, Sofia and all other centres of anti-Christian oppression?

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deaf to its warnings and entreaties so that, instead of 'holding fast', we fall away. There is no possibility of our falling away from our place of eternal security in Christ, but we may fall away from our place of divine blessing and privilege in the service of God. The corrective is found in the day by day exhortation of one another from the word of God, which is 'living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword' (Heb.4:12).
Voices from the Past

Little Things (1)

In these days when science has penetrated into the realm of things unseen by the naked eye, much has been learned of the greatness and power of small things. God has indicated in the Scriptures the value He sets on little things, and has also shown the havoc wrought by things that are small. What care is shown by the Lord in regard to the little ones who believe on Him! Better were it that a man be drowned in the sea, than that he should cause one little believer on Christ to stumble. "See", said He, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt.18:6,10). "Their angels"! What provision is here seen, so that they may not fall a prey to the evils of a sinful world! God has appointed angels to take care of them.

In Lk.12:32 the Lord encourages His little band of followers with the words — "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". In Acts 20:28,29 we have the same diminutive word for flock used by Paul in his address to the elders of the church in Ephesus: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the (little) flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops (or overseers) ... I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the (little) flock". Peter too, as he exhorted the elders, used the same word: "Tend the (little) flock of God ... making yourselves ensamples to the (little) flock" (1 Pet.5:2,3). We have also the word flock (not in its diminutive form) in Matt.26:31 and Jn 10:16, and it is both interesting and important to note the addition the Lord makes to the scripture in Zech.13:7 which He quoted in Matt.26:31, He said — "It is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad". Why did He add the words "of the flock"? The reason is evident, for there were many sheep who were already scattered. These sheep were not "of the flock". It was the sheep that were together under the control of the Shepherd that formed the flock. The Lord died that He might gather together into one God's children that were scattered abroad (see Jn 11:52). This is one of the purposes of the Lord's death which is fulfilled in some of God's children, but, alas! is not fulfilled in them all.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
Problems of the Papacy

During the visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States, he was described by a young American priest as "a flesh and blood Pope... truly a gift of God in this troubled era". Another commentator referred to his "charismatic magic" and his ability to project the Catholic religion as a "happy faith". The immense response when he visited different countries leaves no doubt about the strength of his personality appeal.

Many believers will nevertheless discern from Scripture the unchanged basic principles on which the Roman Catholic faith still rests. The projection of a favourable image to those of other persuasions, and appeals for peace and reconciliation, do nothing to alter the unscriptural foundations of the Papacy and the Catholic Church. That many Catholics are children of God through faith in Christ is not in question. Nor is there doubt that many of them give sacrificial service. But this should not be allowed to disguise the doctrinal errors and false claims which pervade the whole organization. For example, Pope John Paul II is still regarded as "Christ's vicar", the visible head of the Church on earth. When he speaks ex cathedra on matters of faith and morals he is regarded as infallible. The masses which were celebrated in such spectacular settings during his overseas visits still purported to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Enormous sums of money still flow into the treasuries of the Church of Rome under the pretext of promoting forgiveness of sins, or to ensure more limited punishment in a non-existent purgatory. There is continuing need for clear witness to all Bible truth which has been made void by religious tradition.

One purpose of Pope John Paul II's wide-ranging personal appearances has been to rally and inspire Catholic adherents whose loyalties have been under severe strain. On one hand there was the strain of State interference and repression in Eastern Europe: on the other hand the strain of growing dissidence in free societies such as the United States. As one religious correspond-
ent put it: "The issues that divide American Catholics no longer follow the old fault lines between liberals and conservatives; instead they radiate in all directions, like cracks in a shattered windshield".

A cause of unrest has been the Papacy's inflexible opposition to contraception. Several years ago, when Pope Paul VI issued an encyclical banning contraception, several theologians at the Catholic University of America in Washington publicly dissented. On this subject it has been said that a "guerilla type warfare" has been going on inside the Catholic Church. Polls of Catholic opinion apparently suggest that the "guerillas" have already won this battle. The rights or wrongs of the subject are not here under discussion, but attention is drawn to the challenge to papal authority.

Another source of dissatisfaction springs from a form of women's liberation movement among American Catholic women. They resented the Vatican's decision that only priests would be allowed to distribute communion at the Pope's masses when he was in the United States. In some quarters there is a demand for the ordination of women as priests. In favour of this one younger American Catholic theologian is reported as saying: "Most scholars see no theological or scriptural barrier to the ordination of women ... I hope the Pope will prove sensitive to this issue, however strange it may seem against his background in the Polish church". In this connexion it is relevant that trainees for the Catholic priesthood in the United States during 1978 numbered less than a quarter of those who were training in 1965!

A quite different feature illustrates still further the great changes of attitude within the Catholic Church. For there has developed widespread interest in the so-called charismatic gifts, such as speaking in tongues and prophesying. In North America it is estimated that about half a million Catholics have engaged in Pentecostal-type prayer groups, involving charismatic experiences. Perhaps by this means many find a supplement to the formalism and ritual which must be so unsatisfying.

Do these trends have any significance in the light of Scripture? It would at least seem that the Papacy is having to re-think its traditional policies and adjust to some degree of flexibility. On his visit to Turkey (Nov. 1979), the Pope not only sought some basis of accommodation with the Eastern Orthodox Church, but also hinted at dialogue with Islam as well. May all this be a pointer towards a great world religious system as symbolized in the "great harlot that sitteth on many waters" (Rev.17:1)? It is held by many that the harlot represents such an organization at the time of the end, supported at first by the authority of the Beast (the Antichrist) and his associates. The Beast will presumably come to power in alliance with the

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Themes from Hebrews

(4) High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek

(Heb.4:14-5:11 and Heb.6:13-7:28)

By J. W. Archibald, of Wembley

The people of God are blessed beyond measure in having a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Throughout their earthly experience the saints of God are beset by temptation and difficulty and the way is often hard. In heaven there is One who fully understands earthly difficulties and human frailty because He has been here and because He is Man. His ceaseless activity as High Priest before God enables His people to overcome in all circumstances. It is because we have such a High Priest that we are able to draw near with boldness to the throne of grace. What a powerful answer to human need is access to the supreme throne where, because it is the throne of God, there is absolute power and ultimate authority! But to His people it is the throne of grace. For them at the throne there is infinite mercy as well as infinite power and the supreme authority is graciously exercised. And this is so only because of our great High Priest.

It is a blessed fact that Jesus the Son of God has passed through the heavens. He passed through when He emptied Himself and became man, and He passed through when He was highly exalted after the death of the cross (Phil.2:6-9). He has known utter humiliation and He enjoys supreme triumph. The great High Priest is not One who has never left heaven. He has been taken from among men and appointed for men in things pertaining to God. It is most reassuring for the people of God that though they are of mankind, with all its limitations, there is continually in the presence of God a Man who is Himself the Son of God.

Our great High Priest has His priesthood by divine decree. The writer to the Hebrews quotes from Ps.110, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." Here again the throne and the priest are associated. The decree is announced at the heart of a psalm whose subject is messianic rule and kingship. Amid all the honour with which God has delighted to honour His Son He has determined that this precious office and title should belong to the Son, "A priest for ever" and this has all the permanence of the divine oath, "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent" (Ps.110:4).

Let us now examine the style of Melchizedek's priesthood. Melchizedek was a king. His name means king of righteousness and he is also described
as king of Salem which is king of peace. During the turbulent history of mankind there have been many kings and rulers in whose hands the divinely constituted authority has been badly abused. Even the king who wrote Ps.110 said, "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps.51:3) and although he reigned in Jerusalem he could not be described as a king of peace. There is only One who could ever fulfil the Melchizedek type and in Him we see not only the majesty of the full expression of divine authority but also the exercise of perfect judgement and the benign rule that alone can bring peace to troubled men. Of Him the prophet said, "He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne: and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech.6:13).

Melchizedek is designated the priest of God Most High. The title Most High is often used in the Scriptures to emphasize the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men and in particular in His dealings with the opponents of His purposes. David says, "the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the lovingkindness of the Most High he shall not be moved. Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies; Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee" (Ps.21:7,8). Again, the sons of Korah, "O clap your hands, all ye peoples; ... For the LORD Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth" (Ps.47:1,2). Nebuchadnezzar was taught that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will (Dan.4:32). We note in passing that the demons also used this title (see Mk.5:7 and Acts 16:17).

Coming now to Gen.14, we find the account of Melchizedek's priestly ministry on Abram's behalf. Abram was returning, successful and triumphant from his battle with the four kings. Two men went out to meet him on his return. One was the king of Sodom and the other was the king of Righteousness who was also the priest of God Most High. Melchizedek reached Abram first. Thank God that in the hour of our need, our great Priest can be relied upon to reach us first! He is unfailing in His care and untiring in His watchfulness over His own. To the spiritually unenlightened it would seem to be the time when Abram was least in need, but it is important to recognise that the victorious return provided an opportunity for the Adversary to destroy Abram's separation to God and involve him in the society of Sodom by enriching him at the hand of Sodom's king. Sodom's wealth can only be enjoyed in Sodom's society. Often in our case too we are spiritually most vulnerable when things seem to be going well. Of the seven churches in Asia to whom John wrote, the one in most lamentable case was Laodicea where the saints felt that they were rich and had need of nothing. Self-satisfaction is one of the most crippling and deadly
spiritual diseases. It is very comforting to reflect that our High Priest knows us very well and is never unaware of our danger. The ministry of Melchizedek gave to Abram the perspective he needed to enable him to resist the temptation. "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen.14:19). In the light of the greatness and the sovereignty of God, what was the value of all Sodom's wealth to the man who enjoyed the richest promise that God has ever given to man? (Gen.12:3).

Another feature of the priesthood of Melchizedek is that in the scriptural presentation of his priestly office he had no predecessor and no successor. It is witnessed of him that he "abideth a priest continually" and in this too he is a type of the Son of God. The Lord Jesus is unique. No other could ever have filled His priestly office and His tenure of it is eternal. Indeed this is one of the striking differences from the Aaronic priesthood. The order of Aaron was supported by a carnal commandment; carnal in the sense that the office of the priest was affected by the fleshy characteristics of the incumbent. Eli became an old priest and a blind priest whose priesthood was terminated by the judgement of God (I Sam.4:15-18). In contrast to that sad example, the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is in the power of an indissoluble life. Our High Priest has His priesthood unchangeable because He lives for ever.

As we thus consider the completeness or perfection of our great High Priest we become aware that in His completeness are elements that have been attained at tremendous cost. "Though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered". The Author of our salvation was made complete through sufferings. The One who makes intercession for us has in person plumbed the depths of human pain and anguish. In the glory of heaven His person bears the disfigurement that men inflicted in the day of His greatest suffering and sorrow. As He pleads for those whose iniquity was laid upon Him at Calvary, His wounds render the pleading complete.

The High Priesthood of Christ affords us not only present comfort and sustenance but also future hope. This hope acts as an anchor of the soul because it is "a hope both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil". There are saints of God whose spiritual lives and witness are firm and strong as a rock. Their faith seems unshakable and their strength is a source of support and encouragement to others. The reason is that they have cast their anchor inside the veil. They have assimilated in a very real way the hope that springs from the recognition that the High Priest is our forerunner in that blessed place. One day soon He will come out from within the veil and, having gathered His own, the dead and the living, He will take us in to stay, and our stay will be for ever. This is a hope that is both sure 

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Contemporary Issues in Christian Life
(1) The Christian and Politics

By L. Burrows, of Kingston upon Thames

The churches of God, who publish this magazine, have always taught that the disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ ought not to engage in politics or vote in political elections. In this article we propose to look at some of the scriptural principles on which this teaching is based, and their bearing on present day conditions. The first and most important consideration is:

The nature of the Christian's call to service

The New Testament says nothing directly about political activity for the disciple, but much about divine service. The Great Commission (Matt.28:18-20) is uncompromising; the Lord Jesus said: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you". There is a great work to be done by all who would follow in the footsteps of those eleven early disciples who heard the Lord announce this great new service under His own supreme authority. The work of making disciples, baptizing them and teaching the Lord's will for them is very demanding in terms of time and effort. In studying the New Testament, especially the epistles, we find a great deal about discipleship, and in particular how the believer should serve God in the context of the churches of God in the Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor.1:2,9). Alongside this it is also taught that in the normal course of events the adult disciple should take regular employment, so that he may not be a burden to others, but be able to support any family or dependants he may have, and contribute towards the expenses of the churches of God and any poor in them, not forgetting to do good to all men (Gal.6:10). In so doing he will maintain a good testimony to those around him (Acts 18:1-4; 2 Thess.3:8-12). It is clear that the kind of employment envisaged here is in order that we may "eat bread", that is, gain a livelihood. It goes hand in hand with spiritual pursuits, is subsidiary to them and has no political objective.

In the New Testament the Christian believer is regarded as a pilgrim passing through this world. Abraham was perhaps the greatest exponent of the pilgrim life, living in tents and looking for the eternal city.
(Heb.11:8-10). In contrast his nephew Lot longed after material ease and an earthly city. He got what he wanted, became involved in politics and found to his disappointment that he could not influence for good his wicked neighbours (2 Pet.2:6-8). Eventually he lost all his possessions and became a cave-dweller. But Abraham decided to avoid worldly involvement. He turned to God in times of difficulty, and through his supplications Lot's life was preserved when the Cities of the Plain were destroyed by divine judgement (see Gen.13,14,18,19); truly a clear lesson for today!

Paul tells us to "set our minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth" (Col.3:2). He directs our minds heavenward because Christ is there and our citizenship is there (Phil.3:20). "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (Heb.13:13,14). The word "city" (Gk. polis) is an interesting one and its meaning may be of some help in our present study. In the New Testament it denotes a walled town with its own local government structure. From polis is derived a group of English words, including police, metropolis, politics. The derivation of the word politics is not difficult to trace. Leading men of a city would meet from time to time to make suitable arrangements for the conduct of the affairs of the city. They engaged in politics. The wider meaning understood today would naturally follow. In Phil.3:20 the related word "citizenship" (Gr. politeuma) is used with reference to the life of the city dweller. Paul is here speaking of the heavenly destiny and heavenward attitude of mind of the true believer and exposing the error of those who are preoccupied with material things. In Paul's own words, "their god is their stomach" (NIV); he calls them enemies of the cross of Christ.

The lesson of history
A fashionable political philosophy maintains that, if the environment is improved, people will be happy and less disposed to crime. This theory ignores the plain facts of the present as well as of the past. In western lands greater affluence has been accompanied by increased crime. Violence of all kinds is the despair of every order enforcing authority, and moral problems have never been so widespread as they are today. Every possible variety of political programme has been tried, but all have failed miserably. Sin always intervenes to spoil the most hopeful of schemes. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast: man never is, but always to be, blessed" wrote the eighteenth century poet Pope, with remarkable insight.

Politicians often labour heroically and thanklessly in pursuit of peace and prosperity. Credit is due to them for their dedication, but failure is in the
long ran inevitable. The difficulties are too great for human solutions, for man's root problem is the condition of his heart, which is fouled with sin. There is no possibility of bringing peace and contentment to our society until greed and covetousness have been eliminated. These woes are innate in man and before wider problems can be approached with any possibility of success there must be the individual cleansing of human hearts. Only the personal experience of the new birth can accomplish this (Jn 3:1-16). That is why Christ went to Calvary, and that is why the gospel is preached. The Son of God did not stoop to manhood and die on the cross as the Sin-bearer for a mere political objective. It was to deal once for all with the all-important, all-embracing problem of sin. And so we return to the point we began with: the Great Commission. The only way to bring lasting good to our fellow men is through the gospel. It is no mere palliative; it goes right to the root of the problem.

The argument from prophecy

Even the casual reader of the book of Revelation cannot but be impressed by the dramatic course of events depicted in its prophecies. Much of the imagery may be difficult to understand, but clearly running through the later chapters of the book can be seen the parallel themes of man's mounting opposition to God and the increasing severity of divine judgements on man. Furthermore, in the book of Daniel there are prophetic passages which depict successive world empires dominating men throughout the ages and attempting to challenge divine authority (Dan.11:36) until the Son of Man is given the dominion and establishes His everlasting kingdom (Dan.7:13,14). World empires are similarly portrayed in Revelation as culminating in an organization, sometimes referred to by present day writers as the ten kingdom confederacy, led by a king with Satanic power who will oppose God (Rev.17:8-18). This man will hold sway for a time over the whole world, but he and his centre of administration, Babylon (Rev.18), will be quickly engulfed in a conflagration of divine judgement. Scripture so depicts the great political and religious systems of earth becoming crystallized into one anti-God movement with its centre in rebuilt Babylon. When this world empire reaches the zenith of its power it will be suddenly crushed, completely wiped out, and replaced by a righteous kingdom, enduring for ever, with the Lord Jesus Christ as its King.

Can the Christian support, or vote into power, governments which, according to Scripture, must be at least precursors of the doomed Satanic confederation referred to in the previous paragraph?
Concluding remarks

Involvement of the believer in politics is thought by some to be justified by such scriptures as, "let us work that which is good toward all men" (Gal.6:10). But the verse is to be read in the context of service in churches of God. The conditions which govern the exhortation are plainly stated. Firstly, "as we have opportunity", that is, not as a top priority and not on an organized basis. Secondly, "especially toward them that are of the household of the faith", surely not a mandate to engage in secular political activity! Examples showing the personal nature of the good works envisaged in this scripture are to be found in the word of God. The work of Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43) is eminently worthy of imitation. There is a place for good works in the life of every disciple. Giving a helping hand to those he comes in contact with as occasion presents itself has been found to be a successful method of establishing mutual confidence and rendering an approach to spiritual things possible. In this way the main objective of bringing the gospel to acquaintances can be pursued.

The New Testament sets out clearly what the relationship of the Christian to political systems ought to be. He must be "in subjection to the higher powers" for they "are ordained of God". "Render unto all their dues", writes Paul, "tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom.13:1-7). Finally, we have the high privilege of praying for "kings and all that are in high place" (1 Tim.2:1-7). Thus we have access to the court of heaven, where ultimate power over earthly kingdoms resides. God in His sovereignty is bringing to fruition His eternal purposes. In this perspective the greatest of men are of small power, but the believer in prayer has power with God. Our attendance at the prayer meeting will have a greater influence for good in world affairs than attendance at the polling booth.

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and steadfast and those who cherish it will inevitably display its steadfast-ness in their service. If our eye is on our forerunner then some of His glorious qualities will begin to express themselves in our character. In this happy process also our High Priest will come to our aid.

Truly blessed are those who have such a High Priest, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.
The Holy Scriptures

(1) God's Self-Revelation

By D. T. Hyland, of Middlesbrough

God is almighty and omniscient; His thoughts are on a higher plane than those of men, for He said to Israel through the prophet Isaiah, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9). Apart from divine revelation, man is completely out of his depth when attempting to investigate spiritual truth. Job's friend posed the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job 11:7). Until the Creator discloses Himself, He is inaccessible to His creatures. The initiative is God's and He chooses the medium of revelation. In His own time and way God illuminates the darkened minds of men. Man is first of all a recipient of God's self-revelation, and then under the guidance of the Spirit of God he may become a channel of revelation to others.

The possibility of a divine self-revelation has been questioned and even denied. How can the infinite communicate with the finite? Can human language be the vehicle for the expression of thoughts which originate in the mind of Deity? The problems posed in these questions are of man's making, for to doubt the possibility of divine revelation is to imply a limit to God's power. But God is omnipotent; as the Creator He knows what man is capable of receiving and acting on. In His loving wisdom God can find ways of revealing Himself and communicating His will.

Some critics have stated that there is no such thing as verbal or recorded revealed truth. God reveals Himself in acts, they say. This is of course true, but they go on to deny that Scripture is God's self-revelation. The Bible, they claim, is the record of man's understanding of the significance of the acts of God. According to this view the Bible is not revelation and has not the authority of absolute truth. Each generation, they say, must make its own assessment of the worth of Scripture. They erroneously teach that, like all man's works, the Bible is fallible and inaccurate.

Scripture teaches that God reveals Himself in His mighty works and redemptive acts but God does not leave men to guess the significance of His actions. The oral and written messages of prophets and apostles illuminate the significance of divine acts for Scripture is God's verbal revelation.

Before the Fall there was no barrier to communion between man and his Creator. The environment in which the first pair was placed bore eloquent testimony to the Creator's power and wisdom, and creation still declares
God's glory: how much more the un-cursed earth into which sin had not entered! But the man also received a verbal revelation. "The LORD God commanded the man saying..." (Gen.2:16). The man and his wife were accustomed to hearing "the voice of the LORD God... in the cool of the day" (Gen.3:8). When Adam disobeyed the command of God, sin intruded into his life and affected his relationship with God. Since the Fall, God's self-revelation has in view man's redemption and restoration to fellowship with Himself. In revelation God works to bring men back to Himself and prepare them for service in this life and for life in the world to come.

After the Fall there were men to whom God revealed Himself in a special way. Enoch "walked with God"; Abraham became "the friend of God"; God spoke with Moses "face to face". God revealed Himself through His servants the prophets; the visions and oracles they received were to be announced. They were to be declared so that God's will could be known and done. They had authority to prefacing their oral messages with, "thus saith the LORD". When, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, they committed their messages to writing, they conveyed a revelation from God which will remain for ever. Amos was aware that he was a channel of divine revelation. "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Moreover, there were occasions when the prophets realized that the full significance of what they wrote would be revealed to a future generation (1 Pet.1:10-12).

Since God's purposes in revelation are progressive, divine truth has not been disclosed all at once. Revelation through the prophets was partial and intermittent but it was moving towards a climax: "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son" (Gal.4:4). God's purposes in revelation reach finality in the Word Incarnate, the Son of God who has revealed and declared the Father. The person and work of Christ and apostolic testimony to Him in the New Testament are God's final words to men.

There are theologians who say that the only material in Scripture that is revelational is that which deals with the spiritual life of man. They teach that the Bible is only revelation when it does not touch on history or the material universe. But if the Bible is not reliable in what it says about the material universe, is it likely to be reliable in what it says about man's relationship to God? The Bible has a great deal to say about the life of man in the world to come. It is totally inconsistent to concede that this is revelation and yet challenge the accuracy of those parts of Scripture which deal with historical matters. The Bible is revelational on whatever matters it touches.

Now, divinely disclosed truth demands a response from man. The reception of a divine revelation makes men accountable, for increased light
brings increased responsibility. Divine enlightenment places obligations on man to respond in obedience. Thus when the prophet Micah was revealing God's will for His people he made it clear that God requires a response. "What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic.6:8).

Scripture is "God's word written" and men should use all their ransomed powers to explore what God has been pleased to reveal. But in some areas of truth there comes a point beyond which enquiry is unprofitable. The truth of the incarnation is a case in point. There has been a great deal of speculation as to how Mary conceived of the Holy Spirit. But when Mary heard the most astounding news that ever fell on human ears she asked but one question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Lk.1:34). The reply, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee", was sufficient for Mary. She resigned herself to the will of God. We shall do well to leave the issue where Mary left it, for speculation where Scripture is silent is futile. As Moses said, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever (Deut.29:29).

"Fret not Thyself"

By J. Taylor, of Crowborough

The writer of Ps.37 looks over his past life and its times of adversity and, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, passes on words of wisdom, as relevant today as they were when they were written.

If anyone had cause to fret or worry it must surely have been David. In his early days he was persecuted and pursued over the mountains and hills by Saul and his men. In later life he had the sad experience of being driven out by his own son but through all these experiences he was sustained by the unfailing faithfulness of the Lord in whom he trusted.

It is interesting to notice how many times in this and other Psalms David uses the exhortation, "Trust in the LORD" or similar expressions. There were, as we can well discern from the Psalms he wrote, times when he was in the depths of despair and on one occasion he said, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam.27:1). However, the Lord sustained and preserved him, and he could say, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round
about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Ps.34:7). And so, reflecting on these things he wrote, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread" (Ps.37:25). But in this Ps. David is not so much dwelling on his own past troubles. Rather is he concerned with the moral depravity of man, and the sad departure from God and His standards. He is concerned with the apparent prosperity of evil men who seem to bring their corrupt plans to fruition. In another Ps. he voices his concern in these words, "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Ps.12:1).

Elijah felt something of this too, when in his fit of depression he said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars . . . and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kgs.19:10). He was to learn later that he was not after all the only one left, for the Lord revealed to him that there were many more faithful ones, of whom he knew nothing. The Lord said to Elijah, "Yet will I leave Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him".

Is it any wonder that we may sometimes feel as this man of old did? Elijah, and David too, were men "of like passions with us" (Jas.5:17). As we look around us we see on every hand signs of depravity and departure from God. Things which were once acknowledged to be sinful (a very much ridiculed word in the world today) are now tolerated or even openly encouraged. We see the evil purposes of men being put into operation, and we may feel like saying, with David, that the godly men are ceasing. However, there are undoubtedly many more redeemed souls than we with our limited experience imagine. We can rest assured that, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim.2:19).

What we see going on around us today should come as no surprise, for the Lord has told us in His Word that "evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse" (2 Tim.3:13). We are living in the last days (2 Tim.3:1-8) and very soon the Lord will return to take to Himself all who belong to Him. He will then deal with all that now corrupt the earth, and those who "work unrighteousness... shall be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (Ps.37:1-2).

In the light of all this, what should we be found doing? David, in the Spirit, gives us the answer, "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil-doing" (Ps.37:7,8).
What *did* happen to the shields?

By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

They were of immense value, and they hung for years on the walls of Solomon's sumptuous palace in the woods. There were 300 shields in all, and each weighed three "minas" (about 10 lb.—1 Kgs.10:17). They were made of fine gold, and at today's value one of those shields would be worth about £43,000, or $100,000. Three hundred shields, then, represented a fortune of £13,000,000 or $30,000,000. The golden shields might have been to Solomon a symbol of divine protection. The Hebrew word used here for shield is the same as that used in God's promise to Abram. "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen.15:1). The meaning of the word is strength, protection, defence against an enemy.

Solomon's reign ended in decline and there was no improvement in the spiritual condition of Judah during the reign of his son, Rehoboam. "And Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, above all that their fathers had done" (1 Kgs.14:22). Their evil included the worshipping of idols in secluded places, the tolerance of homosexual acts, and many other abominations learned from the nations around. It is no surprise therefore to know of the ease with which Egypt's king Shishak invaded Jerusalem, robbing the Temple of its treasures and stripping the walls of Solomon's house of its 300 shields of fine gold. Where were the guardians of the king's domain while this was going on? What happened to the shields? Taken back to Egypt, no doubt, and used for the boastful claim of the enemy's prowess over a weakened people of God. And what did Rehoboam do? Replace the shields? Yes, but not with fine gold. He had shields made of copper, and they did not fill the empty place on the walls of the king's house, but were kept in the chamber of the guards. There is no record of their active use against an enemy (1 Kgs.14:25-28); and no attempt appears to have been made to recover the original shields. Such was the debilitated physical and spiritual health of the king and his people.

There must be a lesson in this for those who belong to the Israel of God today (Gal.6:16). Our battles are spiritual, and are against the hosts of wickedness guided by God's arch-enemy, Satan. Our shields are the visible testimony to our faith in a living Lord who is able to keep us, protect us, guard us. How is this possible? By living for Him through the power of His word and the help of the Spirit. Are our shields, the symbols of our trust in God, on display? Or have they been torn down by the enemy? Have they...
been replaced by something inferior which we keep handy if needed? The king of Egypt is an illustration of Satan in his control of society, "the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 Jn 5:19). By subtle attractions, and keeping us preoccupied with things material, he is endeavouring to break down our dependence on the Lord. He wants to deprive us of our benefits in Christ. If he can snatch away our faith, our joy, our loyalty to the Truth; if he can encourage us to neglect prayer, assembly gatherings, spiritual exercises, distributing leaflets, caring for a young people's class, and reading the word; he will replace these things of eternal value with those of less importance. It will not be long then before it is evident that he has captured our shield of fine gold.

It is so easy for spiritual anaemia to afflict us all in these demanding days with their tension and pressure. Instead of being a people capable of doing exploits, we can quickly deteriorate into a people interested only in doing a minimum. What happened to Solomon's shields is not now of great importance; but we should know about our own shield. Is it in its place? Have I checked lately? Has it been displaced? What is filling that gap on the wall? Serious questions for us all to answer.

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...religious organization, but once established he will destroy it. This will doubtless be necessary to attain his objective of exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (2 Thess.2:4).

If, as we believe, the last days of the present age of grace are upon us, it seems significant that pressures from without and within the Roman Church are influencing the Papacy to adopt the role of unifier of religion on a world-wide scale. The Lord's coming to the air will remove from the world all true believers who are members of the Church which is His Body. Secularized religious organizations will then even more rapidly find common ground for world-wide unity. Meantime Christians loyal to their Master's word will feel the force and relevance of His challenging command:

"Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins" (Rev.18:4).
Voices from the Past

Little Things (2)

The Lord did not love and choose Israel because they were more in number than other peoples, "for" He said, "ye were the fewest of all peoples" (Deut.7:7). But they seemed a great host in contrast to the one hundred and twenty with whom the Lord Jesus began in this dispensation (Acts 1:15).

It was truly a little flock. Many children of God were not of the number, yet their absence did not retard the progress of the work which began with the few who were together, who were as one man, a unity of which David in Ps.133:1 sang many centuries previously.

In the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, the time of the prophecy of Amos, God was punishing His people for their sin, but the prophet sought divine mercy for them — "O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech Thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small". Twice he said the words — "How shall Jacob stand? for he is small" and twice God repented of the evil and said that it should not be. Jacob was ever small in comparison with the nations around. He could stand when God was with him, but how could he stand if God were against him in a cold and antagonistic world?

But when we come to the time of the return of the remnant from Babylon, that was indeed a day of small things! As though to dissipate the gloom that had settled down on many because of the opposition that had been experienced in seeking to build the Lord's house, God challenges those who would despise the work of a feeble remnant: "Who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zech.4:10). Old men wept, those who had seen the Solomonic temple, when they saw the foundation of the temple the remnant laid, but young men rejoiced, those whose vision had not been dimmed by the glamour of the glory of former days. That glory, like a faded flower, had gone, never to return to a house of remnant testimony; that glorious house was but a memory. Men cannot live on what their fathers have told them of what God did in their day, that is only a help if such like work (though it may be smaller) is carried on in the living present.

We want to be men who preach the old doctrines with a freshness and living power that will warm the dying embers in the hearts of God's saints, that will cheer them with a Haggai ministry. "I am with you, saith the LORD of Hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and My Spirit abideth among you: fear ye not" (Hag.2:4,5 RVM).

Extracted from Jottings by J. Miller.
"Feet, part of iron, and part of clay" (Dan.2:33)

The image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was mighty, its brightness excellent, its aspect terrible. The head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of bronze and the legs of iron were significantly distinguished from the feet. For the feet and toes were not of one material. They were partly of iron and partly of clay, materials which do not mix.

When interpreting the dream, Daniel identified Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold, a monarch to whom God had granted absolute power. There was to follow an "inferior kingdom", which would be succeeded by the kingdom of bronze; and the fourth kingdom was of iron because it would break in pieces and crush. These three parts of the image seem clearly to represent the Medo-Persian, Grecian and Roman empires, which succeeded one another in leadership of Gentile dominion. Roman power still obtained at the time of Israel's rejection of her Messiah. As a result of this rejection Israel was set aside as a nation and scattered into captivity.

The feet of the image relate to the time of the end, when Gentile dominion will again vitally affect Israel in her restored nationhood. Already we have seen the historic miracle of Israel's restoration to her land as an independent nation. The political structure of Gentile power is now being moulded by the great Potter of the nations towards the crisis of the time of the end. We are probably witnessing the formative stage of a process through which will emerge the great ten-kingdom confederacy represented by the ten toes of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The ten kings of this confederacy are seen in different imagery in Dan.7:24, where it is shown that they will arise out of the kingdom represented by the fourth beast of Daniel's vision. This beast, like the legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image, represents the Roman empire. So it is reasonable to deduce that the end-time confederacy will develop in the area of that ancient empire. This strikingly points to the likelihood that the present European Economic Community is the precursor of the
coming ten-kingdom confederacy, which will be the power-base of Anti-
christ's world dominion.

As believers in this age of grace we await the return of the Lord Jesus to
the air for His Church before the time of the end and the manifestation of
Antichrist. But do we not already see portents of "feet and toes, part of iron,
and part of clay"? For Daniel's interpretation shows that the mixture of iron
and clay denotes a divided kingdom (Dan.2:41); a kingdom partly strong
and partly brittle (Dan.2:42); a kingdom with ethnically mixed
relationships, but no inherent unity of principle (Dan.2:43). The present
European Economic Community shows just such characteristics. Some
member states are weak and some are strong, both in terms of political
authority and economic resource. Local national interests often take
precedence over loyalty to the common cause, leading to frequent
quarrelling over such matters as fishing rights, agricultural policies, oil
distribution and financial adjustments. There is nothing answering to the
strong authoritative union illustrated by the gold, silver, brass and iron of
ancient empires.

These very characteristics of the end-time confederation will play into
the hands of the contemptible one who "shall obtain the kingdom by flat-
teries" (Dan.11:21), who "through his policy shall cause craft to prosper in
his hand" (Dan.8:25). Such scriptures suggest that by astute diplomacy
and statecraft the Antichrist will play off one against another until his
authority within the confederation is established. Then as a result of his
political brilliance, control of terrorising power (Rev.13:4; Dan.11:39) and
signs and lying wonders (2 Thess.2:9), he will be able for a time to hold
together the confederation of "iron and clay". Its united resources will be
deployed to achieve world-wide control (Rev.13:7).

Doubtless there will be many political changes within the European
Economic Community as events are processed towards the final end-time
formation of the ten-kingdom confederacy. At present the Community has
ten member states. This grouping may well be radically altered in the final
event. Dan.7:24 would suggest that at a very late phase Antichrist will
himself put down three of the ten kings in his own bid for supremacy.
Whatever the re-groupings, the mixture of "iron and clay" will prevail.

If Scripture indeed sheds this light on modern developments in Europe,
how deeply significant it is! For of the period represented by the "feet and
toes, part of iron, and part of clay" we read: "In the days of those kings shall
the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, nor
shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in
pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan.2:44). As world events move forward to that glorious day, "Amen,
come Lord Jesus" is the prayer of many hearts.
Although the Lord Jesus is named a priest after the order of Melchizedek, His present ministry on behalf of the people together for God is presented in the Hebrews epistle as similar in certain respects to that of Aaron. The imagery permeating the whole letter is of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

Throughout Hebrews prominence is given to the priest and his work rather than to the people and their service, for without the high priest there could be no offering of divine service by the people of God (Heb.12:28). Aaron is mentioned in chapter 9 in connexion with the rod that was laid up before the Lord and which budded (Num.17:7-10). This miraculous demonstration of divine power confirmed to Korah and his fellow dissidents that the priesthood was vested in the family of Aaron (who was of Amram rather than of Izhar, the father of Korah) through Levi (Ex.6:18-21). Furthermore, it foreshadowed in type the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and His appointment to an order of priesthood superior to that of the Aaronic order. The author of Hebrews uses what is written concerning the Aaronic priesthood to draw valuable teaching for God's people today. It must be borne in mind that the order of that priesthood was in every way inferior to the order of Melchizedek's priesthood, after which Christ was called in an eternal appointment.

Aaron is the head of the old order. He and his sons in perpetuity were chosen for the priesthood (Ex.28) prior to the setting aside of the firstborn sons (Ex.32; Num.3:12). He had a ministry to accomplish on behalf of the people of Israel who were under covenant to God (Ex.24). Under his priesthood with its teaching ministry the nation of Israel received the law with its precepts, statutes and judgements.

Enshrined within the canon of the law was an order of sacrifice through which the high priest, representing the people, drew near to God in His holy dwelling place, the Tabernacle. In the yearly calendar of service, the Day of Atonement (Lev.16), was an event unparalleled in importance among the festivals of Jehovah (Lev.23). The high priest on that day entered into the very presence of God, into the Holy of holies within the veil, where God dwelt between the cherubim upon the mercy-seat. There, upon the lustrous gold, he sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. The sanctuary, the priest and the people were cleansed on this solemn occasion. On the basis of the sin-offering, and on
that alone, would God continue with a people covenanted to Himself (Heb 9:13-10:4) for yet another year.

This is the backdrop to the Hebrews epistle, and should we fail to comprehend it much of the preciousness and value of the present ministry of Christ in heaven as a high priest on behalf of a people for God will, we suggest, be missed.

The propitiatory work of Aaron was repetitive and of annual value only (Heb.10:1). There was no perfection through the ministry of the Levitical priesthood as touching the cleansing of the conscience of the worshipper, even though embodied in that order of things was the essence of God's revelation of Himself as Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God.

It is clear that the Aaronic order was not the final phase in the progressive revelation to men by God regarding truly acceptable service. The need for another priest to arise was evident, and with that event a change also in the instrument of rule. Men are now answerable to the principles and doctrines embodied in the faith (Jude 1:3). Under the old order the imperfections of the people, in respect of service and worship, and the inadequacy of the sacrifices to deal with sin (Heb.8:7,8) were clearly in evidence. Therefore the priesthood of Christ is associated with higher things, with the true (abiding) tabernacle in heaven itself. The Lord could not be a priest on earth, His lineage through Judah would not allow of this. By the word of the oath (in contrast to a carnal commandment) He has been appointed a priest eternally in resurrection, after the order of Melchizedek.

The vital elements of the Lord's priestly activities are given in Heb.8:1-3. Having entered in once for all into the holies (an action foreshadowed by the entry of Aaron into the Holy of holies in a cloud of incense on the Day of Atonement) the Lord is described as a minister both of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.

Aaron never sat down in the sanctuary. God's just demands on His ancient people Israel would not permit of such an action. The "affliction of soul" continued annually through successive generations of high priests until the death of Christ "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant" (see Heb.9:15). Then He, the Victor of Calvary, ascended and entered into heaven itself as the Forerunner of a worshipping people. There He cleansed the sanctuary by virtue of His propitiatory sacrifice and sat down by invitation at the right hand of God, evidence of a work complete and accepted.

At the institution of the memorial to His death the Lord, in the Upper Room, indicated that the shedding of His blood in supreme sacrifice was the basis of the New Covenant (Lk.22:19-20).

Jeremiah's ancient oracle about a New Covenant (Jer.31:31-34) seems
particularly to apply to Israel, as a united nation, enjoying the blessings of millennial times. The Spirit of God however, through the writer of this letter, applies this scripture to the covenanted people of God today. This is clear from a comparison of Heb.8:12 with Heb.10:15-18. The blessings of the New Covenant could be realized only by the death of Christ (Heb.9:17). The Lord Jesus is the Mediator and Surety of this better covenant.

The atoning work of Christ makes it possible for God to justly forgive transgression and to remit sins. This is possible to the sinner on the ground of faith. Herein lies the unconditional aspect of the covenant blessings (Heb.10:17-18). However, Heb.9:18-22 tells us that the blood of the covenant (victim) was sprinkled on the book, upon the people and upon the Tabernacle with its vessels, taking us back to Sinai, to the solemn convocation of the covenant day (Ex.24) when Israel, already redeemed, gathered together to be bound in covenant service to their God. The book, the people and the Tabernacle were linked together at that critical ceremony, implying that the people were now under an obligation to fulfil the words of the law which were read in their hearing. It was laid upon them henceforth to fulfil their own promise of obedience (Ex.24:7,8).

God's will for them was that His commandments should be written upon the tables of their hearts that they might serve Him fully and acceptably. The blessings of divine service in connexion with the sanctuary of that day could be realized only through unfeigned obedience. Bestowal of such blessings and subsequent enjoyment by Israel were governed by their obedience and response to the word of the Lord. Which things contain a lesson for the believer today. It is the will of God that all believers should serve as priests in the priesthood (1 Pet.2:5). The potential is there. We submit, in the light of Israel's experience and the teaching of the Hebrews epistle, that the service of the people today is acceptable only on the ground of obedience to the words of the Faith.

The Lord Jesus is Son in authority over God's house. We owe full allegiance to Him in all aspects of our service. He functions as High Priest on behalf of a covenanted people. The spiritual sacrifices of the holy priesthood can find acceptance only through the ministry of the Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

Accepted through His death are we
To be a priesthood serving Thee
What joy is ours, through saving grace,
To worship in the holy place! A solemn responsibility is laid upon all believers to examine their service in the light of revealed truth and to see whether or not they are serving according to the pattern.
Contemporary Issues in Christian Life
(2) The Christian and Television

By R. Armstrong, of London, Ontario

The World and Television

The development of television during the past 30 years has brought about one of the greatest social changes in history. The "age of television", as it is now called, was initiated by a major breakthrough in technology which has revolutionized global communications. Education, entertainment, consumerism, news, religion, documentaries, crime and violence films, and many other features are brought right into the living rooms of millions around the world.

Thirty years experience has taught Christians and non-Christians that television can be used for both good and evil purposes, and that the problem lies in its evil use. It is surprising that the world has said more about the evils of television than have Christians. One is hard pressed to find a booklet or tract dealing with the evils of television and its effects on spiritual life.

The impact of television on society has been the subject of many studies and reports by governments, educators and medical authorities. Before dealing with the Christian and television I ask the indulgence of the reader for a moment to look at the world and television and what respected authorities in America, who give no indication of a Christian viewpoint, have to say (doubtless the situation is similar in other parts of the world).

"One hundred and forty six articles in behavioural science journals, representing 50 studies involving 10,000 children and adolescents from every conceivable background, all showed that violence viewing produces increased aggressive behaviour in the young, and that remedial action in terms of television programming is warranted. The time is long past due for a major cry of protest from the medical profession in relation to what, in political terms, I consider a national scandal". (From a report by Michael Rothenberg, M.D. entitled "Effect of television violence on children and youth". (Jama 234:1043-10461975, The Departments of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences, University of Washington, U.S.A.).

The report reveals that, "the average American child will have viewed 15,000 hours of T.V. by the time he graduates from high school, compared with 11,000 hours of formal classroom instruction. He will have witnessed 18,000 murders, incidents of robbery, arson, bombing, forgery, smuggling, beating and torture, averaging approximately one per minute in the
standard T.V. cartoon for children under ten. There is an average of six times more violence during one hour of children's T.V. than in one hour of adult T.V. The code of Hamurabi in 2,250 B.C. made selling to, or buying from a child without authority a crime punishable by death. Today children are exposed to some 350,000 T.V. commercials by the time they reach the age of 18. The relationship of television violence and aggressive behaviour in children now demands a change”. Current reports indicate that this cry is going unheeded by authorities, and we predict the situation will get worse, because Satan is “the god of this age” and observes no moral standards. As the world plunges into a neo-pagan age the portents are too awful to contemplate.

**Attitudes**

We recall the early attitudes of many Christians to television, attitudes which were the same as still earlier ones to the motor car, the radio, the record player and many other inventions as they came along. They were branded by some as inventions of the devil. I well remember Christians who would not ride in a motor car on Sunday, or fly in an aeroplane, because they thought such inventions were of the devil (see footnote). Today however, many Christians accept these inventions as neutral in themselves, but recognize that some of them are liable to misuse.

In spite of the early concern about television, at present, Christians who do not have a set in their homes are in a minority. Since it has become part of family life it is no longer a question of how to keep it out or put it out, but how to handle it. Attempts at church legislation to keep it out have proved ineffective. It has to be conceded that television is not evil in itself; the instrument can be put to both good and bad uses. On the positive side millions have heard the gospel by means of television, and many have been saved. On the negative side there are those who enjoy suggestive and immoral programmes, and there are those who see that they get them. A group of concerned parents in the Boston, Mass., area petitioned a group of T.V. stations a few years ago with a protest against some of the immoral programmes their children were watching. They were told the switches provided on their sets were for turning off what they did not like. So it became a matter of control for those people who objected.

**The Christian and television**

For disciples who have television in their homes comes the responsibility of handling another hazard to spiritual life. Its abuse or wrong use will make
Christians answerable to the Lord at the judgement-seat, as will other things we regard as legitimate in our lives. At the flip of a switch a succession of lust pictures, prize fights, scantily dressed or nude dancers, liquor and tobacco advertisements and whatever decent programmes may be shown at prime evening time, floodlight the living room with visual impressions that are difficult to erase from the mind. Such television shows run absolutely counter to the great regulator of Christian life: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor.10:31). We wonder if such scriptures as 1 Jn 2:15 have lost their impact on our spiritual lives: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him". Also, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgement-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad (literally, good for nothing)" (2 Cor.5:10). There is also the spiritual significance of the cross that Paul wrote about: "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal.2:20), that is historically, but there is the corresponding experimental aspect: "I am crucified with Christ". Most of us take a long time to die, we keep parts of ourselves back from crucifixion, and because of this some worldliness survives.

If we don't understand what these verses mean in our spiritual experience our progress in Christ-likeness will be very limited. There are verses in the Bible I do not understand fully, but they present to me no spiritual problem. My problem lies in the verses I do understand all too well to admit of any misunderstanding. That understanding teaches me that I must weigh the "all things" that are lawful but not expedient and that edify not (1 Cor.10:23), and decide whether or not I allow, as part of my lifestyle, something with the potential to dump the filth and immoral garbage of an almost pagan society into my living room. If any reader thinks this is strong language, allow me to recall that for almost ten years I was involved in my business life working with advertisement agencies who prepared T. V. and radio advertisements for commercial product promotions. Part of that work was to review advertising copy to ensure its credibility. The purpose of this scrutiny was to protect the firm's image in the eyes of the public, but much of the material submitted was an insult to intelligence. That small area of T.V. production to which I was exposed created a strong revulsion to the falsehoods of commercial hucksterism.

The writer did a brief survey of Christian young people and parents on their thoughts about television. Most were unfavourable in their comments, among which were the following:

(1) "I wish we had not bought one. It is a great time waster".
(2) "If ours breaks down I have told my family it will not be repaired".

1980-73
"Watching T.V. has affected my spiritual life, because I became addicted".

"We find it anti-social because family members do not wish to be disturbed".

"Because of T.V. we don't communicate as much as we used to".

"We put strict controls on our children's T.V. watching. We realize the danger".

"T.V. is all input through eye gate and does little to stimulate creative thinking and meditation. People become television bound".

Christians who do not have television, or those who have and limit viewing, are usually well informed on current affairs through other sources. Each must decide before the Lord the issues of television and the harm it may be doing to spiritual life and set limits accordingly. If one is sensitive to this, the disciplines may not be easy.

**Spiritual perspectives**

The Lord's disciples need a true perspective as we stand on the threshold of world events that stagger the imagination. Although all unaware of it, this is the world's hour of desperate need. It must soon face the massive global dislocations to be caused by the Rapture, the mark of the Beast and the horrors of Armageddon, that Middle East confrontation of the armies of the world with the Lord Jesus Christ and His heavenly warriors.

Beloved, let no thief of time deter us from following close to our heavenly Master while it is day: let us maintain our engagement in the battle for souls. May God help us to be weaned from many earthly pursuits to seek the good of His house, and to tell the vision of the eternal Saviour to desperate men and women around us. While blending with outward life may we know the inward detachment Abraham knew when he left a pagan world behind him. Of him it is written, "He went out, not knowing whither he went... as in a strange country. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb.11:9-10 AV). The Bible says, if he had been "mindful of that country from which he went out" he could have gone back to it. But he knew his direction. He had learned well his lesson about God and a better country.

Let us as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ ask God for a fresh vision about the glorious city of God, where all our future lies amid the eternal splendours and brilliance of that place faith makes real to our gaze. Such perspectives will help us make the right choices about our priorities while living in, but not of, a world system which is almost finished. May God help us!
Footnote

Mr J. Drain writes: The course of this world may be said to be consistently contrary to the mind of God but it is also true that the fashion of this world is a changing thing. With these changes there may come fresh challenges to the consciences of disciples. A sensitive disciple hesitates to accept some new thing because he fears there may be hidden in it some evil which in time will manifest itself. He may refrain from accepting it in case his action should do harm to a weaker disciple. He may hesitate because he desires to examine public reaction to certain things. Therefore a disciple may seek to act within the spirit of the teaching of 1 Cor.10:31-33: "... whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God... not seeking mine own profit". In the process of time his scruples may be acceptably removed and the disciple may feel free to engage in something about which he was previously hesitant. But this does not necessarily imply that what previously was demonstrably wrong has now become right.

The Paraclete

By "Watchman"

The Greek noun parakletos means "one called to the side of another". It was the term used by our Lord in His Upper Room ministry to His apostles to designate the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16,26; Jn 15:26; Jn 16:7). Translators have had difficulty in finding an English word which adequately defines its meaning. In classical Greek parakletos meant, "an advocate for the defence". It always describes someone called in: such as a lawyer to plead a difficult case, or an expert to give advice on a difficult situation, or an officer to boost the morale of a company of dispirited soldiers.

The translation "Comforter" (AV and RV) goes back to Wycliffe and Tyndale. Other translations are Helper, Advocate, Counsellor. In all these renderings there is the basic thought of consolation. An advocate consoles because he takes over the problems of the person he defends. Peace of mind is assured in the knowledge that at one's side is a counsellor with unerring wisdom.

Meditate on this whole bunch of renderings: then give thanks for the priceless gift the Father has bestowed upon us.

"Oh, what a comfort 'tis to know
We have what'er betide, A
mighty Helper here below.
Who ever will abide!"
The Holy Scriptures
(2) "Inspired of God"

By D. T. Hyland, of Middlesbrough

Scripture is God's Self-revelation to men. Man cannot by searching find out God and apart from an infallible revelation he is in pitch darkness. But God delights to make Himself known; He is pleased to reveal His truth to men. Truth is like light. It is the nature of light to shine, similarly it is the nature of truth to be revealed.

The divine origin of Scripture is usually described as "inspiration". This is a specialized use of the word, and is very different from describing the work of a talented artist or musician as inspired. The five words "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim.3:16 AV) or the three words "inspired of God" (RV) translate a single Greek adjective theopneustos (theos, God, pneo, to breathe). The word theopneustos literally means "God-breathed". This implies that God "breathed out" the words which were written down by prophets and apostles to become Scripture. "God-breathed" means that the words of the human authors were in reality the words of God. They were spoken so directly by the Spirit of God, to and through men, that they may be accurately described as issuing from His mouth. "The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa.1:20). The Scriptures originate from the Holy Spirit of God.

The message did not originate with the writer, nor did the writers put their own construction or interpretation on what they wrote. "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet.1:21 RSV). The Greek word phew, translated "moved", means literally "being carried". The same Greek word is used to describe the movement of a ship being driven in a storm. "When the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and were driven" (Acts 27:15). The direction of the ship was not determined by human initiative but by the wind. In the inspiration of the Scriptures, God was guiding and leading the human writers through His Spirit. They were under the constraint of the Spirit of God who bore them along. This is a clear rejection of the idea that the Scriptures are of merely human origination.

The passages referred to above are probably as far as Scripture goes in defining the nature of inspiration. Scripture offers no detailed analysis of the mode of inspiration. We are not told how the Spirit of God worked in the inspiration of the human writers, just as we are not told how the Spirit of God brings about the new birth.
Some negative statements can be made to show what inspiration did not involve. It did not lead to the obliteration or overriding of the personality of the human writer, consequently there is no uniformity of literary style. As a general principle the process was not mechanical, the faculties of the writers were fully employed.

In some cases we are told that God was preparing these men from birth for the work of communicating His word to men (see Jer.1:5; Gal.1:15,16). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "God spoke" (1:1 RSV); Peter says, "Men spoke from God" (2 Pet.1:21 RSV). These statements are complementary. One of the clearest attempts to define inspiration the writer has come across is, "It is that process which has resulted in a perfectly accurate and authoritative compilation of literature which everywhere bears the mark of divine origin".

The view of inspiration put forward in this article is sometimes described as "a theory of biblical inspiration which regards the written words of the Bible as divinely dictated". Another writer says that the view of inspiration for which we are contending implies that "the Holy Spirit used the writers as a dictaphone". This is a caricature of the truth. The Spirit of the living God was speaking so directly through the human writers that their words were in a real sense His words. But the process was not mechanical; the men were not robots, they were living agents. The minds and personalities of the human writers were fully employed and their natural talents were sanctified. By the leading of the Spirit of God they were preserved from error and their writings are authoritative.

The Gospels reveal that the Lord treated the Old Testament as having divine authority. This is not because of the authority of the human authors, but because God is the ultimate Author. For Christ, what Scripture says, God says. It has been well said that the veracity of the Old Testament Scriptures and the deity of Christ stand or fall together. We have the Lord's authority for totally rejecting the view of some liberal scholars that "special religious interests affected the minds of many of the writers in dealing with early material, and they felt justified in modifying the narrative for their own purposes . . . myths and legends are related as though they were actual occurrences". This is a systematic attempt to undermine the authority of the Scriptures and the Lord's validation of them. But the Old Testament is accredited by the authority of the Lord in retrospect and the Lord's words to the apostles in the Upper Room before His betrayal reveal that He accredited the New Testament in prospect, as we shall now consider more fully.

The Lord promised His disciples that on His return to heaven He would send "the Comforter... the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:16,17). The Lord led the apostles to expect that when the Holy Spirit came to indwell them He
would be their Teacher and Guide. The Lord had many things to tell them, but He said, "Ye cannot bear them now" (Jn 16:12). In describing some of the functions of the indwelling Spirit the Lord said, "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (Jn 14:26). The Holy Spirit would work on the human faculty of memory assisting them in the recall of the Lord's teaching and of events they had witnessed. Addressed to the apostles the Lord's words no doubt included the promise of an unction of the Holy Spirit in their oral ministry. There can be no doubt, however, that they also refer to the writing of the New Testament. This is a promise of the Spirit's guidance in the completion of the canon of Scripture. The Spirit of God would teach them, guide them into all the truth and show them things to come. All these elements are found in the Gospels, the Epistles and the book of Revelation. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit these men became channels through whom fresh truth was communicated to men. Secrets were divulged in their oral and written ministry. The divine Spirit became to the New Testament writers "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation" in their knowledge of Christ (Eph.1:17).

"Lord, dost Thou not care?"
By R. Darke, of Victoria, B.C.

It was the cry of a distraught woman unable to cope with the responsibilities of the home. It was a cry for help, for relief from the pressures and tensions at hand. It was an appeal coming from a conscientious, hard-working person. Many today can relate to her experience. The questioning cry did not pass unheeded for the Lord Jesus was in that warm, friendly home of Martha and Mary at Bethany when the incident happened. His quiet conversation with Mary was suddenly interrupted when Martha entered the room to express her anxious concern. Martha, that strong, godly woman, who made service to others a priority in her life, had found herself overwhelmed and was at breaking point. She loved the Lord, and delighted to welcome Him into the home, but on this particular visit the task of preparing the meal seemed greater than normal. Perhaps the sickness of Lazarus, the burden of caring for him, had taken its toll. Whatever the cause, the effect was seen in her dramatic outburst. "Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone?" (Lk.10:40). She knew that Mary had been sitting adoringly at His feet, hanging on His every word. Mary was enjoying the good things, spiritual, while Martha was preparing the good things natural.
With this there was nothing basically wrong. It is a balance which must become part of all our lives. We must all find time to sit at His feet to enjoy those quiet times of communion with Him, hearing His voice in the Word. Such meditations enable us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.3:18). The mundane things of home and business life must still be handled on their regular basis. It is when things get sadly out of balance that we find ourselves frustrated, tense, and crying out our complaint as Martha did: "Lord, dost Thou not care ... bid her therefore that she help me". This is when we can sympathize with Martha, not forgetting that we need a like word from the Lord.

In the now silent room the Lord turns from Mary to her sister. "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (vv 41,42). This was not a rebuke but rather the calming of a very upset person. The tone is kindly as He gives His full attention to this dear woman's distress. Those eyes of love looked into the besieged mind of Martha and saw how she was being pulled in all directions, mentally and emotionally. Where peace should be reigning there was discord; joy was replaced by tears; in her despair and distress she cried out. Thankfully she called for help from One who could give it. He brought things into perspective with His kindly word. Whatever the Lord meant by "one thing is needful", it was obviously the opposite to what Martha was doing. She needed to change her programme; no more rushing hither and thither, wearing herself out by being over-occupied with the demands of life. The Lord in His wisdom described her situation as being "anxious and troubled about many things", and He seeks to guide away from this upsetting environment to the "good part" which Mary had chosen.

If Christ is given anything but prime place then life becomes unbalanced. It is when we allow the circumstances and demands of life to oust His things, the things of the Spirit, the things associated with His Word, that we find that we cannot cope. So the pressures build up, the cares increase, and we find ourselves pulled and stretched by circumstances in all directions at once. Then follow the uncontrolled tears, the turmoil of mind and body, the emotional stress, the lack of sleep, the irritability, and the decline in spiritual interests. And the cry: "Lord, dost Thou not care?". Of course He cares. In the time of the storm on the lake the disciples forgot momentarily His nearness, His deity, His power, and in their distress they cried: "Master, carest Thou not...?" (Mk.4:38). Of course He cared, and instantly He came to their rescue. Peace followed, and a restoring of faith and joy in Him. Even David thought he had been wholly deserted when troubles forced him to flee to the cave for prayer and meditation. "Look", he says,"... no man careth
for my soul" (Ps.142:4). But the Lord cared; as he cried his anguished prayer the Lord was there with him listening. The same One who walked with him through the valley of the shadow was with him in the cave. Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there!

At no time must we doubt the presence of the Lord with us. Daily we must claim His promise: "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Heb.13:5). We should avoid letting financial matters come between ourselves and the Lord. He knows all about our circumstances; He knows the end from the beginning. "Let your forbearance (sweet reasonableness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil.4:5). Forbearance has been translated as "not demanding your lawful rights" knowing that the Lord is near to balance out the deficiencies. Another reminder of the Lord's presence. Dare we forget His promise to the disciples as He prepared to leave them knowing that they would pass through perilous times: "... and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt.28:20).

"At the blest mercy-seat
Pleading for me —
My feeble faith looks up,
O Lord, to Thee;
Help me the cross to bear,
Thy wondrous love declare,
Some song to raise, or prayer,
Something for Thee".
Voices from the Past

Little Things (3)

There are little things that can do well-nigh irreparable evil. Solomon, with his profound knowledge of things, tells us that as dead flies corrupt the perfumer's ointment so does a little folly outweigh wisdom and honour (Eccles. 10:1). Often a glorious life is dimmed by some foolish act.

Solomon again tells us that it is the little foxes that spoil the vineyards. The vinedresser thinks that he has every hole in the hedge stopped against the inroads of the foxes, but there are small holes through which little foxes may come. It is not the big things which endanger the life of assemblies, but the little things. Full grown sins would soon be laid by the heels, but it is the little ones that are to be feared. These, like the little foxes which scrape the soil and damage the tender roots of the blossoming vines damage that which is vital to fruitful life in believers. Believers are grieved and discouraged. Their bloom goes; their leaves fade and fall off, and a state of deadness ensues, till at length the assembly ceases altogether.

James speaks of the importance of small things; the bridle of a horse, the rudder of a ship, and what a little fire can do. "So" he says, "the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things... the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue ... the tongue can no man tame" (Jas.3:1-12). Unless we have the tongue of them that are taught, as the Lord had (Isa.50:4), we shall, in the light of the statements in James, be wise to be careful of its use. For by our words we shall be justified or condemned. A tongue controlled by the Holy Spirit may be a great blessing, but, under the power of the devil it may be a great curse.

Paul twice uses the similitude of "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor.5:6; Gal.5:9), first in connexion with moral evil, then with doctrinal evil. Moral evil is usually soon detected and dealt with, but doctrinal evil may sometimes be allowed a great amount of freedom: yet evil doctrine works with all the power of leaven. It is unrelenting in its action; even a little, if allowed to remain, will in time leaven the whole. If the whole is to be saved there must be a purging out of the leaven, and if the leaven has already permeated the greater portion of the whole, then there must be the out-purging of those who would be faithful to the Lord from that which evil doctrine has corrupted. Examine with care the teaching of 2 Tim.2:16-22.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
Islam

In today's world Islam is said to be the religion of at least 600 million people!

Islam is the name given by the prophet Mohammed to the religion of the Muslims, and is an Arabic name which has come to mean "submission to God". They consider Mohammed (born about 570 AD) to have been the greatest and last of the prophets. It is claimed that the Koran, their holy book, was recited to Mohammed by the angel Gabriel, who read from the original in heaven. Sadly, the Lord Jesus Christ is regarded as but one of a line of prophets, and inferior to Mohammed; His uniqueness as the Son of God is denied.

There are of course many sects within Islam, giving a different emphasis of teaching and varied standards of religious practice. The fundamentalist Muslim wishes to maintain the traditional beliefs and practices against all the pressures for change. Other schools of thought within Islam would prefer concessions to modern trends. Yet basic principles held in common allow for wide areas of appeal to Muslims as a whole.

The Lord Jesus warned the apostles that "many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray" (Matt.24:11). Mohammed can be viewed only in this light by the Christian believer. The expansion of Islam has indeed affected many! From its origins in Arabia it has spread along North Africa to the Atlantic, and south to the Sudan, Zanzibar and areas of East Africa. To the north and east it covers Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia. There are significant numbers of Muslims in many other countries, including southern U.S.S.R.

Last year's dramatic developments in Iran and Afghanistan highlighted the political influence of Islam in certain situations. For Ayatollah Khomeini gained victory over the Shah of Iran through religious incitement of the Muslim masses in that country; while Muslim resentment against atheistic communist influence was one factor underlying the Russian invasion of

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Afghanistan. Where western culture has had a close impact on Muslim populations, as in the Middle East, there have at times been strong reactions against what are seen as harmfully lowered standards of conduct, e.g. alcoholism, moral permissiveness, material extravagance. It reflects little credit on western society, nominally "Christian" in outlook, that there should be real justification for such reactions!

For several decades it has been a cornerstone of the policy of Muslim countries in the Near East to oppose the restoration of Israel to her traditional homeland. Egypt has for the time being "broken rank" and come to terms with Israel, political motives overriding President Sadat's Muslim sympathies. The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was seen by many Muslims as a "separate settlement with the effect of handing over the holy city of Jerusalem to perpetual Israeli control". Because this treaty was sponsored by President Carter, deep resentment has been stirred against the United States. Despite their smallness compared with the United States, the Muslim controlled governments of the Middle East can bring intense pressure to bear on the United States and the European Community by reason of oil supplies, so vital to "western" industry and transport. Indeed, a feature of the present world situation is the disproportionate influence of relatively small countries. The United States, for instance, is under strong pressures both towards the "Arab cause" from Middle East oil producing states, and towards the "Israeli cause" through the Jewish lobby in Washington. President Carter has warned his countrymen that United States foreign policy may be in danger of being dictated from abroad!

Scripture would lead us to expect that the grouping of Middle East Muslim countries against Israel will still obtain at the time of the end. Ps.83:2-4 reads like a modern declaration of their policy!
"Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance". The peoples involved in this conspiracy (verses 6-8) include those at present adjacent to Israel. Then "Assyria also is joined with them" — extending the alliance through to Iraq and possibly Iran. How ironic that several of these peoples are themselves descended from Abraham (Gen.25:1-18)!

Apart from the political influence of Islam in our time, its modern spiritual thrust also concerns the Christian believer. In many parts of the "third world" Islam's missionary gains develop apace. It is also penetrating western society more than ever before. Immigrants among western nations from Asia and elsewhere practise their faith, providing centres from which it may be publicised. This brings fresh challenge to "the gospel of the glory of the gospel of the glory of (contd. on page 96).
Themes from Hebrews

(6) Falling Away

By Martin Archibald, of Glasgow

Early in his letter the writer to the Hebrews draws attention to the seriousness of the believer's departure from God: "...we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away" (Heb.2:1). For, he reasons, if disobedience to the word spoken through angels brought sure judgement, how shall we escape if we neglect God's voice in His Son? Expounding the eminence that belongs to our Lord leads directly to practical advice for the daily life of the Christian. Again, in chapter 3, the vision of the Lord as Apostle and High Priest of our confession, and Son over God's house, becomes the basis of the appeal, "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God". In chapter 5, while the main argument takes its course, the writer is also reminding those who have "become dull of hearing", of the prayers and tears of the Lord in the days of His flesh and His obedience learned by the things which He suffered, as a strong encouragement to hold fast their confession. Then can they not press on, or must they remain in need of someone to teach them again the rudiments? The letter goes on, "Let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection...And this will we do, if God permit" (Heb.6:1,3). So these verses show the writer believes that at least some of those who have departed from God could yet be reached by his appeal to appreciate in fuller experience the stature of Christ.

We say "at least some" may respond, for there are others, who are in a worse state. Standing still can lead to turning back; and then, Heb.6:6 says, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (Heb.6:4-6).

If this passage described the loss of eternal salvation, far from spurring on the failing Christian, it would drive him either to despair or to a life-long habit of finding excuses for his sins. The Good Shepherd said, "He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life"
(Jn 5:24). Life that is eternal cannot cease, even when we cease to obey the Lord's word. Rather, Heb. 6 shows what may be expected to happen to those who "drift away" (Heb. 2:1), or those who "fall away" (Heb. 3:12) from the living God. The former include the writer (for he says "we"), and so they are believers. The latter are the saints to whom the letter is written, and there can be an evil heart of unbelief in any one of them. When they are warned, "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be...", the words do not mean "there shall be found" or "there shall be revealed", as though referring to some people who were deceivers or being deceived, and who had always had a heart of unbelief, that would one day be discovered. The future verb in the Greek, though specially used here to indicate urgency, is also future in sense.

It would be reasonable to expect, from our review of the earlier tenor of the letter, that chapter 6 again concerns the failure that may destroy the testimony of those who are born again. Verses 4 and 5 make this clear. "Those who were once enlightened" had known the experience of the Ephesian saints, to whom Paul says "... ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). The light of God's word may shine on the life of a sinner, showing him his error, and he may shrink away from its truth. But could the sinner himself be enlightened without receiving Christ, who alone can give the life and light of the Spirit to men (Jn 1:9)?

It has been suggested that people who "tasted of the heavenly gift" and "tasted the good word of God" merely enjoyed the benefits of the community the Spirit was working in, being carried along by the enthusiasm of others, and never themselves saved. But this interpretation does not acknowledge the force of "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit". The Greek word for "partakers" is used with a prefix meaning "fellow-" in Eph. 3:6: "fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (see also Heb. 3:14). And another word, meaning "having a share (in)", is also translated "partakers" in 2 Pet. 1:4: "precious... promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature". How could the expression "partakers" mean anything less in these instances than the closest participation? This point needs the closer scrutiny because the helpful and widely respected New Scofield Reference Bible (1967) comments on Heb. 6:4 thus —

"The clause rendered 'and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit' might be paraphrased somewhat like this: 'and were willingly being led toward the Holy Spirit'". — but provides no direct support for so singular an interpretation.

It has also been argued that the Greek term translated "word" in "... tasted the good word of God" (Heb. 6:5) is used for a saying, or one brief
utterance or promise, so that those who fell away had little experience of the Scriptures — alleged support for the view that they were not saved. But the term appears in Eph.5:26: "... having cleansed it (the Church) by the washing of water with the word", and in Heb.11:3 and 1 Pet.1:25. If only one or a few "brief utterances" from God are referred to in these scriptures, then the eternal salvation of a soul can be accomplished by the same measure of the word of God.

So I believe the tasting of such powerful things describes those converts making an excellent start followed by renouncing the good they had received. They are like "those on the rock" in the Lord's parable, "they which ... receive the word with joy ... for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk.8:13). The illustration in Heb.6 of land drinking the rain is also concerned with fruit-bearing.

"For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned" (Heb.6:7,8). The land described in verse 7 received rain often. Then verse 8 refers to "it" — namely, the same kind of land as in 7, if not the same part. It therefore had drunk the rain that came often upon it, yet later it bore thorns. Similarly, those in verses 4 and 5 tasted of the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come. Surely there were fruits for a spell, and the acts of disciples. But at the judgement day, those disciples are "nigh unto a curse", their life's work fit only for burning, and they themselves are saved, but as through fire.

Now the author says something that has been unpopular with many readers from Luther onwards. Yet we must remember he speaks with the authority of the Spirit in saying, "For as touching those who were once enlightened ... it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance". There are things that are impossible for God: it would be a denial of His nature to lie (Heb.6:18). But when the Lord spoke of how hard it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and the disciples said, "Who then can be saved?" He replied, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible". Could there not then be some who in departure resist the efforts even of spiritual people to recover them, but who respond to the chastening of God and are granted repentance? So Paul teaches Timothy that the Lord's servant should correct "them that oppose themselves"; but it is God who "peradventure . .. may give them repentance" (2 Tim.2:25). Again, it was the Lord Jesus Himself, not one of the disciples, who wrought upon Peter to help him turn again from the denial of his Master.

So we are unable to show that it is impossible for God to renew again to
repentance those who fall away from Him. Why then does Heb.6:6 not say "It is impossible for men (though possible for God). "? Here we should remember the purposes of the letter as a whole. One of these is to try by a series of direst warnings to prevent any reader taking a further step towards losing his life of service — not to encourage a feeling of security by assessing what hope there might be of recovery. With this in mind I would not accept the R.V. Margin rendering, "It is impossible . . . while they crucify to themselves the Son of God", since it weakens the passage as a warning, and reduces it to a laboured statement of something we would take for granted. Further, the marginal reading is not based on a different Greek text, but is only another way of understanding the same words.

We have now to recognize an even worse condition the child of God may descend to.

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb.10:26,27). Here there is not even the possibility that God may give repentance in this life. For those who are sanctified (v. 29), and yet sin wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there is no covering sacrifice: only punishment. Nor is this the chastening of sons whom the Father loves, but it is "a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries". Whatever sorrows come in this life upon the believer who forsakes his faith, such a fire's effects will be most keenly felt when at the Judgement-seat of Christ his work is burned and "he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor.3:15). This passage is also set apart by the unique expression "wilfully". Both in the Old Testament (Lev.4:2) and the New (1 Tim.1:13) we read of sins of ignorance. And there is a vast range of evil in which saints can err of their own choice or will, whether neglecting to do good (Jas.4:17) or presenting their members unto sin (Rom.6:13). From 1 Jn 1 and 2 we learn that if we confess such sins we have an Advocate with the Father who will appeal for us. For in those chapters John speaks of sins in general. Hebrews 10:26-29, however, carefully defines, feature by feature, a particular form of sinful act and gives it a special name. (Compare the uncommon expression "do presumptuously" (Deut.17:12), the rebellion that could not be covered by any sacrifice in the Old Testament). Here is an exception to the general rule of 1 Jn 1 and 1 Jn 2: the final choice of a way of life that defies God's love and truth.

And it is this complete rebellion by a redeemed soul that John refers to when he does distinguish one form of sin in 1 Jn 5:16. He tells his beloved children that if they see a brother sinning, and ask God for life for him, it will be granted. But John cannot promise this in the case of them that sin unto
death — those whose behaviour is so destructive of spiritual values that it finally ends all service pleasing to God. The Spirit-directed life is killed, and John will not advise that any should make request for its revival. Yet a man in this state is still a brother, like the sanctified man of Heb.6, and by the grace of God he himself will never perish. (Readers who are interested in a fuller study of these topics are referred to "The Wilful Sin of Heb.10:26" by Mr Drain in Needed Truth, 1979, pp. 174-6).

There remains the sin of which the Lord said it shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come (Matt.12:32). The withholding of forgiveness in this case is so comprehensive that it can only refer to a person who refuses to be saved. This judgement was drawn from the Saviour when the scribes said his casting out of demons by the Spirit was the work of the prince of demons. Those scribes from Jerusalem saw demon-possessed people being restored to lives of peace, yet they rejected the Spirit's witness to the presence of the Son of God. They were warned that their words could be worse than an insult: they could express unbelief that would deny them salvation. For, "he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar: because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son" (1 Jn 5:10).

But in our zeal to settle the status of those who fall away, let us not forget that the writer to the Hebrews appeals to us to recognize the earliest symptoms, and deal with sin before it is full-grown. Drifting may be prevented by reading and studying the Scriptures. To "give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard" also means obeying still the gospel's first call to repentance and faith; rather than ever learning the first principles and never practising them. We may keep ourselves from growing a root of bitterness by following after both peace with all men and sanctification — a task that will exercise every spiritual power we have. Let us consider our Lord Jesus Christ... and consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. To be steadfast in assembling together with others may appear simple, yet it is both taxing and richly rewarding. Let us encourage one another thus; and so much the more, as we see the day drawing nigh.

"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is ... speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord: giving thanks always..."

(Eph.5:15-20).
Contemporary Issues in Christian Life
(3) Marriage — its Sanctity and Blessings

By J. Rodgers, of Toronto

"One in every three marriages contracted this year will end in divorce". This astounding statement was made through the news media some time ago. Just two months prior to the writing of this article the press published appalling statistics, covering a certain area in the North American Continent for the preceding month. It revealed that during that month 3,000 marriages and 2,500 divorces had been registered. In-the comparatively short period of 12 months between these two statements, the divorce rate had risen to almost equal the marriage rate. Although this condition of things relates to North America, we are certain it is not confined to that area alone. These figures do not attempt to include, or even visualize, the multitudes who are cohabiting without having been married.

Liberty and freedom are words which, in this age, have come to imply unrestricted licence in regard to many things, not least the marriage bond. Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ are shocked at the rising divorce rate and the increasing apathy towards marriage as a holy ordinance. To them all this is a direct contravention of the purposes of God.

It can hardly be expected that the natural man would appreciate the sanctity of marriage; to him it is something constituted under human law which, in many instances, now readily permits a legal breaking of wedlock. The man "after the Spirit" is governed by higher laws, which, issuing direct from the throne of heaven, insist on marriage as a divine ordinance. Consequently the Scriptures contain the rules under which the marriage vows should be undertaken and observed.

Superseding conformity to the law of the land in which we live is adherence to the law of God in respect to marriage. In many countries the marriage ceremony includes words which carry the meaning that the marriage is to last as long as both parties are alive, yet liberty is provided for the dissolution of the marriage. Marriage makes husband and wife "no more twain, but one flesh" (Matt.19:6). The words which follow in this passage of Scripture: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder", emphasize that the fusion of the two persons into one is a divine uniting. This union should never be dissolved except by death, yet the implication is clear that, despite what God has said, man can, in opposition to the purposes of God, sever such a unity. Indeed, because of man's hardness of heart, the Lord, in giving His law to the Israel nation, found it
necessary to make provision in certain cases for divorce (Deut.24:1-4; Matt.19:1-9).

Although the word "married" does not occur in the Scriptures until Gen.19, the principles of marriage are clearly detailed as early as Gen.2 and Gen.3. Gen.2:24 states, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". Just as clearly as Gen.2 portrays the relationship of husband and wife so Gen.3:16 presents the relative place and responsibility of both in that relationship. The teaching of these important portions of Scripture would merely refer to a natural relationship were it not for the unveiling of the typical teaching of marriage in Eph.5:22-33. Here the Holy Spirit details some important aspects of that great mystery, "in regard of Christ and of the Church", and links it, in teaching, with the natural relationship of husband and wife, inclusive of the subjection of the wife to her husband and the love of the husband for his wife. Not only do these principles express the divine ideal but also their practical application will help to solve all marital problems, the end product being a sanctified marriage. We pause to remark that the love referred to in Eph.5 of the husband for his wife, is not simply emotionalism, which can be superficial, and at most temporary. It is a word used of a deep, and in many instances, divine love. The same word is used by the Lord when speaking to Peter in Jn 21:15,16, and is further employed here in Ephesians to describe the love of Christ for the Church (note the use of this word thus referred to as applying to Christ and also to a husband in verse 25). The observance of these divine rules in the marriage bond by disciples of the Lord is essential to the sanctity of marriage. This sanctity is not established in the mere signing of a document but is dependent upon the recognition by the parties involved of their joint responsibility to follow scriptural guidelines within this solemn but privileged partnership.

Those contemplating marriage are well advised to study the scriptural example of Isaac, which touches on the importance of godly care in this matter. Abraham said to his servant, "... thou shalt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell" (Gen.24:3). This is an illustration of what is so clearly repeated in succeeding instructions to the Lord's people in Old Testament times, that an unholy relationship cannot culminate in a sanctified experience. In this, as in every aspect of life, the question is well posed: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3 A.V.). The basis is thus laid for the doctrine affecting the Lord's people of this dispensation, as stated in 1 Cor.7:39, that marriage should be "only in the Lord". The term "in Christ" (2 Cor.5:17), applies to the place into which all believers in Christ are brought through
faith, a position which they occupy as the result of a divine work which cannot be disturbed by human influence. In contradistinction to this, the phrase, "in the Lord", refers to a place where, under God, men rule, control, admonish, encourage (e.g. 1 Thess.5:12-15). From other passages of Scripture it is clear that such men are named overseers or bishops, and are ordained by the Holy Spirit within churches of God (see Phil.1:1). Such conclusions show that disciples of the Lord, within churches of God, should marry within that sphere, "only in the Lord".

Referring again to the story of Isaac in Gen.24, it is also important to note the manner in which the servant carried out Abraham's instructions. He prayed for the Lord's guidance about his mission and that a woman might be marked out by the Lord as a wife for Isaac (Gen.24:12-14). Verses 26,27 express his recognition of the Lord's leading, and answer to prayer. The choice of a partner in life, in keeping with the Lord's will, must lead to a secure and sanctified marriage. "A prudent wife is from the LORD" (Prov.19:14). A neglect to seek the Lord's guidance in what is one of the most important steps in life, could be disastrous for both parties.

David's eye for beauty, causing him to succumb to the "lust of the flesh", was a catastrophe both to himself and others (see 2 Sam.11,12, particularly 2 Sam.12:10,11). Samuel almost failed upon the basis of what was a "delight to the eyes", as he looked on Eliab, the son of Jesse and thought that surely the Lord's anointed was before him. The Lord corrected him with the words, "Look not on his countenance ... for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Sam.16:6,7). God's provision of a wife for man as described in Gen.2, was to afford a help meet for him; such a partner is spoken of in Prov.31:10-31 as a woman whose price is "far above rubies".

This is the age of equality of men and women. The liberated woman claims fully individual and independent choice and action within marriage, leading to cleavages between husband and wife, destroying harmony and continuity in married life. This is possibly, in part, a reaction from previous eras, when attitudes were equally deplorable, the husband reigning supreme, enforcing his own inflexible ideas. Neither of these attitudes will be seen in a husband and wife whose married life is divinely arranged, ordered and controlled. The apostle Paul mentions possible disadvantages, in certain circumstances, in married life (1 Cor.7). There are however many scriptural examples of those who were used of God to fill a role which could not have been undertaken, or executed, apart from partnership of man and wife. A few of those who are worthy of mention in this connection are Abraham and Sarah, Boaz and Ruth, Aquila and Priscilla, and there are many more. 1 Cor.11:11 states that:"... neither is the woman without the
man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord", the one being the complement of the other, specifically in relation to assembly life as is signified in the phrase, "in the Lord".

In the days of Noah prior to the flood — licentious days — "they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,... And they knew not until the flood came,..." (Matt.24:38,39). In this passage the linking of eating and drinking with marriage seems to suggest a satisfying of fleshly desires with little or no other interest. In contrast to this, disciples' actions are tempered by the word, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor.10:31), and are governed by the exhortation of Heb.13:4, "Let marriage be had in honour".

The sanctity of marriage is linked with the blessings of marriage which include sharing in a life which has no parallel;"... being also joint-heirs of the grace of life" (1 Pet.3:7). Marriage is a partnership in the intimate things of life, its joys and sorrows, victories and reverses. It is a partnership which encourages an unreserved unburdening of heart secrets, bringing the serenity which is often the product of the unspoken affection of a husband and wife whose marriage has been sanctified by the Lord. There is the profitable experience of joint Scripture reading and study with its sanctifying effect in answer to the Lord's prayer in Jn 17:17. In the verse previously referred to in 1 Pet.3:7, if there is the fulfilment of the opening words requiring responsibility to husband and wife, then combined prayer will follow, as is indicated in his closing comment, "to the end that your prayers be not hindered". Marriage in the Lord, with its privilege and responsibility in divine service and the reciprocation of love between husband and wife, is of divine origin and brings indescribable joy. Additionally there is the unique honour of reflecting the great mystery of Christ and the Church (see Eph.5:22-33).

There remain to be mentioned the blessings of stewardship which, in the will of God, includes children, with the accompanying joys and responsibilities of family life. How apt are the words of Ps.127:3, at this point,"... children are an heritage of the LORD!" The possibilities for good in a sanctified marriage are limitless. The benefits which accrue to husband, wife and family, inclusive of things both natural and spiritual, as a result of such a sanctification, exceed the imagination. The crowning factor, however, in the sanctity of such a union is the glory which redounds to God by the honouring therein of what He has established and revealed through the Scriptures, as the necessary ideals for the sanctity of marriage.
Iran in the Scriptures
By D. Smith, of Lerwick

Political and military developments among the nations in recent years, have created a deep interest on the part of many Christians in the subject of divine prophecy, particularly those events which lie between the present time and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to set up His universal kingdom of peace and righteousness.

Three points have attracted particular attention, namely the grouping of the nations of Europe, the delicate situation in the Middle East and the mighty Soviet Union in relation to the nation of Israel. It is widely held that the last is the subject which the Holy Spirit portrays in such vivid detail in Ezek.38,39. But whether God will destroy the great company there described before the coming of the Lord for His Church, or during the fearful period of the great tribulation remains a subject for debate. However, there can be little doubt as to who He meant when He said "Son of man, set thy face towards Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him" (Ezek.38:2).

The prophet then describes the great military advance toward "the land of unwalled villages": "Thus saith the Lord God ... I will... put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth and all thine army". Geographically there are two ways in which an army from the north may come into the land of Israel, over the Caucasus mountains through Turkey or through Iran. Significantly, Rosh will "devise an evil device" or "conceive a mischievous purpose" (A.V. Margin). Few nations have ever been more artful in conceiving a mischievous purpose than the present rulers of Russia. By every means, fair or foul, they have succeeded in bringing nations numbering 450 million within their sphere of influence. It is therefore not surprising that the scripture should say three times over "many peoples with thee" (verses 6,9,15). Some of those involved are particularly referred to.

The first to gain mention in this great military cavalcade are "Persia, Cush and Put". Persia, now know as Iran, has featured prominently in world affairs during the past 18 months, having undergone a dynamic social, political and religious revolution. This has left the country in a fluid and highly inflammable state. The territory on the east of the Persian Gulf once formed, with ancient Media, the second great world power in succession to the Babylonian Empire, depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the breasts and arms of silver (Dan.2:32). Thus during the days of Israel's captivity Persia became the dominant world power. The books of Daniel, Esther and Ezra are replete with references to Persia and its kings, one of
the most favourably disposed to Israel being Cyrus, whom the Lord used in initiating the release of the godly remnant (Isa.44:28; Ezra. 1:1) to rebuild the house of God at Jerusalem.

More ancient, and perhaps more pertinent to the prophetic involvement of Iran, is the scriptural reference to Elam, the region on the east bank of the river Tigris which was originally peopled by the descendants of Elam the son of Shem (Gen.10:22). It was the king of Elam, Chedorlaomer, who led the kings of the east in their assault on Canaan and was finally slain by Abram (Gen.14:15) at the "slaughter of the kings" (Heb.7:1). In the days of Daniel, Elam was the province of the royal residence (Dan.8:2).

In the judgement of the nations at the end-time, the Lord will plead with all flesh and give the wicked to the sword till the slain of the Lord will be from one end of the earth to the other. Specifically mentioned for judgement are "all the kings of Elam . . . and all the kings of the north, far and near" (Jer.25:25,26). When the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel saying, "Son of man wail for the multitudes of Egypt" He linked with them those "that go down into the pit.. Elam . . Meshech, Tubal and all her multitude" who "caused their terror in the land of the living" (Ezek.32:18-26). The divine sentence of judgement on the nations will be determined by their attitude to the Jews and to Israel.

Politically Iran today shares with Russia a strong antipathy towards the nation of Israel. Whatever tension may at present exist between Iran and the Soviet Union, Scripture would teach that in "the latter days", which to all appearance are not so far distant, both will be together in the vanguard of that great company of armed men who descend like a cloud on the mountains of Israel, to be vanquished and brought to naught at the hand of God.

The total power of the deeply entrenched Islam religion is utterly opposed to all Christian witness. Indeed the powerful influence of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the ruthless repression displayed by the Islam religion highlights the noxious character of the end-time religious harlot that will, from her established citadel in nearby Shinar (Zech.5:5-11), dominate the world scene. All the great religions of the world, and all the husks of formalism left behind after the Church has been taken away at the coming of the Lord Jesus, will converge on Babylon, which is the journey's end for the great ecumenical march to which so many well-meaning Christians are now fervently dedicated.

1980-94
Faith

By W. Murray, of Kirkintilloch

Heb. 11 contains a record of the lives of men; a record stamped with divine approval, whether it is Abel in his worship, Enoch in his walk, Noah in his work or Abraham in his pilgrimage. Indeed the whole chapter tells us what faith is and what it does. No child of God can give too much attention to these truths for it is impossible to please God apart from faith (verse 6). God has dealt to each man, according to His revealed will, "a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). This faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit for the specific purpose that its manifestation will be to the profit of all (1 Cor. 12:7-9).

That measure of faith, however, will greatly depend on our knowledge of Him; but in this as in all else, "with the same measure that ye mete it shall be measured to you again", for it was to His own the Lord delivered the stinging rebuke, "O ye of little faith". Certainly the grace sufficient to meet the various circumstances of life will depend on the strength of our faith (Rom. 4:20) that is, faith in the Strong One, even as precious faith is faith in the Precious One (2 Pet. 1:1), as great faith is faith in the Great One (Matt. 15:28). Great was the faith of those long ago who, suffering for righteousness' sake, were consigned to the fiery furnace. They lost nothing but what bound them, whereas they gained the companionship of the Son of God (Dan. 3:25).

Faith in its far-reaching effect is seen in the fact that it affects the spirit (the seat of the understanding, Heb. 11:3), the soul (the personality, Heb. 10:38) and the body (Gal. 2:20) of every child of God. In view of these things, can we do other than good to ourselves if we regularly prove our thoughts, our words and our deeds, whether they correspond to what they ought to be? Then through that virtuous fruit of the Spirit we shall be found walking in the Spirit as well as living in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).

It is encouraging to ponder that memorable conversation in Lk. 22. The Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not". Such a revelation may well cause both writer and reader to resort often to the feet of Christ where the same kind and sympathetic One is well able and ready to supply all needed grace.

In connexion with this important truth Heb. 4 contains much which ought to awaken every one to righteousness. Israel failed to receive God's promises by faith, so that they could not enter His rest under Moses or Joshua. On the contrary their carcases fell in the wilderness (Heb. 3:17). Perhaps we have here the reason why in Heb. 11 not a word is recorded.
of faith in all the 40 years' journey of the Israelites in the wilderness.

"Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb.12:1) (witness — not to men but to the power of faith through men) "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us”.

(Contd. from page 83)

the blessed God” committed to our trust. For the excellencies of Christ and the glory of our hope in Him far excel anything that Islam could offer.

It is indeed impressive to see thousands of Muslims praying at special religious festivals. Facing towards Mecca, and prostrating themselves repeatedly, the whole exercise bespeaks deep religious fervour. Here is "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”. The glorious Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, has no place in it all. We contrast the day when, in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

How great our responsibility meantime so to pray and to witness that many within Islam will be convicted of sin by God's Spirit, and turned from darkness to light through faith in Christ!

**The New Birth**

God does not try to remedy defects,
But root and branch the worthless tree rejects;
The old, proud, human nature first prostrates,
Then, by His breath of life, anew creates,
And gives (what education never can)
A nature fit for heaven to the man.
Thus lifted out of death, with life endued —
Emancipated from his servitude —
True liberty is his, ne'er known before,
And pleasures which shall last for evermore.
No short, deceptive, exaltation this,
Enjoyment fleeting time will soon dismiss;
But real, celestial, everlasting joy,
That, unlike earth's delights, will never cloy.

C. Belton
Voices from the Past

Little Things (4)

Life is made up of little things: little acts that are done by a people, who, like
the conies, are a feeble folk; little acts of kindness which, if they were done,
would often sweeten the earthly lot of many a burdened soul that is hard
pushed in life. With just a little assistance the daily burden, which they feel
perhaps a little too heavy, would be so far lightened. They would with a
lighter heart face the battle of life, gladdened, no doubt, that the law of
Christ still operated in this otherwise cold world. Such a law is expressed in
"Bear ye one another's burdens". How fruitful our lives might be if we
obeyed it more! Try to fulfil this law and you will realize how much of life's
sweetness and joy you missed by being occupied entirely with your own
things.

Then there are acts of another kind — the little sinful acts which creep
into our lives, which must be guarded against:—

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards;
For our vineyards are in blossom" (Songs 2:15).

How pleasant it must be to look upon the vineyards in blossom, which
give every evidence of fruitfulness! But if the little foxes which creep in
unawares are not taken, they will spoil the vineyards, and the vines which
gave such promise of an abundant harvest will be so damaged that they will
fail to mature their fruit. It is the little sins which creep from their holes into
our lives that do such tremendous damage. Many children of God have been
like vines in blossom, but they did not "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war
against the soul" (1 Pet.2:11). They did not take and kill the little foxes
when they crept into their lives, and alas! they grew into large foxes. A child
of God does not turn his back on God in a day, but little by little, if sin is
tolerated, it saps the spiritual life, and to bring forth fruit to perfection is
impossible. Let it be noted that fleshly lusts war against the soul. "Mortify
therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness,
passion, evil desire, and covetousness, the which is idolatry" (Col.3:5). Kill those foxes when they are little, or they may soon be grown
and be too swift for you to catch!

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller
It was two years to the day after his courageous and sensational visit to Jerusalem that President Sadat flew to Mount Sinai and raised the Egyptian flag there. The area had been newly handed back to Egypt by Israel as part of the agreed withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula. Sadat used the occasion to announce a new ambition — to unify three of the world's greatest religions, Muslim, Christian and Jewish.

On February 26, 1980, the Israeli flag, the Star of David, was unfurled at Israel's newly opened embassy in Cairo. The official in charge declared: "From this moment Israel has its house in Egypt, and within a few days Egypt will have its house in Israel". The Egyptians did open their embassy in Tel Aviv later the same week.

These developments were of course in pursuance of the Camp David agreement. At the Aswan Summit Meeting (the sixth since Camp David), between Premier Begin and President Sadat, there was agreement to resume normal relations between Israel and Egypt on January 26, 1980, and to exchange ambassadors a month later. Egypt undertook to establish direct air services between Tel Aviv and Cairo, to set up postal and communication links, and open the land borders between the two countries to civilian traffic.

On the issue of autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs who live in the Gaza Strip and West Bank areas, however, only limited progress seemed possible. The Israelis insist that autonomy means only a limited measure of self-rule for the Palestinians. The Egyptians press for significant steps towards ultimate independence for these two regions. Feeling runs high between Jews and Palestinians on this issue, as shown by a number of episodes — Arab mayors in these areas resigned en masse as a protest against the arrest of the Mayor of Nablus for allegedly approving terrorist activity.

An ultra nationalist group of Israeli settlers seemed set to defy a Supreme Court order that declared
its West Bank settlement illegal; but they were finally persuaded to accept an alternative site five miles away.

Other West Bank Jewish settlers pressed their right to live in the Arab town of Hebron. The Israeli Cabinet's agreement in principle aroused strong resentment among Palestinian Arabs.

The issue of Jewish settlement in Arab areas was before the Security Council of the United Nations, and was at first unanimously condemned — until President Carter announced that the American representative should have abstained and not voted in favour of the resolution.

Towards the end of the Aswan Summit Begin is reported as saying: "Autonomy is a novelty, and we must be patient". He did, however, promise to discuss with his Cabinet a new two-part proposal by which autonomy would first be put into effect in Gaza. Compared with the West Bank, the Gaza Strip does not arouse such emotional and religious resentments among Israeli nationalists.

In both Israel and Egypt tremendous hopes had been stirred by the prospect of peace following the Camp David Agreement. It was expected that some relief from military burdens, and expanded trade opportunities, would bring solid economic advantages to both countries. In the event, these hopes have so far been disappointed. Early this year inflation in Israel was running at 100%; some food prices went up by 50% overnight! "A popular argument questions the use of celebrating peace if you cannot do so on a full stomach". Egypt has fared badly too. Millions of Egyptians live below the bread line. President Sadat's repeated assurances that the rewards of peace will surely come if only his people are patient must eventually wear thin. Because other Arab States are annoyed at Egypt's treaty with Israel, they are limiting financial assistance, making Egypt's economic situation more difficult. So there is increasing disillusionment.

At an ancient time of crisis, in the days of Isaiah, the people of Israel looked to Egypt for help (Isa.30:1-7; Isa.31:1; Isa.36:6,7). The result was sadly recorded by Jeremiah: "In our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save" (Lam.4:17). For Egypt's once immense power was even then on the wane. "Thus saith the Lord God, ... I will bring again the captivity of Egypt... and they shall be there a base kingdom... neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations. ... and it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel" (Ezek.29:13-16). Attempts to sustain the existing peace treaty between Israel and Egypt may appear to have some success for a while. But it seems clear from Joel 3:19 that Egypt will be included in a dire visitation of judgement at the time of Messiah's advent to deliver Israel and establish His millennial kingdom. So we may expect

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Themes from Hebrews

(7) "The Way of the Holies"

By T. M. Hyland, of Birkenhead

Discriminating expositors of the epistle to the Hebrews have commented on its distinctive character and style. In particular, they have pointed out that it differs in emphasis and scope from the great treatise on the gospel in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Sir Robert Anderson puts this cogently: "In the epistle to the Romans the scene was laid in the hall of judgement. The righteous God was on the throne. At the bar stood the sinner, guilty, condemned, and silent. The righteous sentence had gone forth, and he had not a word to offer why it should not be fulfilled. Then we see how when all hope was dead, sovereign grace could justify the guilty even as he stood, and call him from the very bar of judgement to fellowship with Christ in glory.

When we turn to the epistle to the Hebrews a new scene presents itself. The centre object is a holy shrine, not the throne of righteousness. It is surrounded, not by lost and guilty outcasts, but by a redeemed and happy people. They are in the wilderness, however, beset with infirmity and sin... Hebrews takes up the story of redemption not at the twelth chapter of Exodus but at the twenty-fourth".

In the study of the epistle Anderson's weighty words are worthy of notice. They cast light on some of the difficult sections of the book which have perplexed many commentators. It has been the concern of former contributors to this series on "Themes from Hebrews" to relate the body of doctrine in the epistle to its primary place in the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. The exposition has been based on two main premises:

(1) The epistle has in view a people whose standing in the present age is analogous to that of the nation of Israel, God's covenant people in the past (Ex.19:4-6), and

(2) the persons addressed composed God's spiritual house, and their continuance as such was conditional: "Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb.3:6).

If these premises are valid, and we suggest they are beyond dispute, the teaching of the epistle should be interpreted accordingly. It follows from them that the particular facet of the doctrine of the Lord presented in Hebrews relates primarily to the duties and privileges of disciples gathered in churches of God, and not to their standing as members of the Church which is Christ's Body (Eph.1:22,23; Eph.5:30).
God's New Covenant people

Israel's adoption as the people of God took place at Mount Sinai. The covenant was not ratified until the assembled Israelites gave assent to its terms. This given, the people were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant and became "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex.19:6). Henceforth they would be subject to divine government in every phase of their national life. We are concerned here mainly with their service in the sanctuary. Regulations governing this followed in due course. But first they must provide in their midst a tabernacle where God would dwell and where they would discharge their priestly service. Accordingly, Moses passed on to them Jehovah's momentous invitation, "And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex.25:8).

All of this has its counterpart in the "better" things of Hebrews and is pertinent to our present study. Under the terms of the New Covenant, as under the Old, the house of God and its priestly service are interdependent and inseparable. In Hebrews a worshipping people are in view. Men of faith had been permitted to approach God individually from the days of Abel onwards (witness Daniel and Nehemiah in captivity). But not until there was a divine dwelling place on earth could His redeemed people offer divine service collectively. Likewise, in the present age, the collective drawing near to God of a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet.2:5) is to be distinguished from the privilege of each child of God to approach his heavenly Father at all times in prayer and praise, using the offices of his Advocate (1 Jn 2:1).

The section of the epistle under consideration in this study is 9:1-10:25. The phrase "the way of the holies" which we use for our title, is a literal rendering of "the way into the holy place" (9:8 — see Nestle Greek text). That "way", with regulations regarding its use, is the main subject of this part of the epistle which terminates with the definitive statement: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place (holies) by the blood of Jesus, by the way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a Great Priest over the house of God; let us draw near . . . (Heb.10:19-22).

The High Priest of our confession

Contributors to this series of articles in previous months have discussed the investiture of the High Priest of the New Covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ. His credentials for that office and the ministry proper to it have been reviewed in some detail. It may be relevant here to notice the orderly development of this theme in the structure of the epistle. Early reference is
made to the ministry of Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, who gave succour to Abraham in an hour of approaching temptation (Gen.14:18-24). The incident fore-shadowed our High Priest's succouring ministry to God's tried and tempted people as they journey through the wilderness with its perils and discouragements. This side of His compassionate ministry as High Priest is prominent in 2:17,18; 4:14-16; 7:25. He was prepared for it in "the days of His flesh":

"He, touched with trials that attend
The weakness of our frame,
Can sympathetic succour lend,
For He has known the same",

At the beginning of Heb.8 we arrive at the chief point of the argument. All that has gone before has been leading up to this: "We have such a High Priest... a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man". Prior place is now given to His ministry in the holies on behalf of God's people. This is the first occurrence of the Greek *hagia* (holies), the plural of the neuter adjective *hagion*. Subsequently, it occurs in Heb.9:12,24,25; Heb.10:19; Heb.13:11. This use is peculiar to Hebrews; no separate word "place" (*topos*) being added as, for example, in Matt.24:15. The Greek noun *latreia* (with its cognate verb *latreu*) now comes frequently into the context in this section of the epistle, leading to the conclusion that entrance into the holies by God's gathered people is for the purpose of *latreia* — divine worship.

**Ordinances of divine service**

The arrangements made by God for Israel's worship under the Sinaitic Covenant are briefly outlined in Heb.9:1-10. They served under a disadvantage. No priest of the Aaronic order was able to enter the sanctuary in the heavens. To overcome this disability God gave instructions for a copy of the heavenly things to be embodied in the Mosaic tabernacle. The "copy" was "earthly" and temporary, as also were its furnishings and ritual. But it was also parabolic. Our concern is to interpret the parable and its bearing on the worship of God's New Covenant people.

There were two compartments in the "copy"; an outer, "the first tabernacle", called the Holy place; and an inner, "the second tabernacle," called the Holy of holies. There were two beautiful hangings; the first at the entrance to the Holy place; the other, "the second veil", at the entrance to the Holy of holies. The first compartment was in daily use; the second was used only in Israel's year — on the day of atonement. On that day the high priest passed within the second veil to carry out the prescribed ritual and then withdrew.
Having discussed the layout of the sanctuary in the Mosaic tabernacle, its way of approach into the divine presence, and the ritual necessary to it, the writer of Hebrews, makes this enlightening pronouncement — "The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place (holies) hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing" (Heb.9:8). This defining comment has a crucial bearing on the exposition of this section of the epistle. Yet it poses a problem. In Heb.9:2,6 the term "the first tabernacle" clearly refers to the outer compartment of the sanctuary, the Holy place. Are we to conclude that this is the meaning of the term in verse 8, or does it there describe the entire structure? Commentators differ on this; by far the greater number taking the latter view (e.g. see F. F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on Hebrews*, p. 194). Both views are equally compatible with the overall exposition in this section of our study. But the present writer inclines to the former view. If a writer building up an intricate argument uses a term three times in close proximity, would we not conclude, in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, that it has the same significance in each case? In the absence of proof to the contrary we will assume that the term "the first tabernacle" has one and the same meaning in each of its three uses. On this assumption we offer the following exposition:

**A New and Living Way**

"The way of the holies" (Heb.9:8) is the "new and living way" (Heb.10:20) by which God's New Covenant people draw near to worship in the sanctuary in the heavens. No exact copy of heavenly things could be reproduced in "holies made with hands" (Heb.9:24). In the Mosaic tabernacle the way of approach was concealed by the boards and curtains of the Holy place. The worshippers could not see their high priest passing through the veil into the Holy of holies. This defect in the type is a parable for the time now present. It signified that not until the Antitype of the veil had been "manifested in the flesh" could "the new and living way" be disclosed.

In the development of his theme the writer of Hebrews introduces various related matters. These are all necessary and relevant to his "chief point", but if they are detached from it the thrust of the argument loses some of its force. The general run of commentators widen the applicability of Heb.10:19-22 to a degree that detracts from its primary significance. They interpret the passage as applying to all "access to God through the sacrifice of Christ". It is gloriously true, of course, that the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the basis of all acceptance with God. But, in keeping with the general tenor of the epistle, the "drawing near" in the passage under review has a more specific reference. Under the New Covenant, as under the Old, God's people are
required to assemble for worship at stated times in the manner prescribed. The entrance into the holies (Heb. 10:19) is that of a worshipping people who draw near to offer to God spiritual sacrifices through their great High Priest.

When the High Priest of our confession "through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holies" (Heb. 9:12) he initiated the way of approach for God's New Covenant people. He is a "Forerunner" (Heb. 6:20) whose arrival "within the veil" (Heb. 6:19, 20) guarantees the right of entrance to His redeemed people, a concept which has no parallel in tabernacle typology.

We pause here for a brief comment on the phrase, "... through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10:20). In Hebrews no reference is made to the rending of the veil in Herod's temple (Matt. 27:51). It is nowhere stated or implied that this event had its counterpart in the greater and more perfect tabernacle. Yet the almost unanimous view of commentators is that the veil in the Mosaic tabernacle barred the way into God's presence, and therefore, in the antitype, it must be rent asunder to secure unrestricted entrance. After pondering this theory for many years the present writer remains unconvinced of its validity. To argue the case against it in detail would require a separate paper. A few points are submitted for consideration:

1. If the rending of the veil in the temple had typical teaching in regard to entrance into the holies, would we not expect some hint of this in Hebrews or elsewhere in the New Testament?
2. Herod's temple was forsaken by God (Matt. 23:38) before its veil was rent asunder: the Glory had departed. Does this not preclude the idea that the rending of the veil opened a way into God's presence?
3. It was a tabernacle with a veil intact that was a copy of the heavenly things.
4. Does not the phrase "within the veil" (Heb. 6:19) imply that in the antitype the veil is not rent but in place, forming part of the "new and living way" initiated for God's people by their Forerunner?
5. The rending of the veil in Herod's temple demonstrated that the Glory had departed, and that God no longer dwelt in a temple made with hands. Henceforth the worship of God's people would be offered in the true tabernacle in heaven.

The veil was not a barrier any more than was the screen at the door of the tabernacle; both were means of access, but entrance was permitted to certain persons only, and on specific occasions. In the new economy entrance for worship is the privilege of all God's people. The veil typified the incarnate Christ through whom they enter the holies.

As the high priest faced the Holy of holies in the tabernacle the beautifully blended colours of the veil met his gaze. These spoke of the
excellencies of the Man, Christ Jesus. So, in the "new and living way" of the heavenly sanctuary the excellencies and glories of the Christ fill the vision and ravish the hearts of the approaching worshippers.

"Let us draw near"

"Three times in a year shall thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose... and they shall not appear before the LORD empty" (Deut.16:16). The standing of Israel as God's holy people depended on the strict observance of this statute. The holy convocations at the set feasts were the focus of their national unity. These feasts foreshadowed the good things to come, and they remain on record — a veritable mine of spiritual wealth to students of Old Testament typology. But in themselves they were carnal ordinances which have now been superseded by the "better" things of the New Covenant.

In the Upper Room on the night of His betrayal the Lord Jesus bequeathed to God's New Covenant people a precious remembrance ceremony: "This do", He said, "in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor.11:23-25). This was in no sense a sacrifice or a ground of access into the holies. It was a festival of remembrance, no more and no less, to be observed when a local church assembled (in congregation, 1 Cor.11:18, RVM) on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Its purpose was to focus the minds and hearts of God's people on the Person of their adorable Redeemer.

From 1 Cor.14:26 it is clear that other spiritual exercises have their proper place at the meeting of the assembly on the first day of the week, but the main purpose of that gathering is "to break bread" (Acts 20:7). It is this ordinance that gives unique character to the meeting. Is it not clearly intended that the Remembrance should be "the focal point" (J. Drain) of the worship of God's people? This is the occasion when a holy priesthood enters in spirit into the heavenly sanctuary by the "new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh". Using the offices of the great Priest over God's house, spiritual sacrifices are offered — "the fruit of lips which make confession to His name" (Heb.13:15). What more fitting than that the precious memories of our absent but soon-coming Redeemer, thus stirred in our hearts, should unloose the flow of adoration and praise to His God and Father! May it be so in greater measure and increasing devotion, "till He come!"

"Accepted through His death are we
To be a priesthood, serving Thee,
What joy is ours, through saving grace,
To worship in the holy place!"
Contemporary Issues in Christian Life
(4) The Quiet Time
By Edwin Neely, of Brantford, Ontario

Most readers of Needed Truth will not need to be convinced that a daily
time alone with God is vital for successful Christian living. But it is one thing
to know this, another to use it, and still another to use it to best advantage. A
more dedicated application of ourselves to this daily devotional period may
be the necessary ingredient for greater victory in both our individual and
collective living. This article shares a few thoughts about establishing a time
and using it wisely.

You live in a world that is no friend to the One you serve. Nor will this
world feed you with the food necessary for you to thrive on your heavenly
journey. Your walk demands fellowship with God, a communion of your
heart with His, a quiet listening to His tender voice. So, the need for the
Quiet Time. Use the Lord Jesus as your example:
"The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of them that are taught, that
I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: He
wakeneth morning by morning. He wakeneth Mine ear to hear..."
(Isa.50:4).

"Them that honour Me," says He, "I will honour.

Morning, before the clutter of the day encroaches on us, may be the best
time, but whether then or another time, do fix a time when you can be
unhurried and alone. Prayerfully commit this time to God and then consider
it the most important of all daily appointments. Find a quiet place where
you can pursue your devotions without interruption. You will need a few
moments to begin with to quieten your spirit and to develop a sense of
expectancy, to discipline your mind, and to avoid preoccupation with self.
Expect to delight yourself in the Lord. Expect to pray and have your prayers
answered, and expect to receive a gem from the Word of God. This will not
be done in a spirit of hurry or worry. Do not use this devotional time to
prepare for meeting or Sunday School. Quiet Time is not for task prepara-
tion or education; it is for feasting upon the Lord. Prepare your heart for it.
Do not hurry through it. The busier you are, the more you need it
(Eccles.9:10).

Begin your time in prayer. Not just a reciting of things that you need, but a
confession of your sins, your weaknesses, your problems. Purge yourself of
these things. Then give yourself to thanksgiving, not only for things, but for
Christ and all that He means to you. Next there will be others and their
problems to lay before the Lord. Then your own needs may occupy your
prayer. When Job prayed for his friends, God turned his captivity and began to give him more than he had ever had before.

Bible reading is next. Read according to a plan — not too much at any one time — maybe a dozen verses or a short chapter, but read it through two or three times to help it settle in your mind and heart. Use the Scriptures alone in your quiet time. Meditate on the word itself. Commentaries and helps have their place, but at some other time. Jot down short notes, a recall help for other times, perhaps including from your portion one sin to be forsaken, a promise to be claimed, a special revelation of some facet of the character of Christ, an example to be followed, a commandment to be obeyed, or a pitfall to be avoided. Ask yourself just what this reading can do for you today, and then see how the Spirit of God brings it to mind in the busy hours that follow.

There are a few additional practical aids which you might find helpful. Do all in your power to preserve the time without interruption. Don’t do all the talking — listen. Don't try to crowd in too much reading. Do give yourself at least twenty minutes, and more if possible, but quality is better than quantity. If you have to miss a day, don't feel that the whole day is wasted. Confess your failure to keep the appointment, and get back on track as soon as possible. Don't skip the Lord's Day, even though you will be spending much of it in spiritual pursuits. Work for the Lord does not replace sitting at His feet, as we need to learn, as did Martha.

Finally, commit your day to the Lord, to guide you through it and to use it and to use you to glorify Himself. It will not be long before you begin to reap the harvest of your Quiet Time. And this is a reaping the results of which will go on throughout eternity.

"Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;
And run not before Him, whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow still follow thy Lord.
And looking to Jesus, still trust in His word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul.
Each thought and each temper beneath His control.
Thus led by His Spirit and filled with His love
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above".
The Lamp of David and of Israel

By J. L. Ferguson, of Barrhead, Scotland

In the eyes of his men, David was "the lamp of Israel". On one occasion in the day of battle they asked him to remain in the city for, they said, "thou art worth ten thousand of us" (2 Sam.18:3). To them he was "the chiefest among ten thousand". A short time later, when the old warrior became faint in the battlefield and might well have been slain had not Abishai given him cover, his men made a final decision. "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the lamp of Israel" (2 Sam.21:17). We see in David leadership of the highest quality.

The days of Saul were insecure days for Israel. Very early in his reign he rejected the word of the Lord, with a rebellion which Samuel the prophet likened to witchcraft, and with a stubbornness which the prophet compared to idolatry and teraphim. It was a prophetic simile. In due course the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, to be replaced by a very disturbing evil spirit. He set himself fanatically against the younger man who had become the nation's hero. Totally out of touch with the Lord, he evidenced not the slightest interest in the fact that the Ark of the Covenant, so dear to God and essential to the Tabernacle service, was lying forgotten in a man's dwelling house. It was only a matter of time till the prophetic simile caught up with him and he went down to Endor to consult with a witch.

So although in Saul there may have been good things found (as e.g. in 1 Chron.26:28), overall his was a spiritually dark reign for the nation of Israel. But there was light in Adullam's cave. To David, God Himself was a Lamp. In his great song of final deliverance from all his enemies he wrote, "For Thou art my Lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness" (2 Sam.22:29). As a consequence, Israel had a leader in David, and an eventual king, whose mind was illuminated by a great closeness to the Lord, and in turn he spiritually illuminated an ever-widening circle of influence in the nation.

At which stages in his life he wrote all his more than seventy psalms we have no certain knowledge. It is clear from their various headings that some were penned while David was hunted by Saul, right through to the later years of his subsequent reign. As the man was in his writings, so he would be in his speakings, as for example in the well known words of Ps.34:11. And he so enlightened Israel in the knowledge and appreciation of their God that when he revealed his longing to bring the sacred Ark up to Jerusalem, the whole assembly of the nation was in whole-hearted agreement (1 Chron.13:1-4). Also when later he proposed building a palace-like house for the Lord, the
entire nation offered willingly for the supply of material required, "with a perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD" (1 Chron.29:9). Thus David conformed in large measure to the choice simile in his own last words, "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds;... through clear shining after rain" (2 Sam.23:4); which words of course will receive their final fulfilment in his greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Israel's spiritual barometer read very high in those days. The nation was taking character from David their leader, their enlightener, their "lamp". And God's heart was greatly moved as He saw the thoughts of His own heart reflected in a man who wished to do all His will. So He promised him two things. The first of these we considered briefly in a previous issue of this magazine. That was the covenant of a house, a throne and a kingdom. The second promise was a continuing "lamp" in Jerusalem.

Israel's excellent spiritual condition was of short duration. David's son Solomon wrote, "for what can the man do that cometh after the king?" (Eccles.2:12). Well might he ask, for what in the event did he do? Culminating in his later disastrous years, all he did was to break down what his godly father, king David, had so superbly built up. As a result, forty years after David's death, ten of the twelve tribes he had moulded together separated from the royal house, and left off their association with the magnificent temple of God in Jerusalem. It was a major spiritual disaster in the space of one generation, and what was constructed for God under God-fearing leadership was brought to ruin under the power of flesh-ridden compromise with sin.

Had it not been for God's affectionate remembrance of David, all twelve tribes would have been taken from Solomon's succession. But "for David My servant's sake, whom I chose, because He kept My commandments and My statutes", God gave two tribes to Rehoboam, "that David My servant may have a lamp alway before Me in Jerusalem" (1 Kgs.11:34-36).

That lamp burned on in Jerusalem, although sometimes in flicker only by reason of the recurring darkening apostasy of Judah's kings. Some seventy years after Rehoboam's death the inspired historian confirmed, in the reign of wicked Jehoram, the promise of the lamp to David and for his children (2 Kgs.8:19). So no matter how great may have been the iniquity and rebellion of the house of David and the people of Judah the promise of Ps.132:17 remained written, "I have ordained a lamp for Mine anointed". The purposes of God in the succession of the royal house of David continued and the illumination of the knowledge of God did not cease from the lips of the prophets in Jerusalem.

Then one day, when the lamp of David burned low, "the people which sat
in darkness saw a great light" (Matt.4:16). He was "a light for revelation to
the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Lk.2:32). It was "too
light a thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of
Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light
to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth"
(Isa.49:6). So Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world", That Light, Israel
rejected but could not extinguish.

Then Israel was scattered and for centuries has been buried in the graves
of the nations. Is there no lamp left to David? No lamp for his children? Hear
the word of the Lord in Isa.60:1, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the
glory of the L ORD is risen upon thee". The word "thy" is feminine singular
and speaks of Jerusalem as representing Israel. For, "the L ORD shall be
unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (v. 19). And sitting on
David's throne will be David's Lord; in infinite, redeeming grace, David's
Son. The lamp of David will never go out.

As for ourselves, what a delight to be able to trace the fulfilment of God's
promises, as in Scripture they became history ("His story", as a voice now
still used to say). And to see also, after centuries have rolled by since the
completion of Scripture, all the signs around us that these same promises
are now approaching their final fulfilment. Thus "we have the word of
prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a
lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in
your hearts (2 Pet.1:19).

The Faithfulness of Moses

By T. W. Fullerton, of Melbourne

"Moses My servant is dead" (Josh.1:2).

Many are the tributes, either true or false, written in obituary notices of
those who have passed into eternity. But this tribute stands alone. There
were those who in his lifetime envied Moses; there were those who hated
him; and without doubt there were also those who loved him. But here is the
commendation of Jehovah, inscribed upon the pages of the living word of
God. No testimony from the lips of men can compare with this, "Moses My
servant is dead". Many tributes were paid to Moses by the eternal Son in the
days of His flesh. In Heb.3:5 we read: "Moses indeed was faithful in all His
(God's) house as a servant" and in Heb.11:24-29 is recorded the testimony
of the same inspired writer to his faithfulness.

The first five books of the Holy Scriptures are, we believe, rightly
attributed to Moses. Four of them contain his history, a life devoted to the service of Jehovah, His dwelling-place and His people. Before Amram and Jochebed became husband and wife, God had that life in view. By an act of faith Moses was hidden three months by his parents. By an act of faith he was placed in an ark of bulrushes. He was a child of faith.

It has been said of him, "Moses spent forty years learning to be a somebody, forty years learning to be a nobody and forty years learning that God was everything". He led the people of Israel through the Sinaitic desert, having received the pattern of God's dwelling-place and built it in their midst. The language of the heart of Moses was akin to that of David who, at a later date said, "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life", and the Lord granted him his request. How different would it have been if he had become a Pharaoh, and heir to the riches of Egypt! Then all we would know of him now would be whatever historians and archaeologists could tell us. But he counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. It had been revealed to him that he would have a great successor, "A prophet shall the Lord raise up" to be a leader of Israel, and because of what had been revealed to him concerning the Anointed One or Christ, he chose rather to suffer affliction and the privations of desert life with a despised people rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season in the court of Pharaoh.

Those who, like Moses, have found a place in the house of God have a divine inheritance not recognized by men of this world, nevertheless a place of priceless privilege and of God's choice. There has always been a price to pay for God's things and there has been a continual price to pay in the holding of them. The Lord of life and glory who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, planned to bring out of the world that wondrous thing "The Church which is His Body" had a price to pay for it. "He laid aside His glory". He became "of no reputation" to redeem it. In the sight of the world we are nothing, but in the sight of God we are part of "a pearl of great price", and when we find a place in the house of God where we can serve Him according to His revealed will, we can offer "spiritual sacrifices". Our place in the Body of Christ we can never sell or forfeit, but our place in the house of God we can sell for a trifle, as did Esau his birthright, it may be for the pleasures of sin, or a little popularity, or a place among men of this world. Satan knows what to offer. If we sell, the loss will be eternal and we shall experience the sorrow resulting therefrom in this life. Demas, a fellow worker with Paul, "loved this present world" and forsook the work of the Lord. We find many similar examples in both Old and New Testaments. In the book of Ruth we read of a famine in the land and because of it Elimelech
leaving and taking with him wife and two sons into the land of godless Moab. Years later his widow, through the mercy of God, returned to Bethlehem-Judah, but with this confession, "I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty". Sometimes there has been a famine in God's land, for one reason or another, but the word of the Lord has always been, "Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Ps.37:3 AV).

"Moses My servant is dead". God's tribute to His servant is an eternal one. What will he have to say about us when the record of our lives is unveiled?

(contd. from page 99)

Egypt again to be found ranged among the adversaries of Israel as the final crisis of the nations develops. True peace is already proving elusive, and the peace treaty fragile. "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of healing, and behold dismay!" (Jer.8:15).

President Sadat's expressed ambition to unify the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religions reflects his blindness to the Person of Christ, the Prince of Peace. For when the unique claims of God's Son are disregarded, human efforts to achieve lasting peace must fail. "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape" (1 Thess.5:3).
Voices from the Past

The First and Second Man (1)

Both the Old and New Testaments begin with a Book of Genesis. In Gen.2:4 we read: "These are the generations of the heaven and the earth when they were created". Again, in Gen.5:1 we read: "This is the book of the generations of Adam". We also read of the generations of Noah, and then, when God called and separated Abram, the genealogy especially followed is that through Isaac and Jacob. The Gospel according to Matthew begins: "The book of the generation (genesis) of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham". Genesis deals with the generations of the earth and its inhabitants, but Matthew gives the generation of Him who made the world, Immanuel. It is not His generation as God that is given — He "whose goings forth are... from everlasting" — such a generation is not revealed to men. It is His generation as Man, one born of a woman. This is not an endless or needless genealogy; it is a pedigree to prove a title, and make out a claim. As King, He is the Son of Abraham and David; those to whom God especially made promise regarding Messiah. Those who are to be blessed with Abraham's blessing are to be subject to the rule of David's Son. Unless Christ be proved to be Abraham's Son and David's Son, His claim to Messiahship cannot be admitted.

It is alleged that since the dispersion of Israel no Jew can now legally claim to be a son of David, proving such by his genealogy, so that the kingship of Israel must be lodged in the hands of our blessed Lord or be lost for ever. He is not merely a Son of David, but the Son, upon whose shoulders rests the government. God has fulfilled His royal promise to David, and, like so many of His ways, He fulfilled it when it laboured under the greatest improbabilities. It seems almost beyond question that Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph, whereas that of Luke is Mary's line. The Saviour must be the Son of a woman (Gen.3:15) but the King must reckon His claim to kingship by the male line. Christ was born in wedlock, and though conceived miraculously, the Son that God gave miraculously to Joseph by his wife, Mary, has an unchallengeable right to the throne. Furthermore, He was King by divine appointment; He is King by the grace of God. The kingdom of Messiah is not derived from David, but rather, David's kingdom was established through Messiah, who is the Root as well as the Offspring of David.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
World-wide Church

From the Greek word *oikoumenikos* (meaning "of the inhabited earth") comes our word "ecumenism" — the concept of uniting all "Christian" denominations in one great world-wide communion. Since the early 20th century this idea has caught the imagination of many religious leaders in Christendom, and its appeal is undiminished today.

Despite periodic set-backs considerable practical progress has been made by the ecumenical movement. At an early phase the initiative came mainly from within Western Protestantism. By the late 1930s the Eastern Orthodox Church and the so-called "younger churches" of Asia and Africa were taking an important part. Until the early 1960s Roman Catholic participation was expressed only through interested individuals; but a change of attitude was reflected in the Second Vatican Council Decree on Ecumenism (1964), which referred to members of other communions as "separated brethren" rather than as outside the Roman Catholic church. Regional and national Councils of Churches have been formed in many parts of the world to promote the ecumenical idea, and these now include Roman Catholic representatives.

The World Council of Churches, formally constituted at Amsterdam in 1948, now has its headquarters at Geneva. It claims to be the "Fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour". Apart from the Roman Catholic church and Unitarians, the Council includes all the main denominations of the West, nearly all the Eastern Orthodox churches, and about 150 other churches of the non-western world, mainly in Asia and Africa. Since 1961 the Roman Catholic church has sent accredited observers to Assemblies of the Council, and in 1968 it became a full member of the Faith and Order Commission. Most of the work of the Council is advisory, but it has a large number of administrative units, and is a mainspring of the ecumenical movement.

In a statement to Roman Catholic
ecumenists from 59 nations, Pope John Paul II recently stated that Christian divisions "impair the credibility of Christ Himself and hinder the spread of the gospel. In his drive for "Christian unity" John Paul appears to be giving priority to the Eastern Orthodox church. Last December he visited Istanbul to meet Patriarch Dimitrios I, and became the first Pope in nine centuries to join in an Orthodox Eucharistic service. In a joint statement Pope and Patriarch declared their ultimate goal to be nothing less than "re-establishment of full communion" between the world's 700 million Roman Catholics and 125 million Eastern Orthodox adherents.

Ecumenical trends are pronounced also in the Anglican church, today estimated to have a membership of over 60 million, represented around the world in 27 national groupings. At the fourth meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, held in Canada and representing all Anglicans world-wide, it was agreed to make representations to the Vatican, proposing a new joint commission to discuss mutual relations. Since then a new Archbishop of Canterbury has been appointed — Dr. Robert Runcie. He is Primate of all England, and spiritual leader of Anglicans world-wide. He is said to have a "strong sense of the Church of England as part of the world-wide Catholic Church". When he was installed as Archbishop at Canterbury Cathedral, in April 1980, the Roman Catholic Cardinal Hume was invited to read the Epistle during the ceremony. This has been described as "a remarkable ecumenical break with tradition" and seems to indicate the trend of things to be expected.

The Lord Jesus prayed for those who would believe through the word of His apostles "that they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me" (Jn 17:20-23). So the concept of a world-wide unity of committed Christian disciples was clearly in the Lord's mind. As the apostles fulfilled the Great Commission that visible unity was indeed achieved. For disciples were gathered into churches of God, and those churches are seen in our New Testament as one spiritual kingdom (Acts 1:3), one house (1 Pet.2:5), one flock (1 Pet.5:2,3).

But the basis of that original world-wide unity in churches of God was obedience to the Lord's word (Jn 17:17-19); agreement to scriptural principle. In contrast, modern ecumenism strives to achieve union by accommodation of one denomination's view to those of another at the expense of scriptural principle. It is an exercise in expediency and compromise. Many of those involved have not come to assurance of salvation through faith in Christ, let alone the full knowledge of the truth (1 Tim.2:4).

So in regard to the ecumenical movement of our time, the Christian believer (contd. on page 128)
Themes from Hebrews

(8) Faith's Vision of the Unseen (Chapter 11)

By R. B. Fullarton, of Innerleithen

Faith — Necessity

The Lord Jesus Christ, in saying to the disciples "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see", was not referring to physical objects perceived by natural sight but to what was the subject of divine revelation; spiritual truths seen by the eye of faith. As natural sight is precious so is faith's vision of the realm of the spiritual. When this vision dims, the life of faith will suffer. The sublime operations of the ways and works of God are spiritually discerned (1 Cor.2:14). Most often 'believing' is 'seeing', not vice versa. The spiritual landscape brought into view by the focus of the eye of faith is rich and breath-taking. A believer's progress is not maintained with reference to the visible landmarks of this passing world. Faith guarantees perseverance. Without faith, ever present and sinister forces pitted against the Christian would prove too powerful. It is not easy to fulfil the exhortation "Walk by faith" (2 Cor.5:7) in a hostile, material world, largely atheistic and scornful of faith. Yet all has been foreseen by a merciful God who has "granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet.1:3). Men and women of faith are sustained and spurred on by looking to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of faith.

The Wider Context

Repeatedly in this epistle the importance of faith is emphasized as being the principle which should govern a life well-pleasing to God. Attention has been drawn in the preceding chapters to the perils of unbelief. Spiritual disaster will result from the abandonment of faith. By the command of God the visible creation was brought into existence. It can be accounted for in no other way. Scientific research deals with what exists; the question of discovery of ultimate origin must be the quest of faith. The inspired writer regards faith as spiritual apprehension of divine truth. It produces inward conviction and certainty of the reality of the unseen, does not seek full explanations but accepts unquestionably the revelation of God. Eternal things become factual and real.

Quotation has already been made of Habakkuk's profound statement, "My righteous one shall live by faith" (Heb.10:38). In the first six verses of chapter 11 the writer now describes vividly the effects of faith, and this description is followed by a series of wonderfully depicted profiles of
outstanding personalities of Bible history, whose lives were marked by this virtue. The heroes of faith are not chosen at random. They are carefully selected as appropriate to the main theme of the epistle, namely the supremacy and excellence of Christ over all others; selected also to encourage the saints of these early days to avert the danger of deserting their new Leader and reverting to their old life.

The men and women of Heb.11 acted and lived in the light of revelation from God which altered the course of their lives. They perceived by faith the unseen and eternal. Seven men and one woman of faith are mentioned by name in the period from the beginning of God's work with the human race until the Law (vv. 4-23). The same number are connected with the kingdom and nation of Israel (vv. 23-32). In all these individuals faith was tested under the most severe conditions. Faith was the salient feature and nothing seemed impossible where it existed.

From Abel to Abraham (Heb.11:1-12)

Remarkable light is thrown upon the faith of many, faith which is sometimes not readily observed from the record in Genesis and Exodus. God alone sees faith where men often attribute failure. In some lives, of course, failure gives place to faith.

In Abel, the first martyr, faith led to sacrifice spiritually then physically. Accepted by God, he was hated by his brother. Today, Cain's error is repeated in the attachment of men to their works, seeking justification before God. In rejecting the way to God through the virtue of Christ's offering of Himself they stain their hands with blood exceedingly more precious than Abel's (cf. Heb.10:29). Faith is the initial and continual condition of approach to God. Testimony was borne by God to Abel's faith. That faith is still speaking today.

Enoch's faith led to fellowship, walking with God in the midst of increasing perversity (Jude 1:14,15). He suffered mocking and reproach. The occasion would come later when there would be the visible token of God's presence and dwelling with men in the cloud of glory. The absence of this gave more opportunity for the fuller exercise of faith in acknowledging the reality of God's Person and Presence.

Noah is next cited. His life of faith produced witness, for in action and word he was a preacher of righteousness. His godly fear and devout life, emphasized by references in Ezek.14:14 and Peter (2 Pet.2:5) enabled him with patient endurance to live by faith. The consideration of Him who patiently endured the gainsaying of sinners in His pathway will prevent fainting in our souls and waxing weary in the road of conflict (Heb.12:3).
Abraham trusted God, believed His promise and obeyed His word. He was willing to live as an alien in the country given to him in promise and viewed his accommodation as temporary. As through a telescope, his faith could see the eternal city planned and prepared by God in reward to faith. His faith and implicit obedience had a profound effect upon his progeny. Sarah, his wife, turned from disbelief to faith. Laughter at the idea of conceiving a son in advanced years betrayed scepticism and brought rebuke from the Lord. Faith finally soared above doubt in acceptance of God's promise.

**Strangers and Pilgrims (Heb.11:13-16)**

The lovely epitome of these verses shows stamina being produced by faith when it is accompanied by witness — "they that say such things" (v. 14). In faith they lived, in faith they died. The call of God was heard and obeyed. Eagerly they sought the fulfilment of the promises, having greeted them, yet they did not receive them in the fuller sense (v. 40). As pilgrims in this world they started on the long trek of faith, distant prospects appearing just over the horizon, courageous travellers longing for their permanent home. Their native soil held no attraction for them; they could have returned had they so desired. Their ambitions and aspirations were independent of this age, scavengers of this world's paltry fare they would not be. They moved out in faith's expedition, "wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God" (v. 16).

**From Abraham to Joshua (Heb.11:17-31)**

The writer resumes the story of Abraham in relating the event of Gen.22 and draws out faith's triumph when tried. Isaac's death would nullify God's promises of the Seed, the land and the nation but Abraham's faith was equal to the test. He knew the truth of resurrection and acted through faith in believing God would raise his son from the dead. This typified the work of God at a later date in full accomplishment through the death and resurrection of the Only-begotten from the Father.

Isaac by faith blessed Jacob and Esau. From the Genesis record a very different conclusion could be drawn by the casual observer. The younger son deceived his father. Isaac had preferred the first-born, Esau, but realized that the purposes of God must stand (Gen.25:23), and so did not cancel the blessing given to Jacob (Gen.27:33). Esau was given a subsidiary blessing (Gen.27:39,40). Notice is made of Jacob's bright faith at the end of a tumultuous and sometimes dangerous career, not the disturbing episodes of his varied experiences. With clear perspective he saw the meaning of the
past and the future in the prophetic benediction upon Joseph's two boys. The brief reference to Joseph highlights the sovereign divine insight which selected his dying request as evidence of his faith. Where men might have expected the historical landmarks of his trials, humiliation, exaltation and magnificence, the inspired commentator speaks of Joseph's faith in the exodus of his people and the disposal of Joseph's bones. Egypt had no place in Joseph's heart. He desired no permanent epigraph of his stay there, no elaborate funeral, no ostentatious sepulchre or Egyptian pyramid. The land of promise would be the place of awakening on the resurrection morning.

Moses refused, chose, accounted, looked, forsook and endured. These are activities of faith to be pondered. God saw in his heart a deep-settled faith. Moses renounced earthly advantages and bound up his life with the people of God, choosing the reproach of Christ in suffering affliction rather than the sampling of fleeting pleasures. Comforts of a palace existence were shunned and deemed as dross. The status of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter held no appeal. Ill-treatment there was in the way of faith but greater riches and joys awaited him. Forsaking and enduring are the outcome of faith.

No mention is made of faith during Israel's wilderness wanderings. Failure characterized them. Refreshing it is to see the faith of the nation being the key to victory in the book of Joshua (v. 30). The Red Sea crossing and capture of Jericho were examples of faith in God's word and promise. Rahab's background declares eloquently God's dealings in grace universally. She placed in Israel's God the faith which comes of hearing, repudiated nationalistic feelings and a profligate life to find a place among the people of God and in the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt.1).

Judges, Kings and Prophets (Heb.11:32-40)

Any secular historian would have devoted more space to the names and events of these verses. The hearers and readers of this letter must have been profoundly touched when being reminded of these exploits of faith. The pathos deepens with the pace of the narrative. Reflecting upon these monuments to faith, all of whom clearly and firmly grasped the invisible and unseen, there is challenge. They stand as a line of witnesses against the inclination to unbelief.

The deeds and trials of faith enumerated in vv. 33-38 are not exclusive to certain known figures of the sacred record. The unending line of faithful witnesses had divested themselves of all impediments and every weight of the pressures and anxieties of this life and the sin of unbelief. Prospectively, they looked unto Christ — their Leader and Chief. He sustained them. They
say to us what the life of faith meant to them. The life of faith was a quest of love and humility, not a grudging duty. There was determination to share the glorious vision with others. The world is not worthy of such, but the coming world is! The present world is nonetheless the arena of conflict and the sphere for faith's work.

**Christ above all**

'These all' (v. 39) had witness borne to them by God and His word. Only the divine revelation of faith's Originator, the Son of God, could secure the better thing and provide the long-awaited realization of God's purpose. Faults and failures there were in their lives but these are omitted in line with the promise of the previous chapter, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb.10:17). The Lord Jesus had no lapses from beginning to end of His life of faith. His circumstances were considerably more difficult. He won the highest honours by the way of faith through death to the goal of heavenly glory. Supreme He stands, not only over all creation, in redemption and resurrection but also in faith.

**Contemporary Issues in Christian Life**

(5) Books that have helped me

By L. H. Taylor, of Romford

The wise Preacher said nearly three thousand years ago "of making many books there is no end" (Eccles.12:12). The truth of these words is apparent today in the flood of books coming off the printing presses of the world. Books on spiritual matters are no exception, and include an increasing number of versions of the Scriptures. The wide variety of books available has one advantage, the choice of reading can be personal to one's own approach to Christian life and experience. To select a small range from the books one has read is a formidable task and this article will be restricted to a brief glimpse of the writer's approach to reading generally.

When making a choice of reading material for instruction, spiritual nourishment and edification, it is essential to bear in mind two major areas of revealed truth. Those in Churches of God in the Fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, have had the thrill and the joy of receiving the revelation through the Holy Spirit of a people together for God, forming the
house of God in divine service, and of the kingdom of God. They have been taught to distinguish between the Church which is Christ's Body and a church of God; the one an eternal reality built by Christ and the other a local testimony to the truth of God built by men in accordance with the Apostles' teaching. There is great confusion amongst theologians as to the meaning and use of the word 'church'. Aspects of collective truth which those in churches of God have come to know and understand from the Word of God are often not apparent in the works of great Christian writers.

Certain questions need to be asked as to an author's beliefs in the fundamentals of the gospel. Does he believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures? Does he accept the doctrine of the Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit being co-equal and divine? Does he believe that the eternal Son of God became flesh, born of a virgin to die on the cross at Calvary for our salvation? Does he believe in the resurrection and the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints? Does he accept the doctrine of original sin and the remission of sin through faith in the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ? An affirmative answer to these questions will set a background of confidence for the reader in his quest for spiritual knowledge. In the absence of this assurance care will be needed to "sift the wheat from the chaff and reject teaching which is not of the sound pattern.

The books reviewed below are just a small sample of the writer's experience and are intended as a stimulus to achieve the ultimate objective of the clearer and deeper understanding of the Word of God and of the lovely person of our Lord Jesus Christ of which it so clearly speaks.

Bible Study
"The Church, and the Churches of God" by F. A. Banks (recently reprinted by Hayes Press).
This small book written in the late nineteenth century by a young man in his mid-twenties represents the visionary concepts of those who first rediscovered the truths of collective worship and testimony of a people together for God. Such truths as the inter-dependence of churches, the aggregate of churches of God forming the house of God, were now seen from the Word to be clearly the will of God for our day and generation. This fresh and vivid approach sparkled with the light of divine revelation and was fully supported by scriptural evidence. This book is compelling reading for those who are seeking truth through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That God should have taken home to Himself such a young man of promise remains a mystery down here but the outline of precious truth he bequeathed has never been refuted.
As a younger man the present writer was deeply impressed by such spiritual insight, and a re-reading of F. A. Banks' writings has brought renewed spiritual vitality and zeal.

This book, written in typical Victorian English, has a beautiful fluency and is both sound and instructive. Readers will recall the series in this magazine last year relating to certain fundamental truths of the gospel. Much of what was written can be seen in Anderson's treatise. Such fundamental truths as redemption, sanctification, justification and atonement are vital parts of the whole spectrum of truth. His correlation of Old Testament and New Testament teaching is both helpful and instructive and will assist in the formation of the base of our spiritual life and growth. These truths can be too easily assumed as being elementary. Their profoundness goes beyond our full understanding but to be assured of their effectiveness through the work of Christ is a source of great comfort and security.

"Paul, Apostle of the Free Spirit" by F. F. Bruce, published by the Paternoster Press.
Professor Bruce's knowledge of Greek and ancient literature has made him one of the foremost Bible scholars of our time and he would answer 'yes' to the questions about fundamentals posed at the beginning of this article. The book is neither a biography nor yet a systematic exposition of Paul's teaching but a graphic account of his life and work set in its historical context. His research over a lifetime spent in probing the historical background and the translation of the original Scriptures has enabled him to speak with considerable authority. He has been able to refute many myths about the character of this great servant of the Lord. He refers at length to the attractive warmth of Paul's personality, his intellectual stature and the dynamism with which he propagated the gospel throughout the world in accordance with the commission entrusted to him on the Damascus road.

Devotional

"There is an answer" by Leith Samuel, published by Victory Press.
This small book deals with many of the difficult questions that are encountered by the Christian on his or her earthly pilgrimage. The questions involve such matters as doubt, suffering, loneliness, depression and unanswered prayer. They are dealt with sympathetically, and constant recourse is made to the Word of God for succour, comfort and help. The problems and anxieties of the 1980s will not diminish. We need constant support, guidance and advice and also the ability to give these to others. In a world that can only offer emptiness, desolation and fear, how precious to be comforted through the experience of others. This little book goes a long way
to provide an answer to some of these difficulties.

"True Spirituality" by Dr. Francis Schaeffer, published by Hodder and Stoughton.

Dr. Schaeffer has written many books arising out of his work at the L'Abri Fellowship. This book presents an analysis of the Christian life as he saw it and experienced it. He comes to grips with the reality of the true personal life in Christ arising from the meaning of His finished work and its impact upon our lives. Particularly impressive is his emphasis on thankfulness and the giving of praise to God. Perhaps in this respect our Christian experience suffers from our lack of enthusiasm. The giving of thanks to God should always precede our asking and there is no doubt that in the lives of great men of God in the Scriptures praise occupied a vital place in their individual worship. There is a tendency to restrict praise to our collective service in the Holies rather than making it a day by day joyful spiritual exercise (1 Thess. 5:18).

"The Practice of Prayer" by G. Campbell Morgan. To anyone whose prayer-life leaves something to be desired, this book is excellent reading. The tender warmth of exposition and exhortation is moving and heart warming. He tells the story of a woman who was bedridden for 37 years and yet knew and experienced the power of prayer in a most remarkable way. He cites this both as an example and a solemn lesson to us as to the effectiveness of prayer in terms of revival and blessing. Campbell Morgan writes that he never felt more closely and nearly the presence of the Almighty than when praying with her.

There is a sense in which one feels like the apostle John, who in writing of the work and life of the Lord Jesus Christ, could say, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (Jn 21:25). There are the two classics of Augustine, the City of God and Confessions, and the poetry of Milton and Cowper. To a preacher there are the sermons of C.H. Spurgeon and J. S. Stewart. To the Bible scholar there are standard works such as The Expository Dictionary of New Testament words by W. E. Vine, Matthew Henry's commentary, Young's and Strong's concordances. There are biographies and autobiographies of great men and women who have served their God in their day and whose lives and testimony are left for our learning and admonition. A book shortly to be published by Hayes Press on the Tabernacle by Mr J. L. Ferguson is recommended reading. This book will be invaluable for the Bible student desirous of knowing the will of God for a people together in divine testimony and it will contribute to the enhancement and enrichment.
of the knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. What more can be said but to leave the matter in the hand of the reader to use those books which appeal to him or her having in mind the objective of an increasing knowledge of divine things and a broader conception of the great truths of divine revelation?

Some may respond by indicating that they have only time for reading the Scriptures and do not wish to cloud their minds with the writings of Christian men and women. Whilst this view is respected in its sincerity, it must surely be inadequate and insufficient to the seeker after truth and knowledge. Realizing that "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim.3:16-17), nothing must be allowed to come between us and the prayerful reading and study of the Word of God. But as part of our spiritual education and the widening of our spiritual horizons, the reading of the books of great men and women of God will provide us with the ability to make a more wise and balanced approach in our service to God and to all men.

"Bring ... the books, especially the parchments" (2 Tim.4:13).

"Fear not Little Flock"
By D. T. Hyland, of Middlesbrough

God's purposes of blessing in sending His beloved Son into the world were universal in extent. The divine plan was to redeem "men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev.5:9). As God said to Abraham, "In thy seed (Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen.22:18). It was God's will that this plan should be accomplished according to the principle "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom.1:16) and it was in keeping with this principle that the message of John the Baptist was primarily to the nation of Israel. His mission as the forerunner of Messiah was "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him" (Lk.1:17). Paul succinctly summarized John the Baptist's assignment: "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him. that is, on Jesus (Acts 19:4). The disciples of John the Baptist were as sheep gathered in the safety of a sheepfold, having entered the fold by the door of John's baptism. The Baptist was not the Shepherd, he was the porter who carefully guarded the door. The sheep waited for the Shepherd while the porter kept watch for His
coming. When the true Shepherd, Israel's Messiah was revealed, John recognized Him and opened the door of the fold to Him. Although sinless, the Lord was baptized of John in the River Jordan thus fulfilling all righteousness. By this means the seal of divine approval was set upon John's life and work, which were drawing to a close as, with characteristic self-effacement, he said of the Man he came to herald, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

From the fold of which John was the porter the Good Shepherd "calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (Jn 10:3). Having put forth all His own, the Good Shepherd led them to a fold of which He says, "I am the Door" (Jn 10:7). Entrance to this fold, which is open to all, is by an initial act of faith. Once within the fold none can stray or be removed either by force or allurement for it is under the figure of the fold that personal relationship to Christ, the Good Shepherd, and the eternal security of every believer are clearly seen. Every child of God is safely gathered in the safety of the fold, even as the Saviour said, "I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish" (Jn 10:28).

The enjoyment of this liberty and security will promote friendship and fellowship between the Shepherd and His sheep. It is the Shepherd's desire that His sheep whom He describes as "Mine own" should "go in and go out, and . . . find pasture" (Jn 10:9), referring to the believer's devotional life of communion with Christ and feeding upon God's Word. There is a further desire of the Shepherd, which was before Him in His sufferings and death. This is that His sheep, through listening to His voice and following the guidance of God's written Word, should be gathered together and become "one flock, one Shepherd" (Jn 10:16). As used in the New Testament "the fold" and "the flock" are not interchangeable terms and it is important to differentiate between the different aspects of truth associated with their use. The security of the sheep in the fold in the care of the Good Shepherd describes the believer's unconditional and eternal relationship to Christ.

To the company gathered by the Lord in the days of His flesh He said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:32). When the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep of the flock were scattered abroad but after His resurrection the Lord went before them into Galilee where He gave them the "Great Commission", during 40 days teaching them "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). This company and others obedient to the Word of God formed the nucleus of the flock of God which gave expression to the revealed will of God after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The flock of God was an expression of the kingdom of God. The work began in Jerusalem where the first church of God was planted and eventually there were churches of God
in many parts of the Graeco-Roman world.

In relation to the fold, Christ is the Shepherd: He is the sole Guardian, while the work of caring for "the flock" has been delegated by the Lord to men. Peter was guided to exhort the elders in the churches of God to which he wrote, "Tend the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet.5:2). The elders are to exercise a pastoral care over the churches of God and are accountable to the Lord as the Chief Shepherd in the discharge of their work as under-shepherds.

There can be no scattering or straying of those gathered in the safety of the fold. In contrast to this, Paul warned the elders of the church of God at Ephesus that after his death "grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). False teachers would arise, who, if they were not silenced, would ruin the testimony of the churches. It was with apostolic vision that Paul forewarned of these things and pleaded for watchfulness. His warning was not heeded and the churches of God which were planted as a result of apostolic labours eventually ceased.

"Where are the Nine?"
By D. Smith, of Lerwick

Although the world loves its own and responds to its own language (see Jn 15:19; 1 Jn 4:5) the general attitude of men one to another very largely follows their attitude to God, for those who "fear not God" regard not men (Lk.18:4). Those who resent the authority of heaven's throne will not readily bow to recognized rule on earth, and if the goodness and long-suffering of God brings no response, the kindness of men will also pass without appreciation. Men owe gratitude to a faithful Creator who in His infinite wisdom has made man in His image, giving to all "life and breath and all things" and at immeasurable cost has made possible their salvation from eternal ruin.

Because it is important to give thanks to God, the great Adversary causes men to deny that the blessings of life come from God. They are therefore unable to acknowledge Him with gratitude. Such was the attitude which characterized the ancient world: "... knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks" (Rom.1:18-21). The base unthankfulness of the human heart is one of the ugly features that asserts itself more fully in the grievous times of the last days, "for men shall be . . . unthankful, unholy" (2 Tim.3:2).
How different was the attitude of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose whole life was a thank offering to His God and Father! So often He lifted up His voice and said, "I thank Thee", and although His path on earth was beset by hardship and privation, never once did He complain or fail to glorify the One who had sent Him. In like manner He duly acknowledged the human kindness shown towards Him and the little service rendered by those whose hearts He had won.

The believer who is saved by putting faith in the Son of God becomes a new creature with a new attitude to God and men, yet he may fail to appreciate all that has been done for him. An example of this is seen in the reaction of the ten lepers who in their sad and loathsome state cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us", to which He replied, "Go and shew yourselves unto the priests" and as they went they were cleansed (Lk.17:11-19). Only one of the ten lepers, when he realized he had been healed, returned glorifying God, and giving Him thanks. To the shame of all the others, he who showed such gratitude was a Samaritan, an alien to Israel and to the God of Israel. The other nine who were Israelites should have realized that gratitude is an obligation on the part of the godly. Did not Moses say, "This is my God, and I will praise Him"? and David: "O give thanks unto the LORD".

On this occasion the Samaritan was a true Jew, for "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom.2:29). Rich and lasting was this man's joy when the Lord Jesus said "Arise and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole". In this humble and sincere act of gratitude the alien had given "glory to God", for God is glorified by a thankful and appreciative spirit.

Gratitude to God will have its counterpart in gratefulness to men for the succour and service we receive from each other along life's way. This is illustrated in one of the most beautiful incidents recorded in the Scriptures when David reciprocated the kindness of Jonathan with the kindness of God in giving Jonathan's invalided son Mephibosheth an honourable place at the king's table.

What a sad dearth of thankfulness there is in the world today! As children of God, saved and sanctified through the work of Christ, the Spirit would instruct us, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward". "Giving thanks always for all things". If we lose our sense of appreciation, and the wells of thanksgiving dry up in our souls, then the fruit we bear will inevitably suffer a severe blight. How vital that we should be a people to His praise, who "Give thanks unto the LORD" declaring His doings among the people "for He hath done excellent things".

May God give us each the grace to recognize the kindness of the Lord and
also the kindness of those who, like Abimelech of old, do good to a sojourner and pilgrim (Gen.21:22,23).

(contd. from page 115)

must face the challenge of 2 Cor.6:14-18:

"What communion hath light with darkness? . . . Or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, And ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty".

Scriptural unity of the Spirit, as seen in New Testament churches of God, is our sure guide towards a world-wide association of believers in fulfilment of the Lord's prayer that they may all be one.
Voices from the Past
The First and Second Man (2)

The mystery of Christ's incarnation is not to be pried into; it is to be understood by faith, not by reason. We know not the way of the Spirit, nor how the bones of a child are formed in the womb (Eccles.11:5). Much less do we understand how the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was formed in the womb of the Virgin. But we do know by faith that the body was formed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Never was a daughter of Eve so highly honoured as she. Joseph was told in a dream by an angel of the mighty event which was soon to take place, and that his wife was the chosen and highly honoured woman through whom the Saviour of men was to come. Thus did the eternal Son of the Father come into the world, and thus did Emmanuel come to be with us.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus". Jesus is Joshua. Two who held this name in the past are illustrious types of Christ — Joshua the leader of Israel, and Joshua the high priest. Both were leaders of Israel to the land after they had suffered their bondage, in Egypt and in Babylon. But He, who was to be called Jesus, was to lead His people from a greater bondage — bondage in sin: "He shall save His people from their sins". This statement of fact involves the truth that all this King's people were at one time in a state of sin, and in bondage thereto. But He came to deal with sin and to liberate his people therefrom. Not only was He going to deliver His people, but He was to lead His people to a better land and a truer rest than the two leaders of the past who bore His name, and in such a manner that this delivered people might serve God acceptably with "reverence and godly fear". He is the only King who has dealt with the sins of His people. First, He condemned sin in the lives of men by His manner of life and His teaching, and having discovered sin to men, He then died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

The fitness of the virgin birth may be seen from the words of Paul in 1 Cor.7:34, with reference to the state of female virginity, where he contrasts the wife with the virgin: "She that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit". Thus was Mary until Christ was born. Not that she was born sinless any more than other children born within the lawful bond of wedlock. "Now they are holy" (1 Cor.7:14). This does not by any means whatsoever imply that they are sinless. The virgin birth of the Lord, involving the operation of a Holy Agency, fore-announced to us with divine emphasis the spotlessness and purity of His nature.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
"The Earth was Filled with Violence"

Today's world is pervaded by violence. So were the first 2,000 years of human history, as summarized in Gen.4 to 6. Early in that period Cain became the world's first murderer, soon to be followed by Lamech who boasted of his even greater violence. Towards the end of the second millennium God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh is come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen.6:13). About 1,000 years later, David wrote in Ps.11: "The LORD, His throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. The LORD trieth the righteous:

But the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth". To Cain God said, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground". At one phase of Israel's history their land was said to be "polluted with blood" (Ps.106:38). As God views present-day conditions in His world, how grieved He must be to see many areas similarly defiled with bloodshed!

This feature seems to have developed world-wide, regardless of cultural or political distinctions. At grass-roots level is the increased violence among young offenders, often associated with gang warfare, muggings, break-ins and the like. In Western society, where youngsters are often exposed to television programmes featuring violence for entertainment, there is little wonder that similar behavioural patterns emerge in real life. Against a quite different cultural background, however, there is complaint of similar decadence. China has long cultivated for itself the image of a peace-loving society which had successfully eradicated much of the violent crime so typical of the capitalist West. Now reports confirm a nation-wide crime wave, including serious criminal activities among young people.

From a scriptural viewpoint it is evident that refusal to have God in their knowledge leaves many to their own reprobate mind, "being filled with all unrighteousness, wicked-
ness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity" (Rom.1:29). Where the fear of God no longer obtains, there is no sense of ultimate accountability; hearts harden to fulfil every vile deed, and so often "their feet are swift to shed blood" (Rom.3:15).

The dramatic growth of terrorist techniques over recent decades has given a sensational new dimension to exercises in violence — hi-jacking of planes or trains, hostage taking, kidnapping, embassy seizures. Sometimes the motive has been simply to extract financial gain. More often it has been for the promotion of some political cause. Turin is one city which has been greatly affected; it has been described as "Italy's capital of terror". A recent report states: "Within the past two years terrorists have killed four policemen, two prison guards, two Fiat executives, two students, a judge, a journalist and a bartender. Scores of other victims have been knee-capped. The hits come in broad daylight for maximum psychological impact". A similar pattern of terrorism has been applied in parts of West Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Turkey, as well as in certain countries of Latin America, Africa and the Middle East.

It was the Lord Jesus who predicted that "as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matt.24:37). So we may expect the characteristics of society before the Flood to be repeated at the time of the end, that final phase of human history before the Lord Jesus comes as Son of Man to take His power and reign. Once again violence will fill the earth. Already in these last days of the age of grace we are witnessing a phenomenal growth of violence throughout the world. We await the return of the Lord to the air for His Church. When this has taken place, removing the influence of so many believers, the condition of society will still further deteriorate.

In today's society we may often be sickened by the readiness with which man sheds the blood of his fellow-men. Nevertheless we look forward with joyful hope to that coming era of Messiah's rule, when the blood of even the poor and needy will be valued by Him:

"He shall have pity on the poor and needy. And the souls of the needy He shall save. He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence; And precious shall their blood be in His sight"

(Ps.72:13,14).

Meantime we are left in no doubt as to what our attitude as believers should be in this trouble-torn world. For our Master was Himself the victim of injustice and violence: "By oppression and judgement He was taken away... and they made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His

(contd. on page 144)
"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus" (Heb.12:1-2). In last month's article in this series the writer brought before us the powerful outworking of faith in the lives of godly men and women who believed in the promises of God. This faith was not expressed without their recognizing firstly their standing in this world. They confessed "that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb.11:13). But now the writer to the Hebrews, guided by the Holy Spirit, exhorts and encourages "us also" to run the race that is set before us. The hymn-writer was not going beyond the bounds of possibility when he wrote:

Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!

"Us also" — how often have we thrilled to the exploits of faith which were done by devoted servants of God who were strong in their knowledge of God! Perhaps we have lingered too long on what they did and not given sufficient consideration to their faith. What they did was the working of God. What made them the channels of God's working was their faith. We are not excused from having a like precious faith.

The exhortation to "run with patience the race that is set before us" is itself compassed about with strong encouragement and responsibility. This is a remarkable portion of God's Word, even in the use of words in the original Greek which occur nowhere else in Scripture. The words 'cloud', 'weight' and 'so easily beset' (v. 1), 'Perfecter' (v. 2), 'consider' (v. 3), 'resisted' and 'striving' (v. 4) occur nowhere else, and two words, 'therefore' (v. 1) and 'looking' (v. 2), are used only in one other place. The word 'race' is in other places translated 'conflict' (Phil.1:30; 1 Thess.2:2) and 'fight' (1 Tim.6:12; 2 Tim.4:7), indicating something of the nature of this race.

The motivation for the race is "such a cloud of witnesses". The preparation for the race is to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us". The attitude in the race is 'patience'. The strength and encouragement for the race are by 'looking unto Jesus'. The incentive for the
race is 'the joy' that is set before us even as a joy was set before Him. Let us now look at each of these in more detail.

The Motivation

'Therefore' is a strong word, being a combination of three different words. In chapter 11 there is a long list of worthies and they are all witnesses to the value, effect and necessity of faith if we are to be well-pleasing to God. We cannot ignore them because we are compassed by them, as Paul was 'bound' with a chain (Acts 28:20). These witnesses are not just historical characters with a remarkable story to tell. They are a dense cloud who bear testimony to what faith is and that it should be a reality in our lives. These witnesses are not few and isolated but a veritable cloud, and no matter where we look their testimony surrounds us, challenging us, and motivating us to imitate their faith.

The Preparation

Every burdensome load must be laid aside. We cannot run the race of life in the Lord's service if we are carrying a pile of other interests. The self-made cares and interests should be kept minimal. The lesson of the seed which fell among the thorns in the parable of the sower is helpful here. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. We need to be in the race wholeheartedly as runners, not as spectators. We can be spectators of the runners as we read the Bible and the biographies of the martyrs. Let us be runners. But beware of the sin which is so readily capable of tripping us up. It must be put aside by deliberate decision and action. It is interesting to notice that in every use except one in the New Testament of the expression 'to lay aside' (Gr. apotithemi) it has to do with evil things, and each scripture (Rom.13:12; Eph.4:22,25; Col.3:8; Jas.1:21 and 1 Pet.2:1) will help us in our race.

The Attitude

The race is to be run with patience. In the English translation of the Scriptures it is not possible to see the connecting thought because Greek words having the same basic meaning are translated differently. The nature of patience becomes apparent when we translate as follows: Let us run with patience (v. 1), Jesus . . . was patient with the cross (v. 2), Has been patient with such gainsaying of sinners (v. 3), It is for chastening that you have patience (v. 7). The writer to the Hebrews has mentioned patience twice before, in Heb.10:32.
'You endured — were patient with — a great conflict of sufferings') and Heb 10:36 ('You have need of patience').

Patience is not resignation or fatalism. It is the product of an active faith. It is endurance that persists when circumstances are pressing against us. It is not a weakness but the manifestation of strength. Patience is a quality necessary to see us through to the end of the race in victory and honour. Although endurance or patience may seem to be a passive thing it is accompanied by action of high worth — becoming partakers, had compassion, took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, done the will of God, run, looking, despising shame, wax not weary, striving against sin.

Patience has the traits of persistence and perseverance. This is an attitude of heart and mind with which we must run.

Perhaps the most difficult time for patience is when 'God deals with you as with sons' (Heb.12:7). When difficulties and trials come from men then we may rejoice like the apostles that we are counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name (Acts 5:41). But when we receive the Lord's evident chastening and reproof our patience which is the work of faith may fail. The Holy Spirit takes time to assure us of the loving motive and profitable intent of the Lord's chastening so that we with patience may attain to the peaceable fruit of righteousness. The Lord's chastening is to cause us to be exercised (v. 11) to be partakers of His holiness (v. 10).

*Every trial draws Him nearer,*

Peace, peace is mine.

All His strokes but make Him dearer,

Peace, peace is mine.

Bless I then the hand that smiteth,

Gently, and to heal delighteth;

'Tis against my sins He fighteth;

Peace, peace is mine.

And when the race is done and we see Him, our Lord and Saviour, and receive whatever rewards He may give us as the righteous Judge, then will we say:

*With mercy and with judgement*

My web of time He wove,

And aye the dews of sorrow

Were lusted with His love.

I'll bless the hand that guided,

I'll bless the heart that planned,

When throned where glory dwelleth,

In Immanuel's land.
The Strength and Encouragement

How easily disappointment, depression, weariness, seeming futility and self-interest would take us out of the race if it were not for the great Example who has gone before. 'Looking unto Jesus' will not only prevent distractions from hindering us, whether they be from our flesh or the many interests, allurements and oppositions of the world (Satan using them all) but His earthly life will be our guide and His glory our encouragement. We should follow His steps. That great cloud of witnesses could never provide a Leader of faith but Jesus became that by His life. Faith in God was the unbroken rule of His life. From babyhood ('Thou didst make Me trust when I was upon My mother's breasts' — Ps.22:9) to royal power ('For the King trusteth in the L ORD' — Ps.21:7) the Lord was and is well-pleasing to God and this is impossible without faith (Heb.11:6).

In looking unto Jesus we need to read and learn and understand and apply the Gospel records of His life. The Old Testament also will teach us (e.g. Isa.50:4-9) about our perfect Example. 'Learn of Me' is His word to us and Peter says that He committed Himself or His cause to Him that judges righteously. Are we prepared to leave our lives with God — the hurts, the misunderstandings, the unkind words and actions? Are we willing to please God and not men? Are we committed to empty ourselves that others might be filled? He endured the cross and He endured the contradiction of sinners. That is our pattern. He is the Perfecter of faith and so we do not look beyond Him. Gideon, Samson, David and even Abraham all left something to be desired in the matter of faith, but not Jesus. In life He said:" I am come down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (Jn 6:38) and in the shadow of death He prayed: "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Lk.22:42).

"Wherefore also God highly exalted Him" (Phil.2:9) and if we endure (are patient — same word) we shall also reign with Him (2 Tim.2:12). "Looking unto Jesus" is also to see Him as now enthroned, and thus to be encouraged in our race.

The Incentive

The Saviour had a joy before him which was greater than the cross with all its shame, sorrow and pain. That prospective joy included the doing of His Father's will, the redemption of countless numbers of mankind, the purchasing of a Bride, His exaltation and His triumph over all His enemies. His joy will exceed all other joy inasmuch as He is the Leader and Perfecter of faith.

In running our race with patience we shall not be disappointed with the
joy that lies at our journey's end. There is a joy belonging to redemption about which many Scriptures speak. The ransomed of the Lord will have everlasting joy upon their heads and will obtain gladness and joy. In the presence of God there is fulness of joy. But there is also a joy that comes with service. The good and faithful servant will enter into the joy of his Lord (Matt.25:21,23) and those whom we have led to Christ and taught the way of the Lord will be our joy before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming (1 Thess.2:19-20; Phil.4:1). We can have the joy of Christ fulfilled in ourselves if we keep His word and are sanctified in the truth (Jn 17:13-17). In this we can be helpers of one another's joy (2 Cor.1:24).

There is and there will be a joy for us in running by faith the race of obedient service in patience during our lifetime. Down here that joy may often be mixed with sadness but in His presence any sorrow will disappear and only pure lasting joy will remain at His word of approval and as we receive a crown from His hand and are granted the high honour of reigning with Him.

Conclusion

We do not know whether our race will be long or short but it may be for years. All of us probably are capable of doing something in a short burst but it is sadly a different story for many when a sustained effort is required over a long time. Love, zeal, enthusiasm and faithfulness fade away. What is the remedy? "Consider Him". This word 'consider' is a strengthened form of the word 'to take account' and this is the only place where it is used. If we take an 'upward account' of Him we shall keep ourselves from becoming weary and fainting in our souls. Looking unto Jesus will enable us to run with patience the race that is set before us now so that we shall enter upon the joy that is set before us then.

Contemporary Issues in Christian Life

(6) The Christian and Music

Part I: Collective and Church Aspects

By E. Birchall, of Leigh

In Early Days

From the book of Gen.it is apparent that there was a very early interest in, and attraction to, music. Stringed and wood instruments are mentioned
in chapter 4, providing personal pleasure and satisfaction. The first mention of the word 'song' occurs at a much later date, in association with Israel, a redeemed people. Having been delivered from slavery, they extolled their great Jehovah to the accompaniment of timbrels (Ex.15:20,21). The development of vocal and instrumental music reached a very high standard in David personally as well as in Israel collectively. David's sentiments are worthy of our emulation, as wholeheartedly he declared "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live" (Ps.104:33). He frequently enjoined others to "sing unto the Lord a new song" (Ps.96:1; Ps.98:1; Ps.149:1); and in the days of his son, Solomon, a climax was reached at the dedication of the Temple. The Levites were there with "instruments of music of the Lord... and the priests sounded trumpets before them" (2 Chron.7:6).

About 200 years later the spiritual condition of the people was such that idle songs were being sung to the sound of the viol and men devised for themselves instruments of music, like David (Amos 6:5). The days of revival of Ezra and Nehemiah were associated with singing praise and giving thanks to the Lord with God-honouring use of musical instruments (Ezra3:10; Neh.12:27). The book of Malachi however closes without any reference to praise or thanksgiving.

**In New Testament Days**

It is significant that throughout this period there is no mention of the use of instrumental music in connexion with worship, thanksgiving or praise, except in the book of the Revelation. The references to harps, harpers, minstrels, flute-players and trumpeters are all in association with the period subsequent to the coming of the Lord to the air. The singing of the hymn, i.e. the lesser Hallel (a selection of the psalms sung on the occasion of the Passover) by the Lord and His disciples in the Upper Room (Ps.115-118) strikes a note of contrast in relation to the use of musical instruments under the Old Covenant (see 2 Chron.30:21). This is further emphasized by the rending of the veil of the Temple, the importance of which is stressed by three of the Evangelists. It signified God's abandonment of the material building (the Temple) as the centre of divine worship, and the introduction of a new dispensation involving a spiritual house, with corresponding spiritual sacrifices, and spiritual songs. In church of God capacity we are called upon to speak "one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph.5:19), and also to teach and admonish "one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col.3:16). In both instances the emphasis, it should be noted, is on inner spiritual melody rather than on external musical accompaniment. Is there
perhaps a principle in 1 Cor.4:6 which we should keep in mind when considering this subject: "not to go beyond the things which are written"? Incidentally, it may be interesting to recall that Luther, Calvin, John Wesley and Spurgeon were not prepared (for whatever reason) to accept the use of instrumental music.

The Rendering of Hymns

In this connexion, a knowledge of the rudiments of music can be very helpful to the Christian. To give the correct value to each type of note or rest is all-important, and seeking a balance of pitch and tone will promote better harmony and unity. If we are to glorify God in song together, should we not give earnest attention to theory and practice, with a view to wholehearted, spontaneous praise? How greatly the Lord appreciated the children's joyful outburst of praise as He rode into Jerusalem just before His crucifixion! When the Spirit stirs believers in similar gladness they too can bring joy to His heart. Such experiences draw them also more closely to their beloved Saviour, bringing refreshment, sweetness and comfort to their souls.

1 Cor.14:15 suggests the right balance between the spirit and the understanding. In our hymn singing this principle should guide us. By having in view the thoughts embodied in the verses we sing, the whole hymn will be rendered with corresponding expression.

It may well be that the investigation of such an important subject will help us and encourage us more and more to praise the Lord with our whole heart and glorify His name (see Ps.86:12).

Part II: Individual Aspects

By P. L. Hickling, of Southport

What is the Question?

The attitude of Christians to music, particularly instrumental music, has varied very widely. Some claim that music is 'spiritual' in itself, so that its enjoyment is an act of devotion; others have regarded all music as pandering to the sensual desires of the flesh. Our first question must therefore be, "Is there a Christian attitude to music?" To this, some might give the immediate answer that it depends upon the kind of music, thus raising a second question; "Is there distinctively Christian music?" We are not here considering the words which may be set to music but the music itself,
although the rather extreme view that the setting of sacred words is the only legitimate use of music must at least be mentioned in the argument. It must also be made clear that this discussion is intended to cover only the individual Christian's attitude to music, not its use in the services of the church.

Is there a distinctively Christian attitude to music?

There are many scriptural references to the making of music, from Jubal (Gen.4:21) onwards. Most of them relate to its use in the context of the worship of God, or praise to Him for giving victory. The most detailed of these is in 1 Chron.25, which describes David's arrangements for the worship of the house of God. Other references relate to the use of music for personal enjoyment (e.g. Gen.31:27). These are naturally fewer, because the purpose of the Scriptures is to teach the people of God moral and spiritual truths to enable them to order their personal and collective lives. Things which are irrelevant to this intention naturally find only an incidental place in the Scriptures; for example, there are very few references, even of an oblique nature, to the study of mathematics, although the science was widely studied in the ancient world. Music is one subject not presented in Scripture either as a positive evil or a positive good in itself; it can be made either in a good or in an evil context.

A difficulty in applying scriptural references to music to present-day circumstances arises from the different contexts in which they appear. Music in Biblical times was necessarily 'live', and the public concert was unknown; only those who were rich had the opportunity of hearing anything approaching an orchestra. Music for the common people would come either from itinerant musicians or, more frequently, from their own performances. One can only seek for some general principles which might govern the Christian's attitude to listening to and making music, and seek some corroboration from scriptural examples.

It is sometimes contended that listening to music is itself a spiritual experience; that draws the hearer closer to God. Andrew Carnegie is said to have believed that the church organ was "the true word of God". This kind of idea is based on a meaning for 'spiritual' which is not the scriptural one. The spirit of man is that part of his constitution which can communicate with God, and that which is spiritually discerned is revealed by the Spirit of God (1 Cor.2:10,14). The hearer's response to music is a compound of emotional and intellectual responses, depending on the nature of the music. Neither of these elements is necessarily connected with the knowledge of God; an unbeliever would experience the same feelings. The knowledge of God is essentially a personal relationship based on a knowledge of a person's will and character, and not upon vague feelings of exaltation. On
the other hand, the suggestion that music should be eschewed because it appeals to 'the desires of the flesh and of the mind' is unwarranted. God has put within the minds of men (and angels) the ability to make and appreciate music, and it is inconceivable that He should have done so had there been no legitimate opportunity to exercise it.

This idea of the purpose of God's work suggests a basis for a Christian attitude towards music. Everyone concedes that the Christian reaction to a scene of natural beauty is to admire the scene, as all men can, and then praise the Author of the beauty, "The heavens declare the glory of God". If it is right to praise God for His direct creation, is it not also right to praise Him for His indirect work? We commonly speak of musical ability as a 'gift'; if we really do believe it comes from the Giver should we not praise Him for its exercise? We can thank God for certain works of beauty in art, literature, science and music because He is their ultimate Author. The right use of good gifts produces good things; their wrong use will produce perverted things.

To summarize, music is intrinsically morally neutral, but its beauty is a gift of God in which we can rejoice and be thankful. This is not to say that unlimited devotion to music is a good thing. Scripture speaks of wine and food as gifts of God, for which He can be praised, but drunkenness and gluttony are sins. Enjoyment of any good must not lead to dereliction of duty.

Is there a distinctively Christian music?

Having taken this attitude to music, we must now ask whether the type of music, or the attitude of its composer, should influence us in any way. It is extremely difficult to disentangle this question from one's own opinions about the merits of the music as such, but what one might consider 'bad' music is not necessarily morally bad. Indeed, much bad music has been used as the setting for excellent words in hymns, for example. Contrariwise, great music sometimes is associated with words which are open to question. To take an example, one could not totally agree with the (Lutheran) theology behind Bach's B minor Mass (although the actual words are unexceptionable), but the music has a power which touches the hearer, even if he does not understand the words at all. However, the beliefs of a composer are often reflected in his style of composition, and this can be illustrated by some examples.

Bach's secular music is similar to his religious music; indeed, he frequently recast secular pieces for church use (although not vice versa). As a devout Protestant, his aim was the glory of God, and his music shows the patterns of his thought. His belief in a God of reason who has ordered the universe is expressed in the exquisite interweaving of subjects in a fugue, perhaps the
musical equivalent of the harmony of the spheres. Much of Bach's output was expressly religious, and one might contend that here was a distinctively Christian music. Composers of the classical period, for example Mozart and Haydn, shared the assumption of a rational universe, and their music, different in style from that of the baroque period, nonetheless had in common with it an organization and form founded in this belief. As one moves into the romantic period, music becomes more subjective, more the expression of the feelings of the composer, and less of universal truths. This music affects us in a different way, carrying us along with its tide, sharing its composer's emotions. These may express beliefs of various strengths and directions. A comparison of Mendelssohn and Wagner will show the contrast between the monotheism of the one and the dark gods of the other. The Christian may feel that some of the romantics are out of tune with his understanding of the nature of God. This feeling is accentuated when one comes to composers of the present day. Music which dispenses with the traditional concept of key, and introduces random elements, such as may be found, for example, in the works of Stockhausen and Cage, seems to arise from the explicit rejection of the rational and ordered. It thus seems incompatible with Christian beliefs, which assert that God is the rational controller of all things. There are therefore examples of non-Christian music, which are not likely to corrupt the mind, but will prove uncongenial.

Nothing has so far been said about popular music. Much of this is ephemeral, to be heard today and forgotten tomorrow, and is used as a kind of audible wallpaper, to decorate one's surroundings with sound. Music used in this way does not, to any serious depth, engage the mind, which is occupied with some other task, such as driving or housework. It is essentially morally neutral, and there can no more be a Christian attitude to this than there is to the selection of wallpaper. However, many young people are completely obsessed by 'pop' music, and the music and the milieu of its performance seem to be inseparable. The style of life of its performers is frequently promiscuous and sometimes involves the use of drugs, and the words of the songs and their visual presentation reflect this lifestyle. Furthermore the music itself is often designed to stimulate the hearers physically, and playing it at enormous volume heightens this effect. While considering this topic, the writer asked someone with experience of dealing with young people in the care of the authorities if she thought that there could be such a thing as immoral music per se, and she replied "There is if it makes them do immoral things". It was her experience that this could be the case. Any generalization invites the pointing out of exceptions, and there are, of course, unobjectionable songs and performers in the popular field, but in general the 'pop culture' is one best avoided by the Christian. Young
Christians in particular should beware lest their habits of thought are unconsciously influenced by words they listen to or sing unthinkingly as part of the latest song. If any readers doubt the writer's judgement on this, a useful test is to ask if one could give thanks for the music, and receive it as from the hand of God. (Rom.14:6).

**Christian joy expressed through music**

Scripture gives Christians a positive use for music. Two Greek words are used in the New Testament for 'sing': *ado* and *psallo*. Both occur in Eph.5:19, where the former is translated 'singing', and the latter 'making melody'. God intends that singing and music-making should be the expression of a thankful heart, in which we can encourage each other and give thanks to Him. This is not the only legitimate use of music, but it is perhaps its highest use. It is a good thing to hear God's people, either in the church or at home, praising His name in song, and the good tradition of family music-making should not be allowed to die. The instruments we use may change with the times, but we should be a singing people. Sing in the car, in the bath, around the house as well as in more organized musical evenings, and the Lord will be glorified!

**Conclusion**

In writing about the Christian use of music, we would not wish to give the impression that a Christian with no musical talent is handicapped by its lack. Scripture makes it clear that God has given different gifts to different people, all for use in the building up of the Church. Whichever gift is exercised, God will be glorified, and it is the disciple's duty to discern them and to use them to the full to that end.

"But if not. . ."  

By W. S. Stewart, of Glasgow

When Daniel and his friends were captives in Babylon, king Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image and commanded all to fall down and worship it. Daniel's three companions would not fall down and worship the image and so they were brought before the king. When threatened they bravely made answer, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan.3:17,18). It is
evident that they were not clear as to whether they would be delivered out of the fire or not. The thing they did know was that it would be wrong for them to bow down and worship any other god but Jehovah their God.

This lesson we can learn from these men — we must never let what we don't know hinder us from doing what we do know to be the will of God. There is something else we might learn which has been a help to me. Suppose God had allowed them to perish in the flames; would that have meant that their faith was not strong enough? In Heb.11 we read of some who through faith escaped the edge of the sword, but we read of others who were slain by the sword. Did those who escaped have a stronger faith or a different kind of faith from those who were slain? No, it was the same faith in essence and strength. Why then did some live and some die? The simple answer is that it was God's will to glorify Himself in the deliverance of the first and glorify Himself in the death of the second.

Sometimes we pray earnestly for a sick friend and he is taken home to be with the Lord. We might chide ourselves and say, "If only my faith had been stronger this would not have happened". May the words "But if not" of Shadrach and his companions be a help to us in the day when our faith seems ready to fail because of seemingly unanswered prayer. God sometimes says "No".

"Give heed to reading"

By J. Taylor, of Crowborough

This exhortation by the apostle Paul to Timothy (1 Tim.4:13) is generally understood to refer to the public reading of the Scriptures. The N.I.V. does in fact give this interpretation. It is instructive to notice the order in which the three things mentioned are given: "reading", "exhortation" and "teaching". Paul places reading first, this is a vital part of any service, whether it be the preaching of the gospel or the ministry of the Word. The importance of reading will be appreciated when we consider what is being read. What we read is not any ordinary book, the product of man, but the inspired Word of the living God. It is nothing less than God's voice to us, rightly named the Holy Bible.

An interesting example of the public reading of the Scriptures is given to us in Nehemiah, chapter 8, where we find an example that may well be followed by both readers and hearers. A great concourse of people were gathered together to hear the reading of the Scriptures. We are told in verse 5 that when Ezra the scribe opened the book, all the people stood up. They
evidently appreciated the fact that the book was indeed the Word of God, and due reverence was shown towards it. Do we today have the same reverential regard for what Paul speaks of as "the sacred writings" (2 Tim.3:15)? Mr J. C. Radcliffe had very decided views of the sanctity of the Bible, and in his home he would not have any other book placed on his Bible as it lay on the table. It must have priority of position. This may be regarded as an eccentricity, but it did demonstrate the regard this man of God had for the written Word.

When Ezra the scribe and his assistants read the book of the Law of God, we are told that "They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading" (Neh.8:8). There was no mistaking the meaning of what was read, as it was read clearly, and no doubt without haste. How often do we hear the Word of God read hurriedly, as though to get as soon as possible to what the speaker has to say? While accepting the place preaching and teaching necessarily have, we do not doubt that the power is in the living Word. The Lord Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (Jn 6:63).

In most congregations there are some, particularly among the older ones, who are somewhat hard of hearing, and when the reading is not too clear, or is too hurried, much of the beauty of it, and the force of its message is lost to them. Many years ago, at a local conference, an elderly visiting brother stood up and read Ps.22. He was not a man with a very strong voice, but he read slowly and distinctly, and with considerable expression. He, in fact, "gave the sense". When he had finished he sat down, without attempting to expound or comment on what he had read. He had read it in such a way that the beauty of it, and its message was clear to all. As a young man at the time, this made a lasting impression on me, and I learned to appreciate that the proper way to read the Word of God is clearly and distinctly and to ensure that the reading is not hurried so that all present may hear and understand.

(contd. from page 131)

mouth" (Isa.53:8,9). Moreover, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow His steps... who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet.2:21-23), Christian example in the spirit of the Master will have far-reaching influence, as will the intercession of believers before God on behalf of many affected so grievously by modern outbursts of violence.
Voices from the Past

Gloom and Sunshine

Isaiah paints a very dark picture in Isa.8:22 when he says, "And they shall look unto the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish". Human sin and folly have darkened the days of the sons of men, and caused them to reap sour and bitter fruit. Distress, like a raging tempest, has beaten down upon men, and whilst the leaders of the nations seem to see the dawn of a brighter day and a brave new world, men of sober thought who view the world of affairs not merely from a political point of view but from a moral and spiritual one, fail to see ground for the fair hopes of a better day.

But does God, through the prophet Isaiah, leave us with this picture of gloom? Is there no dawn of a better day? God never leaves men in hopeless distress. Though He may have no cause in man to work for him. He works for His own name sake. So the prophet goes on, "But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish" (Isa.9:1). In Galilee the people had "walked in darkness" and "dwelt in the land of the shadow of death". A great change came for that people and that land. The Man of Nazareth came to live amongst them. Midst the gloom a light sprang up. The promised hope of Galilee of the nations is the hope of the nations still. Wherever Christ is received the gloom goes. The Light of the world dispels the darkness. There is comfort in Christ for the distressed and sorrowing, help for the helpless, hope for the hopeless and wealth for the poor, Christ is the sole answer to all human need. There is no gloom or dimness to those who in their anguish turn to Him.

"Lo, I am with you" is to be heard by Christ's followers over all the ages, and rises clear and sweet above the din of earth's discordant notes and the jarring events of our earthly life. Christ has promised His presence to His own throughout life's journey, and He is nearer to us than He was to the two on the way to Emmaus. Then He dispelled their gloom; then He warmed their cheerless hearts, for they at least knew Him at that evening meal in the breaking of the bread. Let us have the cheer we may have, the light of His countenance, the warmth of His love, the comfort of His word, the strength of His strong hand!

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
Israel and the Palestinians

God changed Abram's name to Abraham, "for the father of a multitude of nations have I made thee ... and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee" (Gen.17:5,6). The main-line divine purpose has of course been through the nation of Israel; but other nations and kings have come of Abraham through Ishmael (Gen.17:20) and through his sons by Keturah (Gen.25:1-4). Many of the Arabic peoples derive from Abrahamic stock. Among these are the Palestinians, so prominently in today's news from the Middle East.

The impression may sometimes be given that all Palestinians live in refugee camps. For about the time that Israel declared her independence in 1948, when she was attacked by several neighbour states, many Arabs living in the mandated territory fled from the area. About 650,000 of them were in due course accommodated in refugee camps under United Nations supervision. At the time this mass exodus of Arabs was described by the first President of Israel, Chaim Weizman, as "a miraculous simplification of Israel's tasks". Thirty-two years later there are still about the same number of Palestinian refugees, living in some 60 camps scattered throughout Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

Yet far more than those in such camps regard themselves as "Palestinians", Over 500,000 live in Israel itself; 1.2 million are in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. There are one million in Jordan and 450,000 in Lebanon, besides many who have gone to seek employment in such countries as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. So in all they represent a most formidable group.

Their aspirations are championed by the "Palestine Liberation Organisation" with its headquarters in Lebanon. For fifteen years this organisation, about 47,000 strong, has been prominent because of its war of
terrorism against Israel. To draw attention to their cause they also carried out terrorist attacks in other countries, but latterly changed to a policy of diplomatic approach, in the hope of creating a more responsible image among the community of nations. Yassar Arafat, the PLO leader, has tried hard for recognition as representative of the Palestinians at discussions for a settlement in the Middle East, but Israel and the United States would not agree. They did not accept that Arafat truly represented the average Palestinian, and regarded him in any case as a terrorist.

Nevertheless, President Sadat of Egypt consistently upheld the Palestinian cause in his negotiations with Israel under the Camp David agreement. Indeed the problem of autonomy for Palestinians living in the West Bank area (i.e. ancient Judea and Samaria) proved one of the most difficult to resolve.

The position was made more difficult by the policy of Israel's Prime Minister Begin to establish more Jewish settlements in the West Bank area. Out of 64 settlements completed in June 1980, 39 had been built since Begin gained power in 1977. Moreover his government had approved the right of Israelis to settle in such Arab cities as Hebron, leading to great unrest and some loss of life. This policy was opposed even in Begin's own cabinet. Former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan resigned last autumn, in part because of this, followed this summer by Defence Minister Ezer Weizman. Many Israelis thought that the settlements policy was thwarting peace efforts, squandering Israel's economic resources and alienating her friends.

World opinion certainly swung in favour of the Palestinian cause as a result of this policy. Under the Camp David agreement, May 26th had been the target date for producing a Palestinian autonomy plan, but an outraged President Sadat of Egypt could not agree to proceed within that time. Many felt also that President Carter was withholding pressure on Israel for fear of losing support from American Jews in the vital presidential election year. Yet America's partners in the Western Alliance were deeply concerned about delay in reaching some agreement on the Palestinian problem. For the oil producing Arab states regarded this as a major issue. Their economic cooperation with the industrial west is vital. So the Economic Community proposed an initiative to supplement what was being attempted through the struggling Camp David negotiations. Thus the United States and Israel became increasingly isolated in regard to the problem of the Palestinians.

As believers we watch with a sense of awe as an unseen Hand thrusts both

(contd. on page 160)
Themes from Hebrews
(10) Mount Zion and the Heavenly Jerusalem

By Ian E. Penn. of Nottingham

The letter to the Hebrews informed the recipients about the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on their behalf. This superiority is distinguished by comparing and contrasting the benefits of Old and New Covenants. Interspersed however are repeated warnings that the recipients were in as much danger of forfeiting major benefits as were their Old Covenant counterparts. It is therefore no surprise that this key passage (Heb.12:18,19) contains, as well as this comparison and contrast, a fierce warning concerning the danger of not holding fast. The passage deals with the very heart of God's rule by presenting two separate lists in which truths about the heavenly Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem are brought together. The first list (vv.18,19) gives in a negative manner seven things each connected by the word 'and' whereas the second list (vv.22-24) gives in a positive manner eight things similarly connected.

"Ye are not come"

Although there is doubt about who wrote the letter there is no doubt about to whom it was written. It was written to people who occupied under the New Covenant the same position in relation to God as Israel had occupied under the Old Covenant. These were believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed by God as were Israel of old, baptized as were Israel of old (1 Cor.10:2) and united under a divine constitution in one or perhaps more churches of God, in a unity like that of Israel under the Old Covenant constitution at Mt. Sinai. This New Covenant position was and is additional to salvation and it was from such a position that they were in danger of falling away.

The use of the present tense shows that these things which characterized the initial experience of Israel continued to characterize their experience throughout the dispensation of the law. Similarly the opposites of these (emphasized by the repeated use of the word 'not') characterize the continuing experience of the people of the present dispensation. Thus the main objective of the first list is not merely to draw attention to things as they were in the past but to highlight the better things now prevailing.

(i) "not ... a mount that might be touched"

Sinai was and is a real mountain. Israel came to a place and a system of
divine service which they and their descendants could see, touch, taste, smell, as well as hear. But the place and system of divine service for the New Covenant people of God is not known by the senses but by faith. The importance of faith is a well known theme of Hebrews and its importance in divine service is such that the New Covenant counterpart to the Law of Moses is called 'The Faith' (Jude 1:3).

(ii) "not . . . burned with fire"

The fire that burned at Mt. Sinai characterized the presence of God. It had burned in the bush (Ex.3:3-4). It burned on the altar and was intended to burn there throughout the entire dispensation (Lev.9:24; Lev.6:13). It consumed men in judgement (Lev.10:2. Num.16:35-40). It signified the wrath of God upon sinner or substitute such that the Old Covenant is as much characterized by fire as by things that might be touched. The disciples were still living in such an era when the Lord rebuked them for requesting the destruction of the Samaritan village (Lk.9:54-55). He was the harbinger of the opposite: ushering in an era characterized by the grace of God. These New Covenant days are characterized by grace and not by summary judgement upon sinners (Rom.2:4-9), or upon saints (1 Cor.3:13-15) although, of course, judgement may occur in the lives of the latter.

(iii) "not . . . unto blackness"

Comparison of the occurrences of the words 'blackness and darkness' with their Old Testament counterparts indicate that the unique New Testament word 'blackness' is the counterpart of the Old Testament phrase 'thick darkness' (Deut.4:11; Matt.4:16). This blackness characterized the immediate presence of God (e.g. 2 Sam.22:10) and necessitated the elaborate arrangements concerning approach to God in the house of God in the past (1 Kgs.8:12-13). Even such a man as Moses was graciously permitted to see only God's back parts and this had lingering, if temporary, effect (Ex.33:17-23; Ex.34:29-35). In contrast to this, however, in the days of the New Covenant the believer may reflect "as a mirror the glory of the Lord" and be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor.3:18).

(iv) "not . . . darkness"

Enlightened though the Israelites were by the giving of the Law at Sinai and by their absorption of it in the centuries that followed, they were still in relative darkness compared with the revelation that has come in Christ.
Those to whom the New Covenant comes may know things that prophets and angels have desired to know (1 Pet.1:10-12). They need have no fear of death as had Old Covenant saints (Heb.2:15) and they are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col.1:12).

(v) "not...tempest"
The mobilization of natural phenomena to fulfill the purposes of God in His kingdom under the Old Covenant is well shown in e.g. the parting of the Red Sea (Ex.14:21-30) or in the matter of the quails (Num.11:31), and in Elijah's day (1 Kgs.18:45). Such is not characteristic of the New Covenant. Instead there is the gentle movement of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners to bring them to Christ (Jn 3:8) or in the hearts of saints to guide them into all the truth (Jn 16:13; 2 Tim.2:24-26).

(vi) "not...the sound of a trumpet"
The trumpeting at Sinai ushered in an era characterized by trumpet-blowing (Num.10:8). Trumpets were blown on special occasions such as when going to war or at set feasts, as well as to mark set times such as the beginning of months (Num.10:10) or in the jubilee or at new moons (Ps.81:3). Under the New Covenant no such thing occurs. The next blowing of trumpets will mark the end of this dispensation and the glad return of the Lord Jesus to the air for His Church (1 Thess.4:16). Here is the preciousness of the silence for it means that nothing is scheduled in the divine calendar until that glad moment. It is to be expected any minute.

(vii) "not...the voice of words"
The voice that spoke at Sinai spoke again and again in the days of the Old Covenant. It spoke in the days of the Lord at His baptism and again at the mount of transfiguration, so impressing the apostles that Peter declared that it was the self-same voice (2 Pet.1:17-18). In the days of the New Covenant that voice is silent, for those former days have been closed by the speaking of God in His Son (Heb.1:1-2). This is done through the pages of the Scriptures where we have the word of prophecy made more sure (2 Pet.1:19-21). We have today a complete revelation and, in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, all that is required by the New Covenant people by way of commandment. It is all that is required until, following the sound of the trumpet, a voice of words will again be heard marking the close of the dispensation when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the air (1 Thess.4:16).
"Ye are come"

Thus the first list emphasizes the New Covenant superiority by negating Old Covenant, earthly characteristics. The second list, however, deals positively with the heavenly things of the New Covenant and so contains much that is difficult to understand. Nevertheless help may be gleaned by the way in which these heavenly things have cast their shadow on earth. The list of eight things may be divided into two, such that the first five items list those that are, as far as is known, unchanged but the last three items denote change that has been brought about by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary.

(i) Things old yet ever new.

The Mount Zion to which the Hebrew recipients of the epistle and their successors came and have come, and that corresponds to the earthly Zion, is located in heaven itself. It is the place from which Satan was cast (Ezek.28:14-16) but where the Lord was "laid" in resurrection (1 Pet.2:6) and from which He will come to deliver Israel (Rev.14:1). Meantime it is to that place and Person that believers today must come, as did the Hebrews to whom the epistle was written, to be built up a spiritual house (1 Pet.2:6). How this happens in practice may be seen from the example of the Corinthians, many of whom "hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts. 18:8). Paul laid a foundation there (1 Cor.3:10). He did on earth what had been done in heaven (1 Pet.2:6; 1 Cor.3:11). The baptized believers were then 'laid towards' the foundation stone to become God's building in that city. Such 'laying towards' is a literal rendering of the word prositithemi (added, e.g. Acts 2:42). This is how believers come to Mount Zion if they wish to be numbered with the people of God. It is this position of service and obedience from which they may be in danger of falling away.

The comparison with the Old Testament 'coming to the Mount' with its attendant privileges and responsibilities shows that the second of the eight items, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" particularly denotes the character of that city as in the case of the earthly Jerusalem with a centre of divine rule and testimony. From here have gone, go, and will go, the instructions and commands that bring men to salvation and saints to worship. Again the comparison with the earthly shadow helps to identify the third and fourth items of the second list. Just as a people in a past day were assembled around the divine centre on earth so to the heavenly Mount and City have been, are and will be, gathered myriads of angels. Like the people of old, too, they are arranged in order in general assembly. Further, just as the tribe of Levi were called out from amongst their fellows to replace the first-born sons (Num.3:11 -13) so there is a similar group of angelic beings,
the church of the first-born ones enrolled in heaven.

Again in keeping with the heavenly place being the centre of divine rule and judgement, it is the character of God as Judge that is presented as fifth item in the list. This too emphasizes the eternal nature of the place, for the office of judge given to the Lord Jesus is, though universal, to be exercised over a fixed period by delegation (Acts. 17:31; 1 Cor.15:24-8).

(ii) Things new and ever new

The three remaining items of the second list are distinct and differ from the previous five in that they represent change in the order of things in the heavenly Zion. For example, although no clear Old Covenant shadow of the "spirits of just men made perfect" may be found, Old Testament saints could obviously not be included in this group until their death. Indeed, we suggest that their inclusion in the list of verse 23 was the result of the Lord Jesus, in resurrection, leading captivity captive (Eph.4:8). Similarly the Lord Jesus is presented, as foreshadowed by Moses who mediated the Old Covenant, as Mediator of the New Covenant. But He had not taken the office till after Calvary. Similarly again the "blood of sprinkling", is clearly foreshadowed by the blood by which the Old Covenant was ratified (Ex.24:1-8) and, demanding similar pledged obedience, had no application prior to Calvary. It is thus a matter provoking great humility and praise from men that the nature of the heavenly centre of divine rule has changed so as to enable men in this dispensation to be brought nigh.

Receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken

This passage, crucial to the message of Hebrews, closes with a strong warning to believers of the consequences of their falling away from the position of obedience and service bequeathed by the New Covenant. Comparison is again made with Old Covenant days, but the issue for believers is more serious in that their loss through disobedience will also be eternal although they are eternally secure as far as the soul is concerned. The contrast between the eternal things associated with the New and the temporal things associated with the Old Covenant is not only emphasized by the insecurity of the earth shown by the Lord's shaking of it at Sinai, but is also shown by reference to a day most apposite to our own time. In the days when a feeble remnant returned to build the house of God and function as the kingdom of God at the earthly Zion, the Lord encouraged them. In a day of flagging interest He showed to them that their association with the place of the name in this life held the promised blessing of association with it during the millennial reign. This reign follows the shaking of the earth.
associated with the return of the Lord to earth and the judgement of the nations (Hag.2:6-9). The Lord will shake the earth once more (Heb.12:26-29) but, though similar, this is not a reference to the shaking prophesied by Haggai. The shaking of Heb.12:27 will be at the dissolution of the world as we know it. Consequently this scripture, at the climax of the book of Hebrews is especially precious to those few in churches of God who have returned to Mount Zion to receive again the aye-abiding kingdom. For it testifies that their present obedience will have its counterpart of reward in eternity; in a time beyond the days when our God will have consumed the earth and its associated temporal things in fire. "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev.21:7).

The Baptism of Believers (1)

By T. M. Hyland, of Birkenhead

It is a distressing anomaly of our times that the ordinance of baptism, so clearly commanded by our Lord and faithfully observed by His apostles, should continue to be a matter of controversy even among born-again believers. Jarring voices are to be heard on every side. The main reason for the discordance, traced to its source, will be found in certain 'traditions' which were appended to the Christian Faith in the sub-apostolic period. These traditions, without the sanction of apostolic teaching or practice, have been endorsed and systematized in most 'Church' Confessions or formularies. They are so widely accepted as Christian doctrine that their authority is taken for granted by the many.

In this short series of articles it is proposed to restate the scriptural mode, meaning and purpose of the ordinance. In doing this some prevalent mis-teaching on the subject will come under notice against the background of the New Testament writings. We begin with the command of the risen Lord to His apostles: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt.28:18-20). There could be no higher authority for the ordinance of baptism than this. The terms of our Lord's momentous declaration are clear and
comprehensive, providing the blueprint for apostolic labours — the cause to which they would devote their lives following His ascension to the Father. And His instructions are age-long in their relevance. They stand, without modification or amendment; the charter of God's people "till He come".

The Mode

There can be no question that the baptism commanded by the risen Lord required that the believer be immersed in water. The Greek verb *baptizo* and its derivatives admit of no other meaning than "to immerse, to dip". This can be verified by reference to any reliable Greek Lexicon (e.g. Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament, Abbott-Smith). Attempts to bring "sprinkling" within the meaning of *baptizo* may be dismissed as special pleading. The Greek language has distinct words for "sprinkle" (*rhantizo*) and "immerse". Theologians affiliated to 'Churches' which advocate the sprinkling of infants do not claim scriptural support for the practice. They concede that dipping is the only form of baptism prescribed in Scripture. We give a few examples:

"In the primitive church baptism was a total immersion" (Luther).

"*Baptizo* signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church" (John Calvin).

"Baptism is immersion" (Dr Chalmers, Free Church of Scotland).

"In the apostolic age, those who came to baptism came in full age, and of their own choice. Those who were baptized were immersed" (Dean Stanley, Episcopalian).

"The mode of administering baptism was by immersion, the whole body being put under water" (Dr Adam Clarke, Methodist).

"The earliest generation of Christians . . . having been baptized as adults, had an indestructible living recollection of their baptism performed by immersion" (Prof. A. Deissmann). In the New Testament, the first mention of baptism occurs in Matt.3:6,7. That John the Baptist practised baptism by immersion cannot be gainsaid (see Jn 3:23). While John's baptism differed in application and significance from Christian baptism, its form was identical.

Sufficient evidence has been adduced to establish that there is neither scriptural nor lexical authority for bringing "sprinkling" within the meaning of *baptizo* and its derivatives. It may well be queried, Why, then, have not translators when referring to the ordinance of Christian baptism rendered the Greek words by their English equivalents? Because, had they done so an error already being practised would have been exposed. The first English translation of the Scriptures goes back to Wyclif. By that time (1382) Christendom had already adopted sprinkling of infants and
designated it as baptism. "The English reader is thus precluded from knowing that the Greek word means to dip. The Greek is not translated but transliterated. To have translated the Greek word would have shown that the practice of sprinkling is not apostolic or scriptural" (G. H. Lang).

**Does the Mode matter?**

Decidedly on two counts:

Firstly, by substituting sprinkling for dipping the commandment of the risen Lord is violated (Matt.28:19). No 'Church' or Council has been authorized to change or re-interpret His plain words. Although widely regarded as an orthodox Christian ordinance sprinkling (christening) is a human alternative devoid of Scriptural authority. It is no part of "the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" for which we are exhorted to "contend earnestly" (Jude 1:3). (In a future article we propose to examine in more detail the heresy of infant sprinkling).

Secondly, the practical significance of the baptismal act is lost if the applicant is not dipped in water. This is made clear in the important passage, Rom.6:1-11. There Paul teaches that the mode of baptism is a symbolic representation of death, burial and resurrection with Christ. Sprinkling robs the ordinance of this sublime concept.

On these two counts the human expedient is found wanting. It fails the crucial test of Scriptural authority.

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**The Tabernacle of David**

By J. L. Ferguson, of Barrhead

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written. After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen…” (Acts 15:13-16).

What was the tabernacle of David? When did it fall? When will it be rebuilt? And has God a plan for the intervening period?

There were several main turning points in Bible history, each of which had a profound effect on the subsequent course of human affairs. In
Matt.1:1-17 details are given of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Fourteen generations are named in each of three successive periods. First, from Abraham to David; then from David to the carrying of Judah to captivity in Babylon; then from the captivity to the Christ. The call of Abraham, the raising up of David and the birth of Jesus Christ were three such turning points.

David was unique in a very wide field of thought and experience. He was loved by many. It is recorded of Saul, Jonathan, all Israel and Judah, and Michal that they loved David; not to mention the four hundred men who went to Adullam's cave with him. It does not say they loved him, but by their actions they showed it. But above all, the Lord loved him, and saw in him "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam.13:14).

David wrote that he loved the Lord (Ps.18:1), the habitation of His house (Ps.26:8), and His law (Ps.119:97). He had a small Bible, comprising in those days only the five books of Moses with possibly Joshua in addition. Nor could it have been readily accessible to him. But that was to him God's law, with its statutes, testimonies, precepts and commandments, and he loved it deeply, meditating on it day and night. As a man of valour in war, he extended the boundaries of Israel to the far reaches of many lands. Yet that empire territory was rapidly dissipated after his death. But as the lover of God and His Word, the sweet psalmist of Israel penned over seventy of the recorded Psalms, which have enriched the minds, warmed the hearts and cheered the spirits of a countless number of believers in the intervening centuries.

What then was the Tabernacle of David?

David was in affliction (Ps.132:1) at the hand of Saul for probably some ten years. This was set in a period in which God's house also was in affliction, described by the Lord as "the affliction of My habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel" (1 Sam.2:32). David in his affliction was conscious of God in His. David had no certain resting place. Fourteen of his haunts are named between 1 Sam.19:18 and 1 Sam.26:1. He knew that since the days of Eli the sacred Ark had been in the house of Abinadab. This was symptomatic of the spiritual state of the priesthood and the people. As a consequence, God had forsaken His house in Shiloh. So when David's wanderings were over and he sat on the throne of Israel in a house of cedar, he remembered the vows of his hiding places, his longings to find out a place for the Lord. So he sent for the prophet and told him all that was in his heart (2 Sam.7:2).

Men who selflessly love God's house greatly touch God's heart. In
appreciation of the depth to which David shared His own longings God gave him the unconditional covenant of a house, a throne and a kingdom. God expressed it this way, "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Sam.7:16). These were later described as "the sure mercies of David" (Isa.5:3). The offspring of David, seated on the throne of the kingdom, this was "the tabernacle of David".

When did the Tabernacle of David fall?

The house of David lost the throne of the kingdom at the carrying away of Judah into captivity in Babylon. This marked the beginning of the fall of the tabernacle of David. Seventy years later a remnant of the people returned to the land, and in them the kingdom of God continued to be expressed, but there was no longer a king at their head. Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah or Coniah (for he is known by all three names) was the last king of Judah to take the throne by direct descent from David. He was succeeded by his uncle, Zedekiah, in whose days the final captivity took place. And in a dramatic threefold call to the land to hear, God said of Coniah, "Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper. .. sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer.22:29,30).

It was not that Jehoiachin had no seed, for Shealtiel was his son and Zerubbabel his grandson. But he was childless in relation to the throne. As a consequence when the remnant returned, Joshua was high priest in the unbroken order of Aaron. But Zerubbabel, in the unbroken lineage of David, was governor and not king (Hag.1:1). Thus the prophecy of Hos.3:4,5 was entering its first stage, "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall come without fear unto the L ORD and to His goodness in the latter days".

So the royal house of David ceased from the throne. During the period of some four hundred years which followed the return from Babylon, sacrifice and ephod were reverted to and continued under the priests of the order of Aaron. But with the rejection of Messiah, God gradually removed Israel from the main line of His purpose (Rom.11); what had been the house of God was left desolate (Matt.23:38); the kingdom was taken away from the nation (Matt.21:43) and the Old Covenant vanished away, displaced by the New (Heb.8:13).

The fall of the tabernacle of David was complete.
When will the Tabernacle of David be rebuilt?

The hardening in part which has befallen Israel will continue till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. The times of the Gentiles and the fulness of the Gentiles do not cover the same period. It is generally understood that the times of the Gentiles began with the giving of authority to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, over Israel in the first year of his reign. This is significantly referred to in Jer.25:1 where uniquely a Gentile date is given in relation to a Jewish. The times of the Gentiles will close when Gentile power is for ever laid low at the coming of the Son of Man. By contrast, the fulness of the Gentiles is generally associated with the period of glorious opportunity given to the nations, by reason of which they may enter into the blessings of the New Covenant, while Israel is nationally laid aside from the main line of divine purpose.

When therefore the building of the Church which is Christ's Body is complete, the great onward movement of God towards a climax in human affairs will focus again on the nation of Israel. There will necessarily be the final refining, the final breaking down of national pride, the final acknowledgement in gratitude of the One they pierced then for centuries scorned, the final call echoing from Isa.64:1, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down...". Then shall the sign of the Son of Man be seen in heaven, the Rider on the white horse will come down, coming "as a rushing stream, which the breath of the LORD driveth", and a Redeemer shall come to Zion for their deliverance, then out from Zion to rule the nations (ISA.59:19,20 with Rom.11:26).

Thus "the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory... the King" (Matt.25:31-34). And the word to the virgin in Nazareth will at last find fulfilment, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk.1:32,33). Yes, David's Son, not by Solomon through Coniah then Joseph as in Matt.1:1-16, for Jer.22:30 precluded that; but by Nathan and finally through Mary the virgin of Nazareth as in Lk.3:23-28 — David's Son and David's Lord.

And so it will come to pass, "And I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen".

What is God's plan for the intervening period?

So we come back to Acts 15, and the setting of the Jerusalem Council, with the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the problem from
Antioch. Was there to be an adherence to the Jewish rite of circumcision as an essential for Gentile converts to the new faith? After much questioning Peter rose and gave his telling testimony to the conversion of the Gentiles at Caesarea. Then Paul and Barnabus rehearsed the remarkable reception of the Word by the disciples in the recently planted churches in lower Galatia.

At this point James reminded the brethren how that in all this God was making it evident that He was visiting the Gentiles "to take out from them a people for His name". Not only so, but this was in agreement with the words of the prophets and in particular with Amos 9:11,12, as quoted in Acts 15, "After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen". So the God who foretold through the prophets the fall and the building again of the throne and the kingdom in Israel, was now revealing His present purpose for the period between; He was going to take out of all nations a people for His name.

From that Council Paul and Barnabus returned to Antioch with clear guidance for all the churches from the apostles and elders through the Spirit. From Antioch Paul and Silas went forth, taking Timothy from his home assembly, "And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:4,5).

Thus the new work among the Gentiles began to take shape and as it did so a pattern emerged which is indelibly stamped on both the acts and the letters of the apostles. It was the process by which God took out from the Gentiles a people for His name; a process which He left clearly defined in His statute book and has never since repealed.

Believers were baptized in one Spirit into one Body (1 Cor.12:13); they were then baptized by immersion in water and added to the Lord in local churches of God (Acts 2:41); these churches were strengthened in and by means of the faith (Acts 16:5); not standing alone, autonomous, but linked in area association with other churches of God (Gal.1:2); area groups seen also in the wider context of fellowship (1 Pet.1:1); indeed a structure of fitly framed together churches forming the New Testament Temple of God (Eph.2:21); a spiritual structure of living stones redeemed by the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet.1:19); formed of churches of God acquired by the blood of God's Son (Acts 20:28).

It was God in search of a new nation in place of Israel. It was God establishing a new people who "in time past were no people, but now are the people of God" (1 Pet.2:5-10). This was the nation envisaged by the Lord Jesus in Matt.21:43 as receiving the kingdom of God. The fellowship of
tribes had given place to the fellowship of assemblies, as a people for His name.

We ask each other, how could the Church which is His Body be this nation? Where is there any evidence in the New Testament of the visible, corporate togetherness of a nation seen associated with Christ's Church? Or where in the New Testament is the discipline called for in the kingdom of God seen in the context of the Church the Body? We would affectionately enquire of fellow-believers reading this issue whether it is not clear that in the New Testament the new nation in which the kingdom of God was expressed was the house of God, functioning locally in churches of God, a unique community in unity under elderhood care? And if that is so, should we rest till we find ourselves giving expression to it with those of a like mind?

(contd. from page 147)

Israeli and Palestinian to the centre of the world's political arena. Self-interest compels great world powers to involvement in the conflict between these peoples. We recognize the centrality of Israel to the developing divine purpose as the time of the end approaches. We read that to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the territory under dispute was given by divine decree (Gen.15:18; Gen.28:13; Gen.35:12). Israel's occupation of the promised land was forfeited because they rejected their Messiah. Nor can they know any security of possession, even of part of that land, until they one day say of the Lord Jesus, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord " (Lk.13:35).

Should we not pray fervently that many Israelis and Palestinians may today be reached with the gospel? For we see the evidence of the dark tomorrow, the time of Jacobs's trouble, already casting its ominous shadow over Emmanuel's land.
Voices from the Past

The First and Second Exodus

Our thoughts often travel back to that hallowed scene on the Mount of Transfiguration, and it has often been emphasized that when Moses and Elijah talked with the Lord there, they "spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Lk.9:31). The original word here for decease is a word from which our word "exodus" is derived. By the association of ideas, this word immediately causes us to think of the exodus of Israel from the land of Egypt, which began with the sacrifice of the pascal lamb. Behind a blood-stained doorway they ate of the roasted lamb, with their shoes on their feet and their staff in their hand. Through a blood-stained doorway lay their exodus, their way to liberty from slavery.

So also is our way to liberty after a true likeness. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed. But there is a difference: Moses, Israel's leader, had his staff or rod in his hand as he led them out, and each man had his staff in hand prepared for the journey, but in this dispensation the staff is changed for a cross. "If any man would come after Me," saith the Lord, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk.9:23). In Israel's day it was a procession of men with staffs, but today it is a procession of men with crosses; not a cross at the end of a rosary, nor yet one of gold worn as an ornament, but a cross upon which to die daily to self and the world, and live unto God in Christ Jesus.

Peter could speak of "my exodus" (2 Pet.1:15), an exodus which is closely associated with the Lord's command, "Follow Me" (Jn 21:19). Had He not just said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. Now this He spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God". The fact is beyond question that there is one way only of pleasing God in this dispensation, and that is by following Christ, and if we follow Him then we must be crucified — crucified to self and crucified to the world and the world to us. Do we wish to glorify God in life and death? Then let us take up our cross daily and know our exodus under the leadership of Him who is faith's princely Leader.

Extracted from "Jottings" by J. Miller.
Race Relations

The fierce outbreak of rioting this past summer in Miami, Florida, came as an ugly reminder of racial tensions in parts of the United States. Each summer from 1964 to 1968 there had been similar outbreaks of serious racial violence in certain American cities, where concentrations of coloured people felt aggrieved by social conditions and by a sense of injustice. The annual sequence of rioting became known as the "long hot summer". Then quite abruptly it stopped. In an attempt to relieve the basic causes of discontent a series of reforms was introduced — more political power for coloured people, institution of police review boards and a variety of job programmes. The similar pattern of violence renewed at Miami this year was an unwelcome indication of continuing resentments. The trouble on this occasion came as a reaction to what was regarded as a miscarriage of justice in favour of white against black. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the case involved, the outrageous resort to killing, looting and burning could only heighten tensions and leave great bitterness and loss.

Other nations have the problem on a smaller scale, when concentrations of coloured people in large cities have led to difficult social conditions such as bad housing and a high level of unemployment among young people. This tends to encourage crime, and when law enforcement is applied there is the possibility of resentments being aroused.

On the African continent the racial problem is seen in different perspective. Since World War II most African countries have known the transfer of political control from a white minority to African leadership. The establishment of Zimbabwe with black majority rule this year carried the process a step further, but the long, bloody guerrilla war against Rhodesia which preceded Zimbabwe's independence illustrated the hatreds stirred by racial tensions.

These tensions persist in South Africa, where the policy of apartheid has been imposed on the country's twenty million black people by a government representing the white minority. Rioting and strikes earlier this year expressed
the discontent which simmers among the unprivileged, a discontent ready to boil over on provocation. 1980 has also brought a significant strategic change, with Zimbabwe now under African control, and Namibia (formerly South West Africa) soon likely to be.

So the South African government can foresee the possibility of overwhelming pressure from "black African" nations, combined with mass rebellion by the country's non-white population. Doubtless such fears have influenced Prime Minister Botha to propose sweeping changes in what is known as "petty apartheid". In Johannesburg apartheid has been modified to the extent that most restaurants and theatres are racially mixed. The laws prohibiting interracial sex and marriage are to be reviewed. Regulations which ban non-whites from certain skills, or jobs in which they would supervise whites, are not always enforced. This shift in policy is felt to be insufficient by those championing the black cause, but hard line supporters of apartheid attack Botha as a traitor to the group which brought him to power. Much prayer is needed for South Africa, that in God's mercy wise counsels may prevail among all sections of the community, and a solution be found which will save its peoples from disruption and bloodshed.

Our New Testament reflects the ancient racial tension between Jew and Gentile. This was illustrated by Peter's slowness to appreciate that he must no longer call any man common or unclean. For some time after Pentecost he had retained his Jewish prejudice against joining himself to one of another nation (Acts 10:9-16,28). Several years later he was still so inhibited by other Jewish believers' prejudices that he earned a sharp rebuke from Paul (Gal.2:11-14). So racial prejudice died hard among some of the disciples in churches of God at that time.

Yet Paul could write to the Ephesians that in Christ Jesus the enmity between Jew and Gentile had been abolished through the cross. Christ had created in Himself of Jew and Gentile one new man, so making peace, reconciling them both in one Body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Gentiles had become within the churches of God "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph.2:13-19). A new holy nation had thereby been brought into being, a people for God's own possession, drawn together into one visible community. It was a multi-racial people, bound together by love to Christ, loyalty to His word, and therefore love one to another.

Within churches of God today, as in the New Testament churches of God, the love of Christ dispels racial prejudice. Differences of colour and culture seem insignificant compared with our common relationship as children of God, our being indwelt by the same Spirit, our being made fellow-citizens

(contd. on page 176)
Themes from Hebrews
(11) Outside the Camp
By J. Drain, of Derby

In an earlier article in this series an exposition was given of the amazing privileges enjoyed by God's people, in this dispensation, of entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, the holy of holies, to worship God. The words of Hebrews 13 remind us that as well as the inside place of glory and privilege there is an outside place with which are associated rejection and shame.

When emphasizing this facet of spiritual experience the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews makes use of a historical fact in the sacrificial law which God gave to His people Israel. The blood of certain sacrifices was taken by the high priest into the holy of holies and sprinkled there according to divine instructions. The carcases of such victims were taken outside the camp and disposed of by burning. Christ was put to death and buried outside the city of Jerusalem and so we read, "Jesus also ... suffered without the gate".

One of the reasons why Christ suffered in the outside place was that as a result of His death He might sanctify a people for God. As a consequence of the rejection of Christ by the Israel nation that people was for the time being nationally rejected by God. In God's purposes a new people was to come into being — a new nation standing to Him in a relationship based on the terms of a New Covenant. Involved in the abrogation of the Old Covenant was the separation of the New Covenant people from the rejected Old Covenant people, their law, their ordinances and their place of worship.

On the day of Pentecost Peter exhorted those who listened to his message, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation". And so "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate". From one standpoint we may see the Lord Jesus as being led forth by His executioners. It is also true, and designedly so, that "He went out, bearing the cross for Himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha" (Jn 19:17). Part of the reproach which Christ had to suffer was to be taken outside the city to a place where malefactors were put to death. But with deliberation the Lord Jesus went out of Jerusalem to die. No longer did that city contain the house of God, though it had the magnificent temple buildings. No longer was it the place of the Name where the people of Israel could gather to worship God, though it still retained the formality of the priestly functions. No longer was it the seat of divine government and rule, though it boasted its Sanhedrin. No longer was Israel God's people. Outside all that Jerusalem at that time
represented, Christ, the Messiah, suffered the painful, shameful death of crucifixion.

This outside place was to become an important factor in the constitution of the New Covenant people of God. The collective sanctification of a people involves personal responsibilities of response. The focal point for the grouping of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ was "without the camp". The term, "the camp" brings to our minds the conception of controlled and orderly arrangement such as was manifested in the Israel encampment in the wilderness of Sinai. In Heb.13 "the camp" is obviously used with a specific reference to the city of Jerusalem and its organized activities. In an extended application of the term we may think of it as indicating the world as an entity organized in opposition to and rejection of the will of God. To the disciple of the Lord Jesus there comes the call, "Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach". He, the rejected One, went forth to the outside place. His disciples should go forth unto Him. It should be observed that it is not just a matter of going forth to a place. We go out unto Him.

In that outside place we shall find others who have heard the call to be outside with the One whom men refused and cast out. Perhaps we can use as an illustration the experiences of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. We do not know with certainty that Joseph was at Golgotha when the Lord was nailed to the tree, but we do know that he was aware of what was happening. It is, we believe, reasonable to conclude that Joseph saw Christ in His sufferings upon the cross and we feel persuaded that the sight moved the deepest emotions of the man's being. After the Lord Jesus had died Joseph was in the city of Jerusalem. There he had access to the Roman governor, Pilate, and he enjoyed sufficient prestige to ask for the body of Jesus so that it might have a reverent burial. We watch the influential, well-known, wealthy councillor of honourable estate as he walked through the gate out of the city and made his way to Golgotha. There he took his place beside the middle cross, proclaiming by action something that spoke louder than words, that his loyalty was with and for the rejected One. Many may have sneered and jeered as they saw that noble man with loving gentleness remove from the cross the marred body of his Saviour and Lord. The vision of the cross and love for the Crucified drew Joseph to the outside place. But Joseph found that he was not alone. He was joined by another man of high standing. Nicodemus, impelled by the same motives that moved Joseph, and perhaps strengthened by Joseph's example, shared with him the sad task of attending to the dead body of the Christ. Thus too did the teacher of Israel identify himself with the Messiah whom Israel despised and rejected. True disciples of the Lord will meet and unite outside the world order of
things and will strengthen each other in bearing His reproach.

The world has many areas of activity. We think of the world of politics, the world of sport, the world of entertainment, the world of social life, the world of religion. The present order of things in the secular world is very highly and skilfully organized and is not lacking in subtlety. What should be the attitude of the disciple of Christ to the world? The specious argument has been advanced that the Christian should actively participate in worldly activities and seek by good influence to raise standards accepted in such activities. Many have engaged in these things to their spiritual ruin. Christ taught His disciples, "Ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world..." (Jn 15:19). Later, speaking to His Father, He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world ... As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (Jn 17:16,18,19). In the world but not of it — this is an apt description of the relationship of the disciple of the Lord to the world. He is in it primarily to witness for Christ, his Lord, though he may use lawfully things that are necessary and desirable for him as a human being. Because he is not of the world the disciple should sanctify himself, taking his place with Christ outside the camp of systematized hostility to God's will.

What does the city, the camp offer? It can provide many facilities for human advancement and prestige. In the city we may find relative ease and the pleasures of friendships and popularity. Fame and influence may be secured. And, of course, in the city cultural projects abound.

What is offered without the gate, outside the camp? In Heb.13:13 the answer is found in one word, "reproach". Outside the camp there are ignominy, shame, disgrace. Who suffered these things? Christ did. Note the phraseology, "Bearing His reproach". We are exhorted to go forth bearing His reproach.

When the truth of the cross entered the mind and heart of the proud and ambitious Saul of Tarsus it brought great changes in the life of that young man. No longer did the world and its prospects hold any attraction for him, and he realized that no longer did the world have any use for him. He could say, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world". He was outside the camp, and he was outside with others who had heard the same call.

We close with a simple soliloquy. I have accepted Christ as my Saviour and yet I realize that I am very much in the world and the world is in me. Over the wall there, in the outside place, is a Man stripped of His garments and nailed to a cross. He has suffered indescribable torture inflicted by men.
He died crushed beneath the load of the wrath and curse of God. Why? For my sins. He is my Saviour and Redeemer. What am I going to do? The challenge is compelling. I can stay in the city, in the camp, and enjoy its advantages. But where is my Saviour? He is out there, the despised and rejected Man of sorrows and reproach. I see the gate that leads to the outside place. Shall I go out to Him for present reproach and future reward? Or shall I remain in the camp of the world for present gain and future loss? What will the answer be?

The Baptism of Believers (2)

By T. M. Hyland, of Birkenhead

Last month, when considering the terms of the commission of the risen Lord to His apostles, we focused attention on the verb baptizo which means "to immerse, to dip". We submitted that the mode of the ordinance would have been self-evident had translators used the English equivalents of the original Greek words. Instead they transliterated baptizo and its derivatives thereby obscuring their meaning. This was because the practice of "sprinkling" had already been adopted in Christendom and misnamed "baptism". The rite of sprinkling with water is not only a human substitute devoid of scriptural authority, it also robs the ordinance of its symbolic significance as set forth in Rom.6:1-11. We now pass on to consider who are to be

The subjects of Christian Baptism

The Lord's words are plainly definitive: "Make disciples of (teach, AV) all the nations, baptizing them..." (Matt.28:19). The persons to be baptized must first be enlisted as His disciples. "Make disciples" is the more accurate rendering of the Greek verb matheteuo (the RSV and NIV have adopted this translation). It includes teaching, but also implies allegiance: "a disciple is not only a pupil, but an adherent" (W. E. Vine).

There have been attempts (not by reputable Greek authorities) to make the Lord's command mean, "Make disciples of all the nations by baptizing them . . ." It is argued on the basis of this paraphrase that discipleship is a status conferred by baptism, and that therefore infants, and others without personal faith, should be baptized, and thus brought onto Christian ground.
But the paraphrase is a violation of the rules of Greek grammar. In Greek usage, when a participle follows a principal verb an action following that principal verb, not preceding or accompanying it, is indicated. In the passage under consideration the principal verb is "make disciples" and the participle following is "baptizing". Therefore it is inadmissible to translate, "make disciples by baptizing them". Moreover the pronoun "them" is masculine, whereas "nations" is neuter gender, establishing that it is not the nations as such that are to be baptized, but persons from among the nations who have been enlisted as disciples. Readers desiring to examine the Greek construction of Matt.28:19 in greater depth should consult the valuable treatise, *Baptism*, by Johannes Warns, pp. 38-42 (The Paternoster Press, 1957).

To sum up: discipleship within the meaning of our Lord's command presupposes belief of the gospel (Mk.16:15,16); such belief being followed by voluntary personal decision to acknowledge His "all authority". By submission to the ordinance of baptism the disciple testifies publicly his allegiance to Christ as Lord.

**Infant baptism (so-called)**

In view of the widespread assumption that this is an orthodox Christian ritual, further examination may be helpful to some readers. Not only does its form (sprinkling) bear no resemblance to the ordinance instituted by our Lord; the doctrine based on the practice has even more detrimental features. Infants on whom it is performed are incapable of the rational response required of the disciple. And when it is claimed that by its means the infant becomes "a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven", Christendom parts company with Holy Scripture.

The destiny of the infant dead is a subject outside the scope of this enquiry. Suffice it to say that according to Scripture the merits of the Atonement extend to those who die before reaching an age of accountability. The claim that their destiny is in any way influenced by the ritual of "sprinkling" is spurious.

If the rite of infant baptism was neither taught nor practised by our Lord and His apostles, how did it gain a foothold in Christendom? It was introduced, along with many other unauthorized doctrines and practices, in the early centuries following the apostolic age. In his address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus the apostle Paul gave this solemn warning:

"I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30).
The writings of the early Fathers (a term applied by historians to Church leaders in the sub-apostolic age) testify to the accuracy of Paul's prediction.

The first clear reference to the baptism of infants occurs in a writing by Tertullian (197 A.D.) in which he condemns the practice then coming into favour. His protests may have stemmed the tide for a while. But the cult was fostered by false teachers within the churches, and by the end of the sixth century was sanctioned throughout Christendom.

A golden opportunity to outlaw infant baptism and the heresies associated with it was missed by the sixteenth century Reformers. Luther's teaching on baptism was confusing and ambiguous. He frequently changed his mind on the subject but eventually became an uncompromising advocate for the baptism of infants. This defect in his theology is a blot on the life-work of the great Reformer. Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer, after upholding the scriptural ordinance, the baptism of believers, later recanted in favour of the baptism of infants. Calvin also was a firm advocate of the unscriptural practice. Thus Sola Scriptura (a Reformation watchword) was patently violated on a major article of the Christian Faith. In consequence the error was firmly re-established in Christendom — human tradition being preferred to the authority of Holy Scripture.

**Household Baptism**

Some advocates of infant baptism have tried to justify the ritual on the ground that five times in the New Testament reference is made to the baptism of whole households. They argue that there may have been infants in some of these households. In the first place, in the New Testament, "household" and "family" are not synonymous terms. That apart, it is made clear in the Acts narrative that those baptized in the households of Cornelius (Acts 10:47,48), the Philippian jailor, (Acts 16:31-34) and Crispus (Acts 18:8) were all persons who had heard the word, believed, and were willing subjects of the ordinance. In the other two cases: those of the households of Lydia (Acts 16:15) and Stephanas (1 Cor.1:16), the details given are meagre but they give no room for the supposition that infants were among those baptized.

On scriptural grounds we are left with the conclusion that Christian baptism, as practised by the apostles and their fellow-workers, was restricted to persons won for Christ by the preaching of the gospel and enlisted as His disciples. Infants and all others outside this category were excluded by the terms of the risen Lord's commission to His apostles (Matt.28:18-20).
"Words Fitly Spoken"

By D. Smith, of Lerwick

Eliphaz the Temanite, paid a worthy tribute to Job when he said, "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast confirmed the feeble knees" (Job 4:3-4). Job, a perfect and upright man and one who feared God, had carefully instructed many another in the same way. A man who walks in the way of God will encourage others to walk with him. Although the response may sometimes be discouraging, as it was with Job's own family, the need to counsel and nurture others in the ways of the Lord is ever present.

With the keen spiritual perception he possessed, Job perceived that some were straying away from what was right and pleasing to the Almighty. Their lives were being brought near to ruin through various solicitations of this evil world. Often in such cases there is little that one can do to reverse the process, but with godly discretion Job had spoken words to uphold and stay those so falling. The righteous are exposed to various stumbling-blocks, for the great adversary, who stood not in the truth (Jn 8:44) but fell from his exalted station as the covering cherub in the Eden of God (Ezek.28:11-16), employs his subtle wisdom and power to bring down to destruction every one who would live to the glory of God. But a word spoken in season can thwart this evil process and strengthen the unstable saint.

The beauty of the proverb, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver" (Prov.25:11) was seen in the Lord Jesus, who although bearing sorrow and grief, was wakened morning by morning to be taught of God "how to sustain with words him that is weary". Undoubtedly a multitude of people were served with "apples of gold in baskets of silver" at the mouth of Him who so readily spoke a word in season to sustain and comfort the faint and weary. Grace had been poured into the lips of Him who was "fairer than the children of men". Can the faithful disciple ignore the example of the Master to supply by way of a gracious word spoken in love, the strength and encouragement necessary to uphold one faint and weary in the way?

In his deep and varied experience of life Job must have realized the truth of Elihu's words, "the ear trieth words as the palate tasteth meat" (Job 34:3). As meat unpleasant to the palate can affect the body, so can wicked and improper words inflict lasting pain and disorder to the soul and spirit. Indeed it is significant that so long ago the devastating effect of human
words was recognized. Job himself was to feel the cruel sting of the bitter and malignant tongue, as expressed in the question to his friends, "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?" (Job 19:2). He who had strengthened and upheld others was now bruised and broken by cruel words and perverted speech. And many have suffered in the same manner, troubled by the untamed tongues of men. Young lives blossoming in righteousness and showing signs of ability and faithfulness have been blasted by prating with wicked words (3 Jn 10). Assemblies and servants of God have been similarly ravaged and wounded.

It is therefore not surprising that such godly men as David and Solomon should seek divine help in regulating their own words and give explicit warning to others of the dangers involved in hasty speech. "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps.141:3) prayed David, who declared "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Ps.39:1). Solomon says it is a "wise son" that heareth instruction, "A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth... He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Prov.13:2,3). With equal apprehension the New Testament writers view the evil of undisciplined speech. James says, with outstanding frankness, "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (Jas.1:26). On the same subject Peter takes up the words of David in Ps.34, "He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile" (1 Pet.3:10). Paul, who directed his powerful ministry to the building up of the assemblies and that he might "present every man perfect in Christ", states positively, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Col.4:6). To the Ephesian elders Paul emphasizes the edifying effect of grace, "Now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). How soon saints and assemblies can be broken down by the ruthless and unsparing talk of unbridled tongues! To every Christian comes the injunction, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying" (Eph.4:29) and "seek that ye may abound unto the edifying of the church" (1 Cor.14:12). "Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor.14:26).

Let us seek to build up and promote faith and confidence in the assembly where we are found. To sustain with words a weary soul or uphold with wise and gracious speech one that is falling away from the living God is a precious ministry. May we all be exercised to discharge it with love and diligence. Such a work is not exclusive to brethren. The words of sisters can
encourage and sustain. Many a "good soldier" and "faithful minister" owes his strength and spiritual attainment to the counsel and encouragement of godly sisters and kindly mothers whose gracious words were "as apples of gold in baskets of silver".

The Lord's Day
By G. K. Kennedy, of Sydney

In two places in the Holy Scriptures there is a Greek word, an adjective, kuriakos, derived from kurios, meaning "lord". The two places are 1 Cor.11:20 (the Lord's supper) and Rev.1:10, where it refers to the first day of the week (as is hereafter shown), and it is to be distinguished from the genitive or possessive kurios (meaning 'of lord') which occurs in many other places, such as 2 Thess.2:2. The meaning of kuriakos is "of or for a lord or master". However, since kuriakos is an adjective, there is no exact English equivalent which can be used to translate it, although 'lordly' is sometimes used. The words 'imperial' and 'dominical' have also been used.

The "Lord's Day" of Rev.1:10 is not the same as the "Day of the Lord" which is a period of time over 1,000 years long, beginning at the end of the Great Tribulation and finishing with the passing away of the heaven and earth before the Great White Throne Judgement (Acts 2:20; 1 Thess.5:2-3; 2 Thess.2:2; 2 Pet.3:10).

If the apostle John had been in the Spirit (Rev.1:10) on the day of the Lord then most of the Revelation would not have been written because most of the contents of the Revelation have occurred or will occur before that Day begins. The apostle John was in a certain place (the island of Patmos — Rev.1:9) on a certain day (the Lord's or Lordly day — verse 10). The question then remains whether this Lord's Day is the weekly Sabbath day or the first day of the week, Saturday or Sunday.

There are a number of references to the first day of the week as the Lord's Day in very early writings, dating from about 100 A.D., that is very shortly after the book of the Revelation was written, which most commentators place at about 95 A.D. Ignatius (martyred 115 A.D.) makes a difference between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day and affirms that the latter is the resurrection day. The "Epistle of Barnabus" (about 120 A.D.) indicates the general practice of early Christians in regard to the "eighth day", which is the first day of the week. The "Didache" or "Teaching of the Apostles" (120 A.D. or earlier) says, "On the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks". Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and
Tertullian (140-200 A.D.) refer to Sunday, the first day of the week, being the Lord's Day. No evidence whatsoever exists that Christians in the early centuries regarded the Sabbath as the Lord's day or that they ever kept the Lord's supper on the Sabbath day.

Having now noted that the Lord's day is not the same as the Day of the Lord and having heard the testimony of the early fathers (so-called) that the Lord's day was the resurrection day, we will now consider the keeping of the Sabbath.

Whether or not it is the Christian's present duty to keep and observe the Sabbath day has been a problem for some children of God. They read the ten commandments and ask if it is not right that the other nine should be obeyed and if so then why not that commandment which says, "remember the Sabbath day". In this paper we look at the question of Sabbath day observance, and firstly we answer the question with which we have begun. The other nine commandments are all repeated in the New Testament as part of the present will of God. On the other hand there is no reference whatever by example or instruction to a Christian observance of the Sabbath (seventh day).

It will help us to understand the place of the Sabbath day if we look at the Biblical references to it, and note also where the Bible does not refer to it. The first reference to the Sabbath day (Sabbath means rest) is in Gen.2:2-3 where God rested because His work was finished and it was very good in His sight. (But note that it was not called the Sabbath day). That rest was for God and it followed a finished work which had been according to the will and word of God. Adam had no part in the doing of that work — it had been God's work — and Adam was brought into the enjoyment of it. Adam's first full day on earth was the day of God's rest in which Adam was given the wonderful privilege of enjoying the work of God in all its completeness: "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb.4:3).

Adam was not commanded to rest every seventh day. God put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it and He gave no commandment to Adam to observe a Sabbath day. The only commandment was that he should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Every day was Adam's responsibility to dress and to keep the Garden. Adam in his innocence did not observe the Sabbath day because he was in the full enjoyment of God's finished work.

After the Fall Adam was put out of the Garden of Eden. God gave him no commandment to keep the Sabbath day but rather said to him: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen.3:17). Sin brought a curse and with that curse came toil and there was no rest, no Sabbath.
For 2,500 years from the time of the Garden of Eden there was no commandment and no provision concerning the Sabbath day. Noah is not commended because he kept the Sabbath nor was the world condemned in the Flood because they kept it not. Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their covenants with God had no obligation to keep the Sabbath. Job, who may have lived during the time of the Egyptian bondage, seems to have known nothing of the Sabbath although we are told much of his righteousness and good works.

It was not until a people was redeemed out of slavery and had been baptized in the Red Sea that God took up the Sabbath day with man. It is clear from Neh.9:13-14 that God had not previously ordained Sabbath keeping for man until Mount Sinai; "Thou... madest known unto them Thy holy Sabbath". Because God made it known, it is clear that it was not previously made known. And then it was not until He made provision for them in the manna (Ex.16:22-30). The children of Israel fed upon the divinely provided food; they rested in a provision which God gave them out of heaven (Neh.9:15; Jn 6:31), so that it was made miraculously possible that they rested on the Sabbath.

The Lord gave Israel the ten commandments, His holy law that was the covenant between Himself and them wherein He would be their God and they would be His people, the kingdom of God. Notice what the fourth commandment says: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Ex.20: 8-10). The Sabbath day was relative to labour and work. The Law is all of works. The Sabbath day existed because of man's work. He had to cease from work and rest unto God. The Israelite did not begin his week with rest. He worked and the prospect of rest was at the end. He looked forward to rest and not backward to it. If we understand the place of the Law (it is our tutor, guide or conductor to bring us to Christ) and if we learn its lesson we will see the significance of the Sabbath. Before the cross of Christ men of faith looked forward to what was to come. The Christian today is not looking forward to when work will be finished but is resting on a finished work. Like Adam, who began his existence in the divine rest, the Christian today is resting in the finished work of Christ who said upon the cross: "It is finished".

In Ex.31:12-17 God clearly defined the extent of Sabbath day observance. Moses was commanded to speak to the children of Israel. It was a sign between God and them. "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... a sign between Me and the children of Israel", God said to the Israelites "thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt... therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut.5:15). The
Sabbath belongs to that covenant made with Israel and has to do with their national identity as God's people whether in the past or future (e.g. Matt.24:20, Isa.66:23, Ezek.46:1). During this present day of grace Israel is set aside nationally.

The Sabbath day was a vital and integral part of the Law which was a shadow of the things to come (see Heb.10:1). On that day the shewbread was set in order in the Tabernacle (Lev.24:8 and note the end of the verse; would any make this applicable to Christians today?); extra lambs were slain on the Sabbath day (Num.28:9,10).

Under the terms of the Sabbath day the Israelites could gather no sticks, light no fires, carry no burden, do no work, sell nothing and buy nothing. They were restricted in the distance of travel. I remember having a meal on a Saturday in a hospital canteen where a charge was made for the food. I offered to pay but my money was refused and yet the price was entered in a book so that I could pay later. That is legalism. The technicality of not taking the money did not mean that a sale had not been made. If the Sabbath is still in force so are all its obligations. The Sabbath was for a people which existed nationally separated from the Gentiles, not only religiously but in commerce and all else.

The Sabbath and its obligations continued until the resurrection of Christ. From that time it is the first day of the week that predominates in the disciple experience. The first day of the week is not a Sabbath. The Sabbath precept was part of the Law. The Lord observed the Sabbath, not as part of the New Covenant but of the Old. "God sent forth His Son... born under the Law" (Gal.4:4) and having kept the Law perfectly He is now the end of the Law unto righteousness to every one that believes (Rom.10:4).

Sometimes it is argued that the apostles observed the Sabbath because they preached to the Jews on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14,44; Acts 17:2 etc.). It might just as readily be argued that they believed the temple to be God's house because they met there to preach (Acts 2:46; Acts 3:1; Acts 5:20). The fact is that they went to the places where the people were on the days that the people gathered. These were not the church gatherings of the Christians but the times when the apostles had a "word of exhortation for the people" (Acts 13:15). The church activities of disciples in fellowship together were more particularly marked out as being on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor.16:2).

There were those who tried to impose upon the Christians those things which belonged to the Law. This was done to the Colossians but Paul advised them in the Holy Spirit: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come" (Col.2:16-17). Now we have been
discharged from the Law, having died to that wherein we were held (Rom.7:6). Some try to circumvent these Scriptures by drawing an artificial distinction between 'moral' and 'ceremonial' law but the Word of God makes no such distinction. It was a 'whole law' (Gal.5:3). "The bond written in ordinances" (Col.2:14) is the law and it is now blotted out for the believer, having been taken out of the way by the cross.

We cannot cover here the significance of the first day of the week but it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament (e.g. Lev.23:16). Nor have we space to speak of that Sabbath rest described in Heb.3,4 which remains for the people of God. That has to do with 'another day' (Heb.4:8) which is an ever present 'today', not a repetitive seventh day of 24 hours, and it is associated with God's house (Heb.3:6; Isa.66:1) not with heaven as the believer's future home.

Most significantly, those who promote the Sabbath observance are in proven error upon other matters of vital Biblical teaching. May we rightly divide the Word of God and prove the things that differ (2 Tim.2:15).

(contd from page 163)

with the saints and of the household of God. In prayer and witness our love will flow out widely to all races. As the Master said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations": and did he not also command that disciples should be made of all the nations?

Racial discrimination withers before the love of Christ!
Voices from the Past

Apart by Themselves

Mark, in his account of the Transfiguration, tells us: "Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them" (Mk.9:2). Such seasons are needed by us all, to be with the Lord apart by ourselves in private and secluded blessedness, when He may reveal Himself to us, not to our eyes, but to our hearts.

Did not Peter, especially, need this experience in the loneliness of that high mountain? Think of what is recorded in Mk.8:31-33! The Lord began to teach His disciples openly that He "must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again". Christ's announcement of suffering, rejection and death totally eclipsed, in the mind of Peter, the glorious triumph contained in the words, "and after three days rise again". His own thoughts blinded his mind to the truth of Christ's words, and he took the Lord and "began to rebuke Him". How solemn! How awful! to rebuke One who was not only wise, but One who is "Wisdom", One into whose heart no foolish thoughts ever entered, for "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov.24:9 RVM), Was Peter's act to pass unnoticed? What would be the effect on the other disciples? What would be the effect on the many who have arisen since and have taken upon themselves to criticize Christ? Christ is above criticism and rebuke! So we read, "But He turning about, and seeing His disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind Me, Satan: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men". The Lord's rebuke had a salutary effect on the disciples, for never again did any one of them presume to rebuke Him. But rebukes are not sufficient in themselves to build up a strong, robust faith. The revelation of the Lord to the heart has a value that nothing else can equal. Hence it was, that about eight days after, He took Peter, and James, and John, the high mountain apart by themselves, and showed them a little of His glory. May we too have the experience of being taken apart with Him. "Apart with Thee, O Master! Where the light of earthly glory dies"

In the quietude and holiness of His presence we may see His beauty, taste of His grace, learn His secrets, take on His likeness, and above all have our hearts drawn out to Him by the magnetic power of the affection He has for us.
The Overshadowing Nuclear Fear

All peoples of the world hunger for peace. Yet as another year draws to a close prospects of international peace grow dimmer. 1980 has seen a further escalation of armaments among major world powers. Taking only NATO and Warsaw Pact countries they have available between them 10 million trained men, 90,000 tanks, 1,500 submarines, 15,000 combat aircraft and 35,000 pieces of artillery. But it's the destructive power of nuclear weapons which makes former global wars seem relatively insignificant compared with the devastation which could result from any future major war. Over 4,500 strategic nuclear launchers of various kinds are available between the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances, with some 14,000 strategic nuclear warheads. 1980 has seen agreement by several European nations to the deployment of United States nuclear-tipped cruise missiles in their territories — 160 are to be based in Great Britain, and 304 in other European countries. Britain and France have also decided to update their own independent nuclear deterrents at enormous cost. So the total destructive power ready for use in case of war is many times greater than ever before in human history. What this might involve in terms of devastation and loss of life is difficult for most of us to imagine. The world has therefore been reduced to a sinister "balance of terror". Fear of nuclear attack has become the main reason for avoiding major war. Many felt a measure of security behind the United States "nuclear shield"; and while the United States had clear superiority in nuclear power there was some justification in this attitude. But as her lead is overtaken, and smaller nations develop their independent nuclear deterrent, there is growing nervousness. World thinking is overshadowed by fear of the nuclear threat. For the overall destructive capability increases; and there are so many more fingers on a nuclear trigger! Inevitably, the economic burden placed on many nations to maintain this mighty arsenal of sophisticated weapons is tremendous. Annual defence spending is reported to cost
$510 for each American, $396 for West Germans, $349 for Frenchmen and $314 for Britons!

Only when the Lord Jesus Christ asserts His authority as King of kings and Lord of lords will worldwide peace be established. As Ps.46 foretells:

"He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariots in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth" (Ps.46:9,10).

Isaiah looked forward to the same great day of deliverance when he wrote: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa.2:4).

Before this there must be "the time of the end", history's darkest era. To this period belong the terrible judgements described in such scriptures as Rev.8, including a third part of the trees and all green grass being burnt up (v.7); the death of a third part of the creatures in the sea, and destruction of a third part of all sea-going ships (v.9); a third part of freshwater supplies being polluted, and many people dying as a result (vv. 10,11). Will these be the result of nuclear destruction and "fall-out"? Nuclear development has put such tremendous destructive power under man's control that these scriptures could conceivably be fulfilled by human agency. Whether by this means or by direct divine intervention the prophetic word must come to pass in that awesome day of visitation.

Meanwhile we wait as believers for the return of the Lord Jesus to the air to take His Church out of the world before the end-time period of judgement begins. Through prayer and supplication for all men (1 Tim.2:1-2) we may exert a mighty influence before God. How effectively Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah! (Gen.18). Had there been but ten righteous the city would have been spared from destruction for their sake. The restraining power of Almighty God is the believer's confidence "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Thy word" (Ps.119:114). There is no guarantee, of course, that further war will be restrained until after the Lord's coming to the air. But whatever is allowed, we can confidently say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear . . ." (Ps.46).

"Why should I ever anxious be, since such a God is mine?
He watches o'er me night and day, and tells me. Mine is thine".
Themes from Hebrews
(12) Review

By J. D. Terrell, of Carlisle

To review some of the unique spiritual riches of Hebrews presented in this magazine during 1980 is no easy assignment. To call these riches 'unique' is entirely justified, for in many respects this epistle stands alone among the inspired writings of the New Testament. Some have found it difficult to study and to follow its closely reasoned approach to profound truths affecting Christian life and service. Yet at numerous points it is made very clear that the imperfect, vulnerable believers to whom it was addressed were fully expected by the author to respond in no half-hearted way to its message.

By whom, to whom, and with what essential purpose then was this letter written? The problem of the authorship of Hebrews has intrigued students of the New Testament since very early days. It would not be to great spiritual profit to embark here on the Pauline and non-Pauline arguments, although vigorously contested views have been advanced for both. Issues of style, language and likely date of writing have all been involved and, despite significant points to the contrary, Paul the apostle has tended to attract considerable support over the years. But may it not be significant that, in ordering the canon of New Testament Scripture, and in the marvel of its preservation, the Holy Spirit has not ordained a clear record of the writer of this remarkable epistle? Its early and clear recognition as divinely inspired may be all the more significant for the obscurity of its authorship.

The original recipients of Hebrews would seem to have been Jewish believers well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, with the records of the tabernacle experience of their fathers. It is impossible to say with certainty whether or not the acknowledgement of the sufferings they had endured hitherto (Heb.10:32-34) and the possible references to worse to come (Heb.12:4) indicate, as has been suggested, a date immediately before the persecutions of Nero. But many of the characteristics of those addressed emerge in the epistle, and the exhortation and teaching are closely tailored to their immediate needs. As in all the New Testament letters to Christians in churches of God, the achievements, weaknesses, aspirations and apprehensions of the saints strike answering chords in our own hearts and we appreciate afresh that the things written aforetime were indeed written for our learning.

It is a notable fact that in the New Testament epistles some of the most profound Christian doctrine is embedded in discourses on the basic principles of Christian living. It is into the turbulence and perplexity of the
market-place of everyday spiritual experience that the Holy Spirit injects some of the most penetrating theology and the most far-reaching doctrine. Let none say the two areas of the believer's experience of God are other than intimately related. An outstanding example is in Phil.2. "Have this mind in you ..." — then, "who being in the form of God ..."; from living together in harmony to the deepest truths of the eternal Person and the atoning work of Christ. So it is with Hebrews. To believers whose spiritual life was, at the best, in shaky condition, comes the arresting challenge of the eternal deity of the Son; His sinless humanity in all its perfection, and the completeness of experience mediated through suffering. Neither angels nor patriarchs can compare. Outflowing from it all is His eternal, majestic, unchangeable priesthood, and the believer's glorious access to the holies through this unblemished minister of the true sanctuary. Compared with the old Israel tabernacle heritage all is better, eternal. Old has given place to new; distance to nearness; shadow to substance. Declares the writer, in effect, You cannot, you must not "neglect" "disobey", "fall away from" such a birthright of spiritual wealth. Unbelief, immaturity, blurred vision threatened a true appreciation of the great collective thing God saw for Himself in a people in priestly service. All of this is meant to grip the hearts of the beloved saints to whom Hebrews was written. Up to the end of chapter 10 teaching, warning, exhortation and the depiction of the things of heavenly worship are interwoven, yet in steadily progressive build-up, as the earlier articles in this series have shown one by one in some detail.

Having already presented Christ the incomparable in Heb.1,2 the writer now parades in honourable procession (Heb.11) men and women of faith from the past; then the epistle flows on into the most direct of practical Christian life teaching. The entrancing, awe-inspiring portrayal of the celestial scene, the heavenly Jerusalem, Mount Zion to which "ye are come", introduced in Heb.12, further enriches the flow of practical instruction and exhortation. These heavenly realms are the place of their, and our, citizenship. He is there in supreme exaltation. But down here His place is, and ever will be, "outside the camp". Keep your eye on that heavenly place with the inexpressible glories of the city of the living God: with the true tabernacle; its sanctuary which the Lord pitched, into which you, the people of God, can enter boldly through the new and living way in holy priesthood service. And as far as this world is concerned, joyfully share His outside place, bearing His reproach. Do not forget, however, that in this collective holy service, which is yours today, there is a divine order of human government through them that have the rule over you. Remember and obey them. (So might we paraphrase in direct speech the flowing thoughts of the writer of this superb Christian treatise.) "And the God of
peace" — beautiful title of benediction — "make you perfect in every good thing to do His will" — words which say it all.

As has been ably demonstrated by earlier contributors in this series, the epistle to the Hebrews, in the course of this elevated and moving appeal to the hearts of spiritually insecure saints, contains teaching nowhere else developed in the New Testament. Peter in his first epistle, presents a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, a spiritual house, a holy and royal priesthood of saints. We lay this alongside the more expansive treatment of the divine purpose for the spiritual service of the holies, such as we have alone in Hebrews — and a picture emerges of unique beauty and completeness for the people of God who today in churches of God have eyes to see a divine purpose precious to God's heart.

Hebrews holds a mirror to the people of God today in many solemn respects. We are so susceptible to spiritual immaturity (Heb.5:12-14); to discouragement at even limited suffering (Heb.12:3,4); to neglect of "so great salvation" (Heb.2:3); to falling away from the living God (Heb.3:12). The writer of this epistle had unshackled spiritual ambition for the saints. It is not enough that they should understand the deliverance from eternal judgement which their faith in Christ had brought them. "Faith" in Hebrews touches more than that. It is the basis of progress to great things in spiritual experience; towards "full-grown men" (Heb.5:14); to running our race with patience (Heb.12:1,2); to perfection in every good thing to do His will (Heb.13:20,21); to collective boldness in access to the very shrine of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb.10:19). There is something uniquely comprehensive about this epistle for the saint of God. There is much encouragement and exhortation at the individual and personal level, e.g. as the heroes of the past are presented as examples of faith in action, and in the practical counsel to honour marriage and to steer clear of the love of money (Heb.13:4,5). But, outstandingly, there is the collective service of a people in a divine position.

A deliberate attempt has been made above to scan this epistle to the Hebrews. It is a book which often attracts very detailed attention to its many absorbing topics of spiritual instruction. And well it may. Yet each of these is enriched by the backdrop of the fabric of total experience of the original recipients and the all-embracing ministry of Christ which is offered. To employ a different metaphor, we should not only enjoy the beauties of the lower and middle slopes as we climb to the summit of the teaching of the holies. We should also survey this majestic mountain of God in all its complete strength and grandeur.

Those privileged to serve God in churches of God, a people for His own
possession, will always have a very special place in their spiritual affections for this epistle with its exceedingly rich veins of truth and teaching. May it ever be so; and may its glories direct the hearts of many lovers of the Son towards the house over which He is supreme in authority (Heb.3:6).

The Baptism of believers (3)
By T. M. Hyland, of Birkenhead

In former articles we examined the Scriptural mode of the ordinance, and established that no other practice than total immersion complies with the command of the risen Christ. This was the mode practised by the apostles and endorsed in their teaching. We also investigated certain traditions, devoid of Scriptural authority, which have been appended to the ordinance and are widely, accredited in Christendom. These traditions distort the symbolism of Christian baptism and make void the word of God. We have observed that in all recorded cases in the Acts of the apostles, belief of the gospel and commitment to discipleship always preceded baptism in water. The most pernicious of the heresies adopted in some sections of Christendom is the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration

This heresy first raised its head in the second century A.D. when baptism began to be miscalled a 'sacrament' — a Latin term already in use to describe rites and customs of the pagan 'Mystery' cults. Most standard 'Church' histories refer to this early development. The 'Mysteries' were ceremonies of initiation. By submitting to them the devotee entered into a relationship with the heathen deity. This pagan idea had permeated the thinking of some early 'Church' leaders who were converted from heathenism. Gradually they introduced it into the 'Church', and eventually baptism came to be an initiatory rite. "The 'sacraments' became mystic initiations, direct channels of communication; to be baptized was to be born again" (Church historian, Samuel G. Green, D.D.). Thus the error of Baptismal Regeneration took shape. The professing Church then claimed the sole right to administer the 'sacrament'; no one outside its pale could be saved.

The claim that baptism in water is the means of regeneration withers in the light of New Testament teaching. The new birth is a divine prerogative (Jn 1:12,13). Born again persons are those who have been "begotten... through the word of God" (1 Pet.1:23). Salvation is "by grace ... through faith" (Eph.2:8). The rite of baptism plays no part in securing for the believer the merits of the Atonement (Rom.3:23-28).
It has been claimed by some that the words of the Lord: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mk.16:16), imply that baptism plays some part in imparting eternal life to the believer. Such an interpretation of the passage would conflict with the clear teaching of the New Testament — that faith in Christ is the sole basis for the reception of eternal life (Jn 3:16;5:24). No other conditions are attached. The omission of any reference to baptism in the second part of the Lord's words, "he that disbelieveth shall be condemned", indicates that rejection of the gospel is the sole reason for divine judgement on the unrepentant sinner (comp. Jn 3:36), not failure to be baptized.

As a consequence of the false teaching prevalent in Christendom, which has gravely distorted the original Christian rite of baptism, some believers have been inclined to minimize its importance and significance. Indeed, there are those who would go further and disregard the ordinance altogether. Since it is not the means of regeneration, they query,

**Is baptism essential?**

To clarify that question we pose another, Essential for what? and reply; Not for salvation, not for the forgiveness of sins; but an imperative for the loyal disciple as evidence of his love for his Lord.

When Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, "Brother Saul . . . arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22:13,16), he was addressing an already converted man whose sins were forgiven when he met the Lord on the Damascus road. He must now make a public confession of his allegiance to his new Master, and dissociate himself completely from his previous manner of life. Those who knew the former persecuting Pharisee remained in no doubt of the radical change Saul's public act of baptism signified. It is to this consequence of Saul's baptism that the words, "wash away thy sins" apply.

To illustrate the significance of baptism as a pledge of obedience to Christ, the apostle Paul refers to the crossing of the Red Sea by the redeemed Israelites: "They were all", he writes, "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor.10:2). The phrase, "baptized unto (Gr. eis) Moses", indicates Israel's commitment to their God-appointed leader. As the Israelites were baptized unto Moses, so the Christian disciple is "baptized unto (Gr. eis) Christ" (Rom.6:3; Gal.3:27); his baptism is a confession that the Saviour to whom he owes his deliverance will henceforth be his Leader and Lord.

When the Israelites reached the wilderness side of the Red Sea they set out on an entirely new life — a life of faith and obedience. The returning
waters cut them off from their old life in Egypt. There was no way back. Likewise the baptized disciple dissociates himself from the life he lived when he was "separate from Christ". This is the second lesson Paul drew from his illustration of Israel's Red Sea crossing. This meaning of the ordinance is prominent in other New Testament passages. Paul underlines it in Rom.6:

"We were buried therefore with Him though baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection" (vv.4,5).

Here Paul refers to that consequence of the Atonement which identifies the believer with Christ in His death. Not only did Christ die for our sins; we also died to sin in His death: "For he that hath died is justified from sin" (v.7). Paul is not saying that the act of baptism introduces the believer to this identification with Christ — that occurs when he places faith in the Saviour. The word "likeness" (Gr. homoioma) means a "resemblance" or "similitude". Baptism symbolizes burial and resurrection. The disciple is plunged beneath the water — burial; he is lifted from it — resurrection. From henceforth he will "walk in newness of life"; he will give practical expression to the new status which divine grace has conferred on him.

The apostle Peter describes baptism as a "figure" (1 Pet.3:21, AV; "true likeness", RV), and like Paul he uses an Old Testament incident to illustrate its purpose and meaning. He refers to the Flood in the days of Noah. The waters which destroyed the ancient world separated Noah and his family from its corruption. The Ark sheltered them from divine judgement; it also carried them forward to a new beginning. Peter comments: "which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

The Greek noun eperotema (translated "interrogation" RV, "answer" AV) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It seems clear that the idea behind the word is that of "an inquiry" or "a demand" rather than "an answer". Most modern translators give it this sense.

The enlightened believer knows that the outward form of the ordinance has no saving power, that baptism is but the symbol of a spiritual reality. This spiritual reality — his identification with Christ — has been firmly grasped by faith, bringing with it a complete transformation of his outlook on life. As evidence of this his conscience prompts him to undergo baptism. This he does willingly and gladly, indicating his
intention to shun those things and pursuits which are incompatible with his new standing in Christ. Henceforth he will live on a higher plane, and "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (Col.3:1). Thus Peter and Paul are at one on the meaning and purpose of the ordinance.

Conclusion
We commenced this series of articles by referring to the command of the risen Lord:
"Make disciples . . . baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt.28:19), noting that He prefaced His command with the declaration:
"All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth". That is the bedrock New Testament passage on this important subject, standing unshaken down the centuries. It has never been modified or amended.

Against the background of our Lord's definitive statement we have looked at certain traditions which were appended to the ordinance in the early centuries A.D. and are still widely accredited in Christendom. These traditions, and the practices based on them, are devoid of scriptural authority; they have no place in the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We have noted that throughout the Acts narrative those won for Christ through the proclamation of the gospel were then commanded to be baptized as the outward sign of their allegiance to Him. It is clear that no unbaptized believers were added to churches of God in apostolic days.

We referred earlier to the tendency on the part of some believers to minimize the importance and significance of believers' baptism. With this in mind it has been our aim in this series of articles to demonstrate:

(1) that the baptism of disciples was authorized and commanded by the risen Christ;
(2) that it was consistently practised by His apostles;
(3) that the purpose and meaning of the ordinance, as unfolded in the apostles' teaching, is related to a very precious segment of revealed truth;
(4) that although it plays no part in securing for the believer the merits of the atoning work of Christ, none the less it is the duty and privilege of every true disciple of Christ to comply with it.

There we must leave our studies for the present.

Reviewing once again a theme so relevant to the practicalities of true
Christian living has been a heart-searching exercise to the present writer. What solemn obligations were incurred when he took that first faltering step along the disciple pathway so long ago! For while baptism is a once for all transaction, its bearing on Christian experience is life-long. How necessary then, for the baptized disciple to recall time and again the pledge of allegiance to his Lord which the initial act of baptism signified. The moving appeal of a former editor of Needed Truth comes to mind:

"We beseech you to fulfil the debt of love you owe. Perish every selfish object, perish every worldly desire. Be pure, be noble. Rise to the claims of thy Lord, strive to do what His own heart will prize. Remember, oh remember, the confession of Christ made in your baptism. Do not suffer the foul blot of worldliness to mar that sacred type. Never surrender your allegiance to Him" (Henry Elson, vol. 26, Pg. 77).

The Ministry of Purah
By D. Smith, of Lerwick

There can be no doubt that Gideon's faith was subjected to severe trial when the Lord reduced his followers from 32,000 to 300 having eliminated the fearful and those who bowed down upon their knees to drink (see Jdg. 7). Although the Lord gave His word "By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you", Gideon's confidence had evidently suffered a setback, and we can well appreciate his feelings when he contrasted this small company with a vast army that "lay along the valley like locusts for multitude". No doubt Gideon knew, as well as did Jonathan in his day, that "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6). The working of God is not dependent on numbers. He can, without difficulty, manifest His supreme power by using a few empty vessels. However unlikely men may judge the possibilities, God's power excels in every field, and help is always at His command.

When God spoke to Gideon, the shades of night lay over the valley of Jezreel and a like darkness lay upon the trembling heart of this "mighty man of valour". But, as always in the crucial hour of trial, the Lord has a word suitable to the occasion. If only our hearts are tuned to heaven we will hear that "still small voice" speaking to us, through the Scriptures of truth and experience blessing which has no equal in the life of a heavenly pilgrim, "I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him", "and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him".
Such promises are a living communication to be sought and cherished by all who love the Lord Jesus and who feed upon His word.

How apt was the word of the Lord to Gideon "Arise, get thee down into the camp; for I have delivered it into thine hand"! In God's dealing the victory was already achieved. "I have delivered it into thine hand" is an accomplished fact, reminding us that nothing can withstand the purposes of God.

"But" — and with these words the Lord seems to touch gently the weakest spot in Gideon's armour, to lay His gracious hand upon the "drooping spirit" of a mighty man (Jdg.6:14) — "if thou fear to go down, go thou with Purah thy servant". The "if does not imply divine ignorance, and God well knew the fear that was troubling the mind of His chosen man, and the answer to that fear was near at hand, "go thou with Purah thy servant". We may think that the record of this incident would not have been diminished had the Spirit of God omitted the name of Purah, but its insertion has enriched the narrative with a spiritual application. The servant's name, which means "foliage, coverage", was pertinent to a situation where, because of fear, the advance of a great man was dependent on the protection and encouragement of another. Are there not times in all our lives when we feel encouraged to go forward by the support of a fellow-worker who gives our faith an opportunity to recover its strength?

God's servants sometimes experience fearfulness and depression. At some time or other they know the valley experience when, like the Psalmist, they complain, "my spirit is overwhelmed" (Ps.77:3). None greater was born of women than John the Baptist, yet his faith was severely tested as he languished in the confines of Herod's prison.

At such times a precious "Purah" ministry of encouragement and shielding is of inestimable value. If this should be the gift which the Spirit of God has distributed to any one of us, then let us thank God and seek grace to minister it "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God". The unsatisfied need may be affecting your assembly. Perhaps someone more gifted and more Christ-like than yourself cannot move forward, lacking the necessary faith to grip the promise of God, and sorely needing the encouragement which your love and fellowship can provide.

The word "Purah" does not imply a veil to conceal evil and wrong, but carries the thought of beauty and adornment. What is more beautiful to the individual and to the testimony of God's people than the fulfilling of the law of Christ in the bearing of one another's burdens (Gal.6:2)? This will bring mutual refreshment of spirit which the apostle so fully valued (1 Cor.16:17,18) and spared no effort to obtain for the sake of the saints (2 Cor.4:15). Paul wrote, "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your comfort and
salvation; or whether we be comforted, it is for your comfort, which worketh in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer" (2 Cor.1:6); "I endure all things for the elect's sake" (2 Tim.2:10).

How far would I go for the sake of another? Would I go down to "the outermost part of the armed men" to provide the coverage, strength and encouragement which a brother or sister may require in order to fulfil God's purpose? Does my willingness compare with the distance Christ came from the height of glory down to the heart of the earth to rescue us and lead us to glory?

Ps.42 and 43

By I. Lithgow, of Innerleithen

These Psalms express the experience of a Levite who was engaged in the service of song within the house of God. They reveal the joy that fills the heart of those who engage in worship.

The Psalms are a Maschil — that which is for instruction — of the sons of Korah who were of the Levitical family of the Kohathites (Ex.6:16,18,21). Their charge in the service of God during the wilderness journey was the ark, the table of shewbread, the lampstand, the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary (Num.3:29-31). These were carried on their shoulders throughout the years spent by the nation in the desert (Num.1:50; Num.3:7-9). The cities which were given to them by lot out of the tribes of Israel were at least twenty-three in number (Josh.21:4,5). It was probably in the territory of the tribe of Dan that the experience of the Psalmist took place (Ps.42:6).

When king David made arrangements for the service of song in the house of God he appointed among others, certain of the Kohathites, namely Heman and Asaph (1 Chron.6:33,39). We find them mentioned again when Solomon brought the ark of the covenant into the temple. The many musical instruments which the Levites used in praising the Lord are also mentioned (2 Chron.5:12,13). The man who wrote Ps.43 was one whose responsibility in praise included the use of the harp.

Worship is at the heart of these two Psalms. The Psalmist's meditation concerns his experiences in the past, what he is passing through in the present, and his hope for the coming day when he will again appear before God.

He recalled former days when with others of a kindred heart he went to engage in worship at the house of God. These occasions were marked by a deep sense of joy in praise, times when he knew refreshment within his whole
being. As he worshipped, he drank deep of the river of God. Days had now changed. Tears there were both day and night. He was conscious of a void and a thirst within himself. He vents his feelings in these words, "As the hart panteth...". We imagine the hart in the wilderness longing to slake its thirst in the cool waters, but unable to find such a place. So did the Psalmist pant, longing for God, thirsting for Him, for God alone could quench the dryness within (Ps.42:1-4).

The cry from his heart reveals his depression. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?" Three times he uttered this cry (Ps.42:5,11; Ps.43:5). His distress was great. He longed for the day when he could say — "Return unto thy rest O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Ps.116:7). What was the cause of such anxiety? Two reasons are clear which resulted in this breakdown of communion with God.

In Ps.42:6,7 we picture the Psalmist standing on the hill Mizar which is among the foothills of Mount Hermon from where the Jordan has its source. (The tribe of Dan had their inheritance in this part. They also possessed territory on the coast, lying between the tribes of Ephraim and Judah — Josh.19:40-48). Looking toward Jerusalem, listening to the rushing sound of the water of Jordan (at the time of the harvest its banks would overflow, Josh.3:15), the thoughts of his heart are expressed, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts. All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me". These words are similar to what a prophet of God would utter because of sin (Jon.2:3). He felt desolate by reason of personal failure and the chastening hand of God. Oppression of enemies is mentioned in Ps.42:9,10 and Ps.43:2. Their character is revealed as ungodly, deceitful and unjust. Now restricted by his adversaries, without any likelihood of deliverance, he feels forgotten and cast off. They reproach him with their constant taunting, "Where is thy God?" Although he is in this dismayed state yet he looks forward to the day when, once again he will praise God, who is the health of his countenance.

His prayer then in Ps.43 is for deliverance and guidance, "Judge me. plead my cause ... deliver me". This is the earnest request of the person committing everything into the hand of God, confident of God's righteous judgement against deceit and injustice. This leads to the darkness giving place to light and truth which lead to God's holy hill and His dwelling place. There is the altar of God, where activity centred in God, who is the gladness of joy, brings spiritual enjoyment. The joy of the Lord would be his strength. The praise of the Lord would be the source of that joy.

The house of God and its worship should be very precious to His people today as in the past. The fulfilment of responsibility in the service of praise
will also bring that joy which filled the hearts of godly men of old. There will be occasions when by reason of failure and other circumstances our desire and ability to worship will be hindered, perhaps leading to a depression of soul known by the Psalmist. We cry, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Then we must remember also his confidence — "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him".

**Entreaty Rejected**

By D. T. Hyland, of Middlesbrough

Towards the close of the Lord's public ministry He related the parable of the householder and the vineyard. It is a story of entreaty rejected. The vineyard represents Israel; God planted the choicest vine and looked for fruit, but little was forthcoming. The Husbandman's servants, the prophets, were shamefully treated; "They mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets" (2 Chron.36:16). Finally, the Son of God was sent in His Father's Name. Israel's Messiah "came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not"; (Jn 1:11). The husbandmen conspired together to kill the Heir and appropriate His inheritance for themselves. The application of the parable is to the leaders of the nation of Israel; the chief priests and the Pharisees knew this for "they perceived that He spake the parable against them" (Mk.12:12).

That Israel's rejection of her Messiah was national, absolute and irrevocable is seen in the decision of the Jewish council and the verdict of the common people. On more than one occasion the members of the Sanhedrin " took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill Him" (Matt.26:4). Then Judas ingratiated himself with the chief priests who bribed him to betray the Master, and the Lord was brought from Gethsemane to the council chamber. False witnesses were bribed to speak against the Man who was the embodiment of truth. The reply to the high priest's question, "What think ye?" was unanimous, "He is worthy of death" (Matt.26:66). Before Pilate's bar the proceedings were equally undignified. When the governor gave the multitude the choice, Jesus or Barabbas, they ask for the criminal and rejected the Christ saying, "Away with Him ... crucify Him" (Jn 19:15).

Israel's rejection of her Messiah in a tragic act of unbelief had severe repercussions. The vineyard failed to produce the fruit for which God looked, and so the Lord pronounced, "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof".
(Matt.21:43). There had been an expression of the kingdom of God in the Israel nation. After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles and those with them would form the nucleus of the first church of God, which was in Jerusalem. In that church of God and in the churches planted as a result of apostolic labours there would be expressed a new phase of the kingdom of God. The Lord had assured His apostles, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:32).

The rulers of the nation of Israel should have been building for God, but because they were completely out of touch with God's purposes they rejected Israel's Messiah. This rejection is likened to the action of builders who discard a stone because it is considered unsuitable for their purpose. It cannot be made to fit into any part of their design, so it is put on one side. The rulers of Israel acted in blind unbelief, and as a result Christ became to Israel "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (1 Pet.2:8). But God raised His Son from the dead and exalted Him to the throne of heaven. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the Head of the corner" (Matt.21:42). So, when Peter was brought before the Sanhedrin after the healing of the impotent man, he charged the Israel nation with accountability for the death of Christ, and he also assured them that God had raised Him from the dead, "He is the Stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the Head of the corner" (Acts 4:11).