

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Editorial

The Apostle Paul in writing to Titus says we are to 'adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things'. (Titus 2:10). Here then is an arresting thought. We have to *preach* the Gospel, in season and out of season, we must endeavour to be faithful and not to fail in this task: We have to *define* the Gospel — we live in a day of vagueness, we need therefore to know what we mean by the Gospel. We have to *defend* it, especially in a day of declension. Paul said he was set for the defence of the Gospel, we too must take up a similar position. We have also to *obey* it, to make our rule of life, the standard of all our action.

There is yet a further duty to the Gospel — we have to *adorn* it, to make it beautiful before the eyes of men.

Many today have peculiar ideas about the Gospel. It is regarded by some as the enemy of pleasure; it is supposed to be harsh, severe, demanding and giving very little. We are to show that such ideas are greatly mistaken and that the Gospel has a glory all its own.

One of the best ways of adorning the Gospel is to live it. Truth is never so beautiful as when this is done. Truths which in creeds and books seem dry and cold, when translated by human life become resplendent. The truth must not simply be a matter of the head but of the heart and life. Creed must be translated into conduct; faith must be seen to work. The Apostle dwells much on this theme in this epistle see 1: 16; 2:7; 3:8:14.

It is surely a remarkable thing that this exhortation to adorn the Gospel was addressed to slaves from the lowest strata of society whose lives were lived in squalor and whose duties were often repulsive. In their limited sphere they were to make the truth of the Gospel beautiful. If they could not preach by lip, they could do so by life. They were to give satisfactory service in every way, willingly and cheerfully, with no answering back and no grumbling (see verses 9 and 10). All this would make their masters admire the faith they professed.

We too can adorn the Gospel by our integrity, courtesy of behaviour and unselfishness. We need to remember that our lives are not neutral in their effect, we either attract or repel. The worst enemies of the Gospel are its inconsistent friends.

It is important to notice the phrase 'in all things'. This includes the daily, lowly, menial tasks, the small as well as the great things. There must be something different about the Lord's people; but it is only as we live near to Christ that His beauty will be seen in us. It was said of the early Christians that men took knowledge of them that they had

been with Jesus. Let us determine by God's help, that whatever others do, we will endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, both by lip and by life.

Hezekiah's Prayer(2)

"O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me".

Isaiah 38:14

In a recent issue we considered together the prayer of Hezekiah as recorded in 2 Kings 19 when he received the threatening letter from the king of Assyria. We turn now to Hezekiah's prayer when he was "sick unto death" verse 1. He was obviously in great distress and in his affliction he turned his face toward the wall and prayed unto the Lord (verse 2). The experience which came to Hezekiah and its outcome remind one forcibly of Psalm 50:15 "call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me". What a source of strength this verse has been to so many sorely tried believers. It was a day of trouble for Hezekiah but he knew where to turn for relief in his trouble. Here is the language of a soul in distress but whose hope is in the Lord. Life inevitably has its shadow as well as its sunshine but even in our times of deepest trial we need never feel forsaken. It is possible by grace to triumph even in the most adverse circumstances.

1. Hezekiah's confession. "I am oppressed"

He was cast down and full of heaviness and thoroughly disquieted. He knew what it was to be depressed, despondent and dejected. Many of the Lord's people know something of the tensions, constraints and the pressures of life that seem to close in upon them. We cannot escape the trying experiences that come our way. David could say "my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate". Psalm 143:4. It is true that some natures are more prone than others to this overwhelming of the spirit but it is not just a matter of temperament. Elijah was a man of outstanding courage in his work for the Lord against the false religion of his day. Yet in the experience of Elijah there came a time when he was plunged into the depths of despair and he prayed that the Lord would let him die.

Sometimes depression comes through an accumulation of our troubles. Trouble never comes singly, says the proverb. We remember how Job's troubles came one after another. If bitter trials came at equal

intervals we could perhaps collect ourselves and ~~summon~~ ^{draw} our reserves but we all have days when nothing seems to go right.

There are things to guard against when we are depressed. We should for instance avoid complaining. This is the easiest thing to do — feeling that everything is wrong and saying so. Moses remonstrated with the Israelites “the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against Him” Exod. 16:8. Christians shouldn’t be grumblers! We should not unduly burden others with our troubles. We are indeed to bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ but we should guard against becoming an undue burden to others.

When we are depressed we need to remind ourselves that God has not changed and that He will never leave us nor forsake us; that He knows the way we take and that we are safe in His hands. He knows our frame, He made us and understands us. Like Moses we can endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Faith is the real antidote to fear. David could say “what time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee”. Psalm 56: 3.

2. Hezekiah’s prayer “undertake for me”.

“Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble any where?

We should never be discouraged;

Take it to the Lord in prayer” (Joseph Scriven)

Hezekiah’s prayer is both simple and yet profound; short yet so comprehensive. He asks the Lord to undertake for him. The margin is very helpful — “ease me”. He finds the burden so chafing that he asks the Lord to ease it.

“Undertake for me”. What a prayer to pray when within us and around us the tempests are raging and every nerve is stretched. It is a prayer we shall all need to pray at sometime or another. If you make this prayer your own you will find as did Hezekiah that the prayer will turn to a glad song of praise. If you lean your whole weight on the never failing promises you will know the ease that comes to a trusting soul. Rest on the fact that He waits to comfort, bless and sustain us in our hour of need.

There are many ways in which the believer gets depressed but it matters not what the cause may be, there is One who is all sufficient to deliver. David wrote out of his own experience when he said “commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass” Psalm 37:5. Let us learn daily to commit every care, every difficulty into His hand and then trust Him to supply every need.

This prayer of Hezekiah is full of comfort to all who experience trouble and testing. “O Lord, undertake for me” — He always does! How often we are confronted with a problem which is too hard for us to deal

with. We need to take it to the Lord in prayer and hear Him say "behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is anything too hard for Me?" Jer. 32: 27.

Then there are times when our strength seems to fail, we are in deep perplexity and perhaps we feel forgotten and forsaken. He will not fail us in our need and will undertake for us in His own way. If you are battling with some tremendous problem what better than to make Hezekiah's prayer your own?

The Apostle Paul found an answer to his prayer in connection with the thorn in the flesh that the Lord undertook for Him in an unexpected way. He was given a word on which to rest — "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2. Cor. 12:9).

The Lord has assured His people that they will never be alone, He has promised His unfailing presence "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5,6): "Lo, I am with you always" (Matt. 28.20).

If the Lord has undertaken to be the Surety of His people and provided eternal redemption for them we may be sure He will not fail them in the lesser things of life.

"Why restless, why cast down, my soul?
 Hope still, and thou shalt sing
 The praise of Him Who is thy God,
 Thy health's eternal spring".

M.H.

The Manifested Life

HORATIUS BONAR

"THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED." 1 John 1:2.

"Like draws to like" is man's maxim, and man's principle of action. The things that resemble attract each other; the things that differ, repel. Love attracts love; the loving and the loveable knit themselves together. Life attracts life and the living cleave to the living. Things congenial discover their mutual congenialities, and find their way to each other, as by some magnetic virtue; things uncongenial keep far asunder. Life and death have no brotherhood; "and what communion has light with darkness?"

Such is the law of earth! Such is the action of human hearts; such the extent of the circle within which, even at their widest stretch, they revolve; such the measure of the depths to which their loves and sympathies can descend. Likeness and fitness and worthiness are necessary elements in all earthly affinities.

But such is not the heavenly law. The principle of divine action, the regulating power of the infinite heart above is the reverse of this. The law of grace, or principle on which God's actings of free love proceed, is what man would call the law of unfitness and unworthiness and unlikeness.

Well for us that it is so! What would have been our hope, had it been otherwise?

In God's dealings with man it is the unlike that we see uniting. What more unlike than God and the sinner? Yet they have come together. What more dissimilar than heaven and earth? Yet they have come together. The mutual attraction has been the mutual unlikeness. Want of resemblance has been the knitting bond. The evil has drawn out the good; the darkness has attracted the light; the unrighteousness has awakened the righteousness; the death has brought down the life; the grave has called up resurrection. Where sin has abounded, grace has abounded much more.

The Life has been manifested. This is our Gospel. It is not, "the Life is," but "the Life" has come forth from its eternal mystery. "The Life" has been *manifested*, so as to be seen and heard and handled. In the Word was life; nay, the Word was *the* Life. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4). The "Light of the world" is the Word made flesh, the manifested life of God. The Life was manifested, and "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In the light we have the life, and in the life we have the light.

The Life has been manifested. But what has drawn it out? What has given it opportunity to come forth? Death! It is not life that has attracted life, nor light that has given occasion for the outshining of light. No, but death and darkness; utter death, absolute darkness.

Thus God, the God of all grace, has spoken out and revealed to us the breadth and length of His infinite love. Thus we learn the true meaning, and discover the essence of that grace which has been proclaimed to us by the lips and embodied in the person of the incarnate Son. It is the *total unlikeness* between the lover and the loved one that brings out the real nature of grace. Love to the unloveable and unloving is its very essence. Apart from this it has no meaning, no reality, no suitableness. Introduce one element of resemblance, one fragment or feature of loveableness, and grace is gone.

It was the manifestation of death on earth that called forth this manifestation of life from heaven. Man's utter death has drawn out the fulness of the life of God. The entrance of death was the signal for the entrance of life. Life, in its boundless fulness seemed on the watch to enter in and take possession of earth. But it could not do so till death had come. As it needs darkness to bring out the glory of the starry heavens, so it needed death to shew forth the life, life such as had not been possessed before, nor could be, by man unfallen, or upon a sinless earth. Hence the deep significance of the Lord's words, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

Thus and then the Life entered. Not like a monarch, to take possession of a fitting palace, but like a physician, to take possession of a hospital; like spring, coming to take possession of a wintry earth; like day-spring, coming to take possession of the darkened skies. What an entrance! Not invited by kindred life, still lingering among men, but uninvited, nay, repelled. It is the absence of life here, that is the cause of its manifestation from on high. The reign of death is the herald of the reign of life, as midnight is the herald of the morn.

A manifestation such as this, in heaven, where all is life, would not have seemed so marvellous; for man's rule is, "like draws like." But it is passing wonderful that it should have been here in the land of death. Yet this is only the more like that God from whom the manifestation came. For His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways ours. His love is not our love, nor His pity ours. As He sends His rain and His sunshine, just *where* they are needed, and *when* they are needed, and *because* they are needed, not because they are there already, so it is with His grace and its revelation, with life and its manifestation. That grace and life came to us simply because we needed them, and because God needed sin and death like ours for the display of His fulness. He needs midnight that He may say, "Let there be light;" He needs the storm that He may say, "Peace, be still." He needs the creature's emptiness for the display of the Creator's strength; He needs the sinner's evil to furnish a sphere for the forthcoming of the good in Himself, which, but for this, had been pent up and hidden. He allows man to fall that He may shew how He can love and lift up the fallen. He lets Eden become a wilderness, that He may shew how He can make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. So He takes up the dried-up well and fills it: He takes the broken harp and draws out from it the full compass of His heavenly music; He takes the quenched star, and lights it up into a more resplendent and everlasting sun.

It was the blind man that was the object of attraction to the Son of God, and Jesus needed him as truly as he needed Jesus. The *tomb* of

Lazarus was to Him more attractive than the *house* of Lazarus, for at the house He was the receiver, at the tomb He was the giver. The leper drew near to Him and He to the leper, as by some mutual fitness, by some irresistible necessity; He needing the leper, and the leper needing Him. The publican and He were daily meeting, finding each other out, attracted by their mutual need; the righteous and the unrighteous recognising in each other an object exactly suited to that which they severally possessed. The sick one and the healer had a link between them which no other knew, and with which a stranger could not intermeddle. It was the *lost* one that attracted the seeker; the *lost* sheep that made the shepherd's journey a necessity; the *lost* piece of silver that made the woman light her candle, and the *lost* son that brought the father to the door, to watch, in longing love, for the wanderer's return.

The Life was manifested and we have seen it. Life in the realms of the dead; light in the land of darkness; God manifest in flesh — this is what our eyes have seen. Yea: and those things are written for us that our joy may be full, for in that *life* is love.

Go to Bethlehem; look into yon cradle, what is that? It is the manifested Life. Climb the hills of Galilee, and enter Nazareth; see yon boy, so like, yet so unlike all others; He is the manifested Life. Pass over Olivet and visit Bethany; stand by yon tomb where a dead man has lain for days; hear the voice which in a moment empties the grave and recalls the dead; what is that? It is the manifested Life. Look at Golgotha; mark yon cross. Is it death, or is it life? It is both. It is death conquering life, and life overcoming death. The manifested Life is yonder; nay, in that very death there is the fullest manifestation of life. Look once more at yon empty grave, from which the stone has been rolled away. Who is it that early in the morning, while it is yet dark, comes forth from the rocky gloom? It is the manifested Life, the risen Son of God, the Resurrection and the Life; He who says, "I am He who liveth and was dead." Yes, at the cradle, and the cross and the tomb, the Life has been manifested. Blessed manifestation for us, the dead in sin. The Life has come and because He liveth, we shall live also; for "he that hath the Son hath life."

"There are not only ministers who bring 'milk' and 'strong meat' but some who bring mere bones".

John Newton.

Salvation Purposed by the Father

HERBERT MOORE

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The crowning wonder of salvation is that there should be any salvation at all. Where all had sold themselves into perpetual thralldom the Triune Jehovah intervened to effect deliverance. That deliverance was planned by the Father, and procured by the Son, and is now being applied by the Holy Spirit. Let us commence by considering (i) the Father; (ii) the Father's Purpose; and (iii) the Basis of the Father's Purpose.

(i) *The Father.* Here must we bow in adoration, for the ground on which we stand is holy. It is He who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. He says: "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Of Him Moses declares: "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods: who is like Thee; glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders". Justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. "Of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things." Our finite minds cannot comprehend the vast extent of His holiness, majesty, might and power. As surely as He is the first, so will He be the last, and at the last account He will be glorified.

Now that is He who is designated the Father, and it is as such that we would view Him. His condescension is worthy of Him, although apart from Himself, and the means which He has provided, it would not have been so. Incomprehensible is He, yet pleased to stoop to vile man, and in His pity to exercise a paternal care peculiarly His own, and which calls forth in the souls of His people the most ardent attachment to Him. Under the endearing title of Father we see the relation which He bears to us. He is the Father of those who bear His name, His sons by gracious adoption. He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named". Their distinguished lineage takes its rise with Him who is the great eternal. Here is the reason that He is known among men. He sovereignly manifests Himself. As man by searching cannot find God, so He must have remained unknown, and the blessings which flow down from His revealed presence must have been denied to His creatures. Because, however, He is the Covenant God and Father of a people, He is pleased to disclose His heart, and in acts which transcend the things that our eyes behold, to engage for the performance of all that He has

undertaken to do. James tells us that with Him as the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Whatever He declares Himself to be He is, the God and Father of His Israel. In omnipotence, wisdom and glory He goes before them. When Moses hesitatingly enquires as to his mission to Pharaoh, the answer is: "I AM THAT I AM: thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." It has been pointed out that it is only in connection with His own people that He takes this name. He did not address Pharaoh in this name. When speaking to him, He calls Himself by that commanding and majestic title, "the Lord God of the Hebrews," i.e., God in connection with the very people whom he was seeking to crush. "I AM" would have conveyed no intelligible sound to an uncircumcised ear, no divine reality to an unbelieving heart. When God manifest in the flesh declared to the unbelieving Jews of His day these words: "Before Abraham was I AM," they took up stones to cast at Him. It is only the true believer who can feel, in any measure, the power, or enjoy the sweetness of that ineffable name, "I AM." Such can rejoice to hear from the lips of the blessed Lord Jesus such declarations as these: "I am that bread of life"; "I am the light of the world"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I am the way, the truth and the life." In a word, he can take every name of divine excellence and beauty, and having placed it after "I AM," find his Father and his God.

We see, therefore, the importance of the distinction which the Father Himself has made between those whom He has mercifully taken into union with Himself, and in whose interest, therefore, He is always concerned. Such knowledge is, indeed, high. We feel we cannot attain unto it, and with such slight capacity how can we understand this matchless condescension? "What is man?" says one, "that Thou art mindful of him?" It is the mercy of such blessed characters that He who has made Himself known for their sake, knows also how to teach them things which are heavenly in their nature. Our point is that God has Himself constituted the relation that we are emphasising. Many have imagined a universal application of this paternal relation, asserting that all mankind are the children of God. But, as one has said: "Men are guilty; God is king, they His rebellious subjects. They have forfeited all claim. He is at liberty to glorify either His righteousness, or His mercy. Israel was the most undeserving of all nations, yet the secret of all their blessing is given in Psalm 44:3. 'Because Thou hadst a favour unto them.'"

(ii) *The Father's Purpose.* These amazing considerations respecting God the Father, prepare the way for an understanding of His purpose in the salvation of His people. Notwithstanding that the people of God are

so blessed and distinguished by so high and so holy a calling, the humiliating fact remains, that, in common with others, they incurred the guilt which "brought death into the world, and all our woe". "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others". This was death indeed, separation from God. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". This changed state became therefore the element of fallen man, and in it he has since, not merely continued, but found pleasure. Moreover, as it is the antithesis of all holiness, a state of opposition was the issue. "Alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works" and as completing the fearful state, enmity or hatred governs the mind. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be". It is here that we fail to understand the consequences of such a condemnation, except our minds are illuminated by God's Holy Spirit to conceive something of the holiness of His Person and His just demands upon the transgressor. The enormity of the offence is such that there can be no remedy. "Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" is, and must be the final state of sinners. How hopelessly lost, then, man is, though he knows it not! This is a truth so plainly revealed in God's Word that it is a marvel how men, professing subjection to that Word, could ever have denied it. It does not set forth the partial ruin of man. It does not set forth man as lost, but only so lost as still to possess within him the remains of his original state, by which, if worked upon through divine instrumentality, he may again recover his original standing before God. Clearly he is represented as "dead in trespasses and in sins."

It is in this irretrievably lost condition that the purpose of God is made known to save effectually those who otherwise could never have found their way to Him. What will not a father do for the recovery of his child? What will not our Father which is in heaven do to recover the people who are called by His own most holy name! Our words are inadequate to describe the love which meets and triumphs over all interposing powers, and at last presents the "whole family" entire "before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy". What a mighty witness the Scriptures present to this wondrous love. That the fulness of divine affection should be manifested to such undeserving characters reveals the greatest of extremes, and is the most humbling truth of revelation. God, our Father, in love predestinated us into the adoption of children. Here is an unfathomable depth that God should so love and so carry His tenderness into execution with respect to those who had

sinned unto death. It is this which meets him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivers the captives. From this servitude how otherwise could they be freed? Taken captive by him at his will, how could they break such bonds? The same determination which rescued Israel from their hard task-masters provides the means for a greater deliverance. Sin hath reigned unto death, and the threatened curse has descended: "Cursed is he who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them", but love is invincible.

"It reaches to the gates of hell,
And rescues souls with Him to dwell."

Thus this is unchanging love. Paul speaks of the "great love wherewith He loved us". The eternal purpose which He has purposed in Himself is that of a Father, and everlasting love and grace adorn the relation, so that though sin had reigned unto death, so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life. Salvation is therefore shown to be of the Lord. Grace denotes God's favour manifested to the soul which as a free act is no more hindered by sin than it is conditional upon works. It is the grace of God because it denoted the relation assumed and maintained by God towards sinful man. It is joined with Christ because it is manifested in and through Him. So speaks a competent witness.

(iii) *The Basis of the Father's Purpose.* Such a salvation taking its rise in the heart of the Father, it is easy to understand the testimony of Holy Scripture respecting the basis, or security of the whole scheme. This is the will of God. Predestination to salvation and adoption in Christ are due to the good pleasure of the Father's will, and the mystery or secret of His will is made known according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself. A cause then within Himself is assigned for this singular blessing of predestination to life eternal. This alone explains the preordination, or the marking out beforehand of those so blessed. "It is most absurd," says Archbishop Leighton, "to give any reason of divine will without Himself. Known unto God are all His works because His works in time were His purpose from eternity. This foreknowledge then, is His eternal and unchangeable love, and that thus He chooseth some, and rejecteth others, is to manifest and magnify His mercy and justice. But why He appointed this man for the one, and the other for the other, made Peter a vessel of this mercy, and Judas of wrath, this is even so because it seemed good to Him. This, if it be harsh, is apostolic doctrine. This deep we must admire, and always in considering it, close with this: 'Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!'" Even the Saviour came down from heaven, He says, not to do His own will, but that of the Father, clearly

showing that His will is that all who believe in Him may have everlasting life.

This is the will of Him whose power no creature is able to resist. He doeth according to it in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him: "What doest Thou?". The cherished notion of the freedom of the human will is destroyed in the searching beam of Holy Writ focussed on God's good pleasure. "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy". Well has it been said: "Man is unwilling to give up sin; he loves it too well; unwilling to be made holy, for he has no taste for spiritual things. God, then must come to man". Next, this omnipotent and paternal will is expressed in an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. The concurrence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in covenant ensures the completion of the stupendous plan of salvation.

This is the "better covenant established upon better promises," of which Christ is the mediator. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: 'I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people.'"

This is the sure foundation which God lays, that also which standeth steady, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are His. It cannot be removed for ever, and it is laid, as we have insisted, in a love which is high above the utmost of natural comprehension and the respective persons engaged in its execution act in a manner worthy of God. Thus we sing with Joseph Hart:

"Glory to God, the Father, be
 Because He sent His son to die;
 Glory to God, the Son, that He
 Did with such willingness comply;
 Glory to God, the Holy Ghost,
 Who to our hearts this love reveals;
 Thus God, Three-One, to sinners lost
 Salvation sends, procures and seals."

"This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John ii 25). "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). Can the heirs of such a promise have stronger testimony? Many are man's motives for lying,

but the great God and Father of heaven is eternally unsusceptible to them. Omnipotence has no fear; all sufficiency has no needs; infinite excellence can never appear more glorious than He is. He cannot lie. All His promises in Christ are Yea, and Amen. Finally, in an act of condescension He adds on oath to these established promises. Knowing our frame and remembering that we are dust and "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise that immutability of His counsel, He confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation". This grand structure of righteousness, fashioned not by art or by man's device, is the admiration of those whose heritage it is. These "walk about Zion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, and tell it to the generation following, for this God is their God for ever and ever. He will be their guide even unto death."

Such a salvation, conceived in everlasting love expressed in grace which amazes the soul, and resting upon an immovable basis, is salvation indeed, and God hath appointed His people to obtain it. When He appears to shake terribly the earth, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, this fabric will remain, for He who has said: "My salvation shall be for ever", regards at all times the Surety, and is well pleased. What a mercy to be the subject of such gracious favour, to know God the Father as He is thus revealed, and to be savingly interested in the Covenant ordered in all things and sure!

The Believer's Sealing

FREDERICK PEACOCK

Ephesians 1:13

The people of God have been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ", and one of these blessings is that of sealing with the Holy Spirit. The steps which lead up to the sealing are carefully marked in the thirteenth verse.

1. *Ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation.* There was the first link in the chain. There was a time when they had not heard. Brought up in a wicked and idolatrous city, they knew not the truth. The day came, however, when in the providence of God, the Apostle

Paul visited Ephesus and continuing there for two years, he proclaimed the truth of God in their midst. He preached that Word, which is truth and is no lie, even the good news concerning salvation. In this, Ephesus was greatly favoured. While other cities still lay in heathen darkness, the light of the Gospel shone unto them. They heard the Word of Truth.

2. *Ye also trusted after that ye heard.* Hearing the Gospel will avail nothing unless it is followed by trusting Him Who is the subject of the Gospel, God's beloved Son. There are always many more hearers than believers. Out of the four different classes in the parable of the sower only one heard to any lasting profit. So it was, doubtless, in Ephesus. Great would be the number of hearers, but few believed. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God".

3. *After that ye believed, ye were sealed.* "On believing" (as it might be rendered) "ye were sealed". The language is, of course, figurative. Sealing is the mark of ownership. Sheep are sealed or marked to signify to what owner they belong. The sealing does not make them property of the owner, but it shows that they are his property. God seals with the Holy Spirit all whom He has purchased to Himself by the precious blood of Christ. He puts His mark on them. He puts His Spirit within them. "They that have My Spirit, these, saith He, are Mine". Every believer in Jesus is "secured" until the day of redemption—the day when their bodies will be redeemed from the corruption of the grave. It should be a vital question with every reader, "Have I been thus sealed?". Not, have I been baptised or am I a regular communicant? We may have all the marks of church membership, and yet lack this gracious and internal mark. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9). But "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you", see to it that you "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption". (Eph. 4:30).

Assurance.

When you are high in assurance be low in humility. Paul had assurance and he baptised himself with the name 'chief of sinners'. The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of a humble heart.

Thomas Watson — "A Body of Divinity"

Sin Abounding; Grace Superabounding

W. J. McDOWELL (Belfast)
(Studies in the Life of Joseph (2))

In his early years Joseph experienced the truth of Eliphaz's remark: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

When he recounted his dream of future greatness to his brothers they retorted: "Shalt thou indeed rule over us?" (Gen. 37:8). He was singled out for preferential treatment by his father, Jacob, and given a coat of many colours. When his brothers saw him coming to visit them wearing "the hated symbol of their father's preferment", to quote Dr. O. T. Allis, they made up their minds to murder him. He was seized, stripped of his coat, and thrown into a waterless cistern. Later they pulled him out, and sold him to passing traders for 20 pieces of silver. Surrounded by these unscrupulous men, Joseph in anguish of soul pleaded for mercy, but received none (Gen. 42:21).

SIN. No doubt Joseph, like all men, was a sinner, but many of the sufferings and sorrows of his youth came upon him on account of other people's sins. His brothers ill-treated him because they envied and hated him. Jacob his father, by breaking the law of Eden, and marrying 4 wives, prepared a fruitful field in his household for jealousy and contention. He was led into this sin by the deceitfulness of his uncle Laban, who passed off Leah as Rachel. Jacob was at his uncle's mercy because he had been compelled to fly to him for refuge from the wrath of his brother Esau, whom we had wronged.

Sin increases. Sins are chiefly against God, but they also affect our neighbours. Unless they are forsaken and forgiven they will multiply, and bring sorrow and suffering. The unfaithful husband may break his wife's heart. The wayward son brings sadness to his parents. When we set the wheels of sin in motion who can foresee the consequences? It was one man's one sin that brought "death into the world, and all our woe". Some sins are more grievous in God's sight than others, but they all have evil results.

Sorrow tracketh wrong,
As echo follows song.
On! On! On! On!"

Sins of thought. These sins of other people that brought Joseph so much trouble had their origins in their minds. The ten brothers were full

of envy and hatred, and when the opportunity came thoughts became deeds. The plot of Jacob and Rebekah to deceive blind Isaac arose from crooked thinking. The murderous threats of Esau against his brother had their source in his heart. No person in our nation can be prosecuted for his thoughts, but the Lord Jesus has warned us: "Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). How necessary it is for us to continually pray: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

GRACE. It is worth noting that in the 37th chapter of Genesis, where the early history of Joseph is told, there is no mention of God speaking or acting, directly. But some words from Matthew Henry's introduction to the Book of Esther are applicable: "Though the name of God be not in it, the finger of God is..."

There is evidence here of what is sometimes called *Common Grace*, and we make use of the term in only one of its aspects, quoting Dr Van Til: "Common grace restrains the destructive process of sin within mankind in general". The first intention of these men was to kill Joseph, but Reuben's intervention delayed the action. The appearance of the traders suggested to Judah the idea of selling him as a slave. Neither Reuben nor Judah in their early days were normal in their conduct, but their combined counsels saved Joseph's life, and so helped to fulfil God's purpose to send him to Egypt (Gen. 45:5).

If every person were permitted to sin to the utmost capacity of all his powers, and to the full satisfaction of all his passions, life would become intolerable. God in His grace restrains sinners, and sometimes causes contrary events to prevent their evil deeds. David was delivered from Saul because the Philistines had invaded the land (1 Sam. 23:27). Absalom, by God's appointment, refused the wise counsel of Ahithophel, and heeded the bombastic advice of Hushai, because it apparently catered to his pride; he could see himself leading a mighty army to a spectacular victory (2 Sam. 17).

This account of Joseph's experience emphasises the *special grace* of God. He was one person among many enemies in his home, and in his exile, but "God was with him" (Acts 7:9). Like Enoch and Noah, Joseph "walked with God". The continual presence of God with every Christian is guaranteed in the words: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee". Our loss of the sense of His presence does not mean that He has withdrawn Himself from us. The Psalmist fell into such a mood of despondency that he felt he was like a beast before God. "Nevertheless", he cried, "I am continually with thee" (Ps. 73:23).

For Younger Readers

CARINE MacKENZIE

FAMILY TREES

Have you ever tried to find out your own ancestors and make up a family tree? If you ask an older relative you can often hear interesting stories about your grandparents and even great grandparents.

If you want to go into your family history more seriously you can look up parish church records or registry office certificates and trace your family back through several generations. If you do that you could unearth some surprises. Perhaps one of your ancestors was a nobleman or an important doctor or soldier. But on the other hand you may find that you have some relation long ago that you would prefer not to know — perhaps even a criminal.

No matter how far back we manage to trace our own family tree we can all claim to be related to one couple — Adam and Eve. God made Adam and Eve holy but they sinned against God by eating from a tree that God had forbidden. They became sinners. And we are like our first parents, Adam and Eve. We too are sinners. We are born sinners. If we continue in sin and do not repent and turn to the Lord God, then Jesus will say of us as he said to the unbelieving Jews “Ye are of your father the devil.” (John 8.44)

How dreadfully solemn to be related to the evil one. That connection results in a miserable life and eternity away from God.

God is ever merciful. He has worked out a plan of salvation for his people through his son Jesus Christ.

“But behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.” (1 John 3.1)

God has adopted repentant sinners into his family for the sake of his own dear son Jesus. When they are adopted they have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: And if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8 16.17)

The missing words in the following verses are all names of relatives. See if you can fill them in.

1. Like as a _____ pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. (Psalm 103)
2. A foolish man despiseth his _____. (Prov 15)
3. Ruth dwelt with her _____. (Ruth 2)

4. Martha said "Dost thou not care that my _____ hath left me to serve alone. (Luke 10)
5. There was a certain nobleman whose _____ was sick at Capernaum. (John 4)
6. And her neighbours and her _____ heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her (Elizabeth). (Luke 1)
7. Thy maker is thine _____; the Lord of hosts is his name. (Isaiah 54)
8. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a _____. (Proverbs 18)
9. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy _____ Lois, and thy mother Eunice. (II Timothy 1)
10. Jairus besought Jesus saying, My little _____ lieth at the point of death. (Mark 5)

Many years ago in Scotland people were persecuted for worshipping the Lord and many people were put to death by cruel men for their faith in the Lord Jesus.

To escape from the cruel soldiers, people would meet in secret places out in the hills to hold services. These services were called conventicles.

One day a young woman was making her way to a conventicle when the soldiers met with her on the road. "Where are you going?" they asked roughly.

She dare not say where she was going for she would bring danger to lots of other people meeting at the conventicle. Also she dare not tell a lie for she knew that was wrong. This was her reply — "My elder brother has died and I am going to hear his last will and testament being read, to see if there is anything in it for me."

The soldiers were quite satisfied with this answer and let her go on her way unharmed.

Of course what she meant and what the soldiers understood were two completely different things.

Her elder brother the Lord Jesus had died on Calvary's cross. His will and testament is the Bible and she was hoping to get something for her soul in the reading and preaching of that word.

That young woman had the best brother of all. Have you? Can you say that Jesus is your elder brother? Can you say to God in your heart "Our Father." Pray that you will belong to the family of God.

"It is not wishes that glorify God, but practice".

Thomas Manton.

The Message of the Tabernacle

The High Priest. Exodus 28.

A. V. McCANDLISH

This will be the last of this series on the tabernacle as God's visual aid to Israel. What did God intend Israel to learn from His command that Aaron and his sons be set apart as priests? What were the lessons to be learned from all the directions given concerning the robes of the high priests?

1. Because of sin men need a Mediator.

Men are not fit to enter God's presence, so Aaron and his sons were set apart to act for them as priests. The Hebrew word for priest is *cohen*, and it denotes one who stands up for another, and mediates his cause. No-one but the appointed priests were allowed to enter into the sanctuary, so every time a priest entered the sanctuary it was brought home to Israel, that sin always shuts men out. This was vividly portrayed on the day of atonement. The high priest alone was allowed to enter the holy of holies, and he was only allowed to enter in on that one day in the year. At the command of God he came with the blood of atonement, which he sprinkled upon the mercy seat, and before the ark. God Himself declared that the object of this ceremony was to enable God's tent to remain in the camp of a sinful people. The high priest went in as a mediator between God and Israel. Job had felt his need of such a mediator, when he said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes should abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgement. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both". Job. 9;30-33. The whole of the characteristics, and function of the priesthood centred in the person of the high priest, so this chapter Exodus. 28, deals in detail with the high priest, and the robes he must wear.

2. Let us look then at the high priest. Ex. 28.

He was a sinner himself, and therefore unfit to enter the presence of a holy God. He was not therefore a perfect mediator, but was God's visual aid, to teach Israel what God required in a true priest, or mediator. This God did by telling Moses in detail what robes the priest must wear, when he went into the tabernacle.

(a) He must wear a coat, or robe of fine linen. v.39.

It reached right down to his feet, and had sleeves to his wrists. This robe was white and clean. Surely it set before Israel the need that a true priest must possess personal purity, and perfect righteousness. He must be without sin.

(b) The robe of the ephod came next. v. 31.

This robe was all of blue. It had no sleeves, and reached down below the knees. It was strongly woven round the neck, so that it could not be rent or torn. Round the bottom, it had a broad hem, and embroidered upon it, all round, there were pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet. Between each of these pomegranates was hung a golden bell. This blue robe would speak to Israel of heaven, The true priest must surely come from heaven, and would have a heavenly character, which could not be rent, or damaged by human violence. The pomegranates would speak of the multitude of pearly seeds in that fruit, and would indicate that the true priest's life would be full of fruit. The golden bells would set before them the true priest, whose speech would always be precious, his words would never be harsh, or out of harmony with his heavenly character.

(c) The ephod was a magnificent garment. v.6.

It was put on over the blue robe, and was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine spun linen. The gold was pure gold wire, finely spun. The garment was in two pieces, one part hung over the back, and the other over the front. These were joined together at the shoulders. One part had a loop of blue, and the other a beautiful onyx stone, to fit into it. These two onyx stones were very beautifully engraved, each one bearing the names of six of the tribes of Israel. On the breast there was a kind of pouch, of the same materials as the ephod. It was fastened by two gold chains to the shoulder pieces; and at the lower corners, two laces of blue fastened it to two rings of gold, which were sewn to the ephod. In the pouch was kept the Urim, and Thummim, which were used by the high priest when he sought the guidance of God on any question. In this breastplate there were set four rows of precious stones, with three in each row. Each of these precious gems had engraved upon it the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The ephod was fastened round him, that it should not hang loose in his ministration; by a beautiful girdle of needlework of blue, purple, and scarlet. This ephod set before Israel gave some idea of the beauty and glory of the true priest. He must be one who could bring all the tribes of Israel, with all their families into God's holy presence. He must be one who could love each individual, carrying them in his heart. He must be able to show them the will of God, and communicate it to them perfectly, and guide them into God's truth.

(d) *Finally he wore a mitre. v. 36,37.*

This appears to have been a turban, made in the usual way with several thick swathes, or folds of pure linen. It was to be adorned in front with a plate of pure gold and bearing the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord". This plate was attached to the linen fabric by a lace of blue. This gold plate with its inscription was very prominent, wherever he went, it met the eye. The lesson was clear, the true priest must be holy; or he could not have any contact with God, nor could he enter His presence. So also he must be able to impart holiness to men, that he might bring them into God's presence to enjoy fellowship with God. He must be able to bear "the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their gifts." v.38. All that he presents to God, whether persons, or gifts, or worship, must be holy, and unblemished by any sin. Wherever he went, and whatever he did must be holy. The incense he burned must ascend in holiness to God. The sacrifice he offered for sin, must be a holy sacrifice. True priestly service demanded perfect holiness.

3. *See how all these qualities are fulfilled in Christ.*

"There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time". 1. Tim. 2; 5,6.

(a) When our Lord Jesus came, and lived in this world, He was perfect in righteousness. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous.*" 1. Jn. 2;1. He claimed to be righteous, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Jn. 8;46. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." 1 Pet. 2;22. "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5;21. (b) He came down from heaven. Jesus said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jn. 6;38. Paul describes Him as "the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. 15; 47. God bore witness, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Matt. 3;17. All his life shewed forth His heavenly character. He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Jn. 4;34. His life shewed the fruit of love to God, and love to men. His words were like the golden bells. All of them were precious as pure gold. He said, "I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." Jn. 12; 49.

(c) As the ephod was a garment of glory and beauty; so the life of our Lord was full of grace and truth. John said, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Jn. 1;14. As the high priest bore on his shoulders the names of the twelve tribes, so our Lord Jesus

has the power to bring men into God's presence, that they may have fellowship with Him. He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." Jn. 17;24. So also, "Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near." Heb. 10; 19-22 So too Christ has our names graven on His heart. Listen, "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Jn. 13;1. He said, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you". Jn. 15:9.

As the high priest had his Urim, and Thummim, so the Lord Jesus is always ready to reveal God's will to us, that we may walk in the right way. "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Jn 8;12. Did He not say, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."? Jn. 14:14

(d) Our Lord Jesus was truly the Holy One of God. Even the demons recognised Him as such. Mark 1:24. When Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit he said, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you." Acts 3:14. We read also, "Such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Heb. 7;26. See how Christ makes men holy; "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10;14.

Here is our true High Priest, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace. that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4;16.

Why the Bible says "no!" to Spiritism

C. C. J. BUTLIN (Sheffield)

Although most ages during the world's history have suffered the practices of Spiritism (or Spiritualism), its actual origins are lost in the mists of antiquity. In more recent times the beginnings of modern Spiritism are attributed to a hoax in New York perpetrated by two sisters, Margaret and Kate Fox, of 12 and 9 years of age respectively. In after years, having confessed, they became themselves victims of alcoholism.

While many people eminent in politics, science and literature have been fascinated by the cult, its greatest support has been received from the large number of bereaved mourners seeking consolation. It has been said that aching hearts and empty chairs led many sorrowing ones to seek renewed contact with loved ones through this means.

If many in search of consolation have sought comfort from Spiritism, then perhaps the Christian Church is somewhat to blame. Our own Christian witness concerning the Saviour has been half-hearted, the consolation which is in Him has been inadequately presented, and the Biblical warnings regarding Spiritism and trafficking with the spirits not pressed home.

FALSE BELIEFS

In seeking to assess the teachings of Spiritism it has to be said that the beliefs of various bodies of devotees may differ widely. As the *Psychic News* confirms when it says: "How can we give the same message (i.e. regarding unified teaching) when half of us accept reincarnation and the other half hotly deny its possibility—when we have even Atheist Spiritualists?"

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who wrote extensively on the cult, stated that there was no guarantee that a "naughty spirit intent on deceiving, might not be contacted, or that the medium might not be misled by the spirit-control".

The opponents of Spiritism do not deny that psychical phenomena occur. From the Bible we have the suggestion that, although it is forbidden to establish communion with the unseen world of spirits, it is nevertheless *possible* to do so.

SPIRITISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Spiritism denies fundamental beliefs of the Christian Faith. The deity of Christ and the pardon of men's sins by virtue of His atoning death are opposed by so-called "advanced spirits" whenever the subjects occur during seances. In addition, Lord Dowding, a leading advocate of the cult, wrote in his book *Modern Mansions*, "The first thing which the orthodox Christian has to face is that the doctrine of the Trinity seems to have no adherents in advanced circles of the spirit world. The divinity of Christ as a co-equal partner with the Father is universally denied. Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God, as we also are Sons of God...." It is to be noted too, that on the whole, spiritualists reject the Biblical revelation of the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT PRICE COMFORT?

Regarding the attraction of Spiritism for the bereaved it may be admitted that many find solace in the messages received whether real or false. As far as the "messages" are concerned, there are three possibilities: (i) the assumption that someone who has died is really speaking. (ii) the possibility of the impersonation of the dead person by some other spirit entity. (This possibility is admitted by some spiritists, and prospective mediums are warned to be on their guard.) (iii) The other possibility is that the medium has telepathic and clairvoyant powers which enable him or her to build up a picture from the subconscious mind of the sitter in the seance. Mrs. Eileen Garratt seems to admit as much in her book *My Life as a Search for the Meaning of Mediumship*, in which she writes: "In examining my own process of clairvoyance, I have become aware that *I draw the knowledge which helps me build the images of the dead relatives and friends of those who need help, from the subconscious minds of the sitters.*" Also she says: "I began to wonder whether the whole structure of mediumship might not depend on a form of telepathy, and whether the medium does not draw information for communications from the subconscious mind of the sitter."

DIVINE WARNINGS

It is significant that wherever Spiritism (or attempts to communicate with the dead) finds mention in the Bible it is condemned as evil. The following passages may be noted as revealing God's abhorrence of those who have a familiar spirit or who consult one; surely comparable to today's mediums and those who seek to contact the dead. Levit. 20 (verses 6 and 27) states: "And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people...A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them." Deut. 18 verses 10/12 says: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee." 1 Sam. 28 verse 7 tells how King Saul sought "a woman that hath a familiar spirit" and was led to the medium at Endor. These passages warn God's people against necromancers (lit. seekers of the

dead, or enquirers of the departed). Saul's death and the cause is related in 1 Chron. 10 verses 13 and 14: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD even against the word of the Lord which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse." Isaiah the prophet condemns people who seek those with familiar spirits, and instead urges them to turn to the Divine Law and Testimony, and test by the Divine Spirit's teaching what is true and what is false. (Cf. Isa. 8 verses 19 and 20).

DARK UNDERWORLD

The incident of the medium consulted by King Saul (1 Sam. 28 verses 3/25) is foundational to the teaching of Spiritism. It is the only occurrence in the Holy Scriptures in which the spirit of a dead man, at the behest of a mortal, is represented as re-appearing on earth. It is well to consider the background to the story.

King Saul, in open rebellion against God, resorts to the medium at Endor for comfort, since God no longer spoke to him, and asks for the dead Samuel to be brought up. To the dismay of both medium and king, God interrupted the séance, and caused, not an impersonating spirit, but Samuel himself to appear in person, to address the guilty man. It seems evident, in view of the medium's astonishment, that the prophet did not appear in response to *her call*. It would appear that God permitted Samuel to return so that he who had anointed Saul as king in the days of his humility, could utter the words of rejection in the time of his arrogance. The foretold doom was fulfilled to the letter.

This is one of the most tragic pictures in Old Testament history, a portrait of a man of magnificent capacity and opportunity failing disastrously. Step by step he travelled a downward path, both in character and conduct. At last, routed by his foes, he died by his own hand, in the midst of the field of defeat.

As we have seen (1 Chron. 10 verse 13) there were two causes of his failure: (i) First and fundamentally, Saul sinned against God, then eventually (ii) he sought counsel from the dark underworld of evil spirits, being denied Divine guidance through disobedience. The forsaken man, craving for supernatural aid, turns to the occult, to mediums and spirits of the dead. The consequences is always destructive.

THE ALTERNATIVES

Some questions asked by the prophets of the Old Testament era are relevant today. Isaiah asked: "And when they shall say unto you, 'Seek

unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards that chirp and that mutter', should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead?"

The situation then is to be noted. The king had refused the Divine sign (Isa. 7 verses 10ff.) The nation had rejected the Divine policy. Consequently the prophet was commanded to seal up his testimony, i.e. to cease his public ministry, and to devote himself to his spiritual children, the elect remnant loyal to God.

This he did, and there is no record of any further public utterance until we reach chapter 28; the intervening matter being instruction to the elect or inner circle of hearers.

It is significant that in this private ministry the message is first one of solemn warning against necromancy (i.e. seeking or enquiring concerning the departed) and against spiritism. When the voices of Divine prophecy are silent men are ever liable to resort to this traffic with the spirit-world. All God's people need to beware. There is clear warning in God's Word against "familiar spirits" and against communicating with them. When men are bidden to "seek unto them" the answer always should be that such seeking is stupid, because they may seek unto God. Why should the living turn from the living God to seek guidance from the spirits of the dead? The alternatives should be carefully noted. The choice is between God, the Living One, and spirits who are dead, who are cut off from God. Those who seek after familiar spirits are of that number who do not seek after God.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

The New Testament gives strong reason to believe that its writers were not spiritists. Reference may be made to two passages, where if the writer had been a spiritist, he would have written differently—where he could not have been silent about the comfort to be obtained at a séance. In I Thess. 4 verses 13/18 Paul discusses the subject of those Christians who have died. He urges those left behind not to sorrow as those who have no Christian hope. In those circumstances a spiritist would have said: "Come to the service on Sunday, and comfort yourselves by speaking to them." Instead, Paul urges the bereaved to wait expectantly and patiently until the coming re-union at the Return of Christ.

Again if Paul had been a believer in Spiritism he would not have employed the reasoning he uses in 1 Cor. 15. he writes: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (verses 17/18). A spiritualist would simply have written: "We know our brethren are not perished, since they speak to us in our séances."

The Christian hope should encourage us not to dabble in Spiritualism, but to shun it as soul-destroying. The one who believes in Christ is promised Eternal Life. That is something that begins in this life, through repentance and trust in the Saviour. Death for the Christian is "to depart and be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1 verse 23).

John Berridge

Recently the Editor visited Everton, Bedfordshire where John Berridge ministered 1755-1793. This article is abridged from an old writer. Bishop Ryle has an interesting study on Berridge in his "Christian Leaders" and says "there were few greater, better, holier and more useful ministers in the 18th century than old John Berridge".

The Rev. John Berridge was the son of John Berridge, a wealthy farmer of Kingston in Nottinghamshire who married Miss Sarah Hathwait of Nottingham in 1714 and by whom he had four sons. John, the eldest son was born at Kingston on March 1st 1716. At the age of fourteen God was pleased to convince him that he was a sinner and must be born again. A tailor who was occasionally employed in the family, being a man of strict sobriety and struck with the uncommon appearance of piety in one so young, conversed with him on serious subjects whenever he came to the house on business. As opportunities of this nature seldom occurred his love for religion induced him to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with this man by going frequently to his house for the purpose of serious conversation. His relations at length suspecting he had too much religion and fearing to what it would grow endeavoured to discourage it. They insinuated that since his attachment was so strong to his new companion he should be bound to him in articles of apprenticeship.

This threat had not the designed effect, for, so keen was his bias to reading, prayer and serious discourse, that he frequently repeated his visits. Finding this their scheme unsuccessful and conceiving that his predilection for reading and religion would entirely unfit him for business, they resolved, though reluctantly, to send him to the University. In this determination, which was perfectly congenial with his own inclination, he most readily concurred and, after previous preparation, entered Clare Hall, October 28, 1734, when he was 19 years of age. A neighbour soon after meeting his father and enquiring

for his son, he jocularly replied, "He is gone to be a light to lighten the Gentiles." This testimony was true.

Being now in his element, he pursued his studies with uncommon avidity and made such progress in every branch of literature as rendered him in no respect inferior to any of his contemporaries. But, as he seemed to know very little of the plague of his own heart was unable to withstand the temptations of his situation and connections. Favoured with a good understanding, improved by literature, and possessing a natural vein of humour which was extremely fascinating, he rose in respect, and his acquaintance was courted at the University by Ecclesiastics of superior rank. As "evil communications corrupt good manners" he caught the contagion and drank in the Socinian scheme to such a degree as to lose all serious impressions and discontinue private prayer for about ten years, a few intervals excepted. In these intervals he would weep bitterly, reflecting on the sad state of his mind, compared with what it was when he came to the University and would frequently say. "O that it were with me as in years past". Conscience, however, at length resumed her authority, he was compelled to relinquish sentiments so derogatory to God and so subsversive of every good principle and practice.

HIS MINISTRY

Soon after this he began to feel strong inclinations to exercise his ministry and accordingly in the year 1749 accepted the curacy of Stapleford, near Cambridge, which he regularly served six years from College. His parishioners were extremely ignorant and dissolute and he was much concerned to do them good. He took extraordinary pains and pressed very earnestly upon them the necessity of sanctification but had the mortification to find that they continued as unsanctified as before. He was admitted to the Vicarage of Everton, 7th July 1755 in the gift of Clare Hall, where he continued to reside to the end of his life. Here again he pressed sanctification and regeneration upon his hearers, as strenuously as he could, but with as little success as before. "Nor was it to be wondered at, as his preaching rather tended to make them trust in themselves as righteous, than to depend upon Christ for the remission of sins through faith in His blood."

CHANGE FROM SALVATION BY WORKS TO SALVATION BY GRACE

Having continued for two years in this unsuccessful mode of preaching, he began to be discouraged. A doubt now arose in his mind whether he was right *himself* and preached as he *ought* to do. The

constant language of his heart was this: "Lord, if I am right keep me so; if I am not, make me so, and lead me to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus." As he sat one morning, musing upon a text of Scripture, these words were, in a wonderful manner, darted into his mind, and seemed indeed like a voice from heaven: "Cease from thine own works, only believe." No sooner were these words impressed upon his mind, than the scales fell from his eyes and he perceived the application. Tears gushed forth like a torrent. He saw the rock upon which he had been splitting for near thirty years, by endeavouring to blend the law and the gospel and unite Christ's righteousness with his own. Immediately he began to think upon the words "Faith" and "Believe" and, looking into his Concordance, found them inserted in many successive columns. This surprised him to a great degree and he instantly formed a resolution to preach Jesus Christ and salvation by faith.

DRAMATIC CHANGE IN HIS MINISTRY

Now God began to bless his ministry; after he had preached in this strain two or three sabbaths and was ruminating whether he was yet right, as he had perceived no better effects from these than his former discourses, one of his parishioners unexpectedly came to enquire for him. Being introduced, "Well, Sarah," said he, she replied, "Well, not so well, I fear." "Why, what is the matter, Sarah?" — "Matter, I don't know what's the matter. These *new* sermons. I find we are all to be lost now; I can neither eat, drink nor sleep. I don't know what's to become of me." The same week came two or three more on a like errand. It is easy to conceive what relief these visits must have afforded his mind in a state of such anxiety and suspense. Now he was deeply humbled that he should have spent so many years of his life to no better purpose than to confirm his hearers in their ignorance. Thereupon, immediately, he burned all his old sermons, and shed a flood of tears of joy in their destruction. These circumstances alarmed the neighbourhood, the church quickly became crowded and God gave testimony to the Word of His grace in the very frequent conviction and conversion of sinners.

Mr. Berridge did not confine his labours to the narrow limits of Everton. He knew the worth of an immortal soul; he knew the awful terrors of the Lord; he knew the emptiness of the present world; he knew the sandy foundation upon which thousands build; he knew the dangerous devices of Satan; he knew the awful precipice upon which the ungodly stand. He therefore left no means unattempted to awaken their concern and allure them to the Son of God. In his itineracy he would take in the counties of Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Hertford and Huntingdon, preaching "in season and out of season".

In this circuit he preached upon an average from ten to twelve sermons a week, and frequently rode an hundred miles. Nor were these extraordinary exertions the hasty fruit of intermitting zeal, but were regularly continued during the long succession of more than twenty years.

The most prominent feature in his character was his unaffected humility, nor was there a man so conscientious, so uniformly and yet so pleasantly, spiritual. In a word, in his parish he was a kind benefactor and in his family a father rather than a master; in his ministry he was a burning and a shining light; in his promises he was scrupulously exact; in his devotions invariably regular; in his friendship inviolably faithful, and, in his life he was much beloved.

HIS LAST DAYS

In January 1793 he intended to have again visited London but instead of his presence his friends received news of his death. For some days previous to his decease his strength and health had visibly decreased and on Sunday the 20th he came down into his parlour as usual, but with great difficulty reached his room in the evening. A few hours after he was in bed he appeared to be seized with the symptoms of immediate dissolution. His face was contracted and his speech faltered and in this situation he continued till about 3 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, January 22nd, when breathing less and less, this champion for his Redeemer fell a victim to mortality in the 76th year of his age.

His frame of mind during his last hours appeared to have been peculiarly comfortable. The Rev. Mr. W. a clergyman who resided near Everton said, "Sir, the Lord has enabled you to fight a good fight, and to finish a truly glorious course." He answered, "Blessed be His holy Name for it." It was also said to him, "Jesus will soon call you up higher." He at once exclaimed, "Yes, and my children too will shout and sing, Here comes our father." On the following Sabbath his remains were interred in his own parish churchyard. The epitaph inscribed on his tombstone is as follows:-

HERE LIE
The Earthly Remains of
JOHN BERRIDGE
Late Vicar of Everton,
And an Itinerant Servant of Jesus Christ,
Who loved His Master and His work,
And, after running on His errands many years,
Was called up to wait on Him above,

READER

Art thou born again?

No salvation without a new birth:

I was born in sin, February, 1716.

Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730

Lived proudly on Faith and Works for Salvation
till 1754.

Admitted to Everton Vicarage, 1755

Fled to Jesus alone for Refuge, 1756,

Fell Asleep in Christ, January 22nd, 1793.

This epitaph was written by himself, excepting the date of his death. The tomb is placed on the North East side of the Church yard, where formerly the bodies of those only were buried who had destroyed themselves, or brought themselves to an ignominious end. The Rev. Richard Whittingham, Vicar of Potton, Bedfordshire, and previously Curate to Rev. John Berridge at Everton, frequently heard Mr. Berridge say, that he had ordered that his remains should be deposited in that part of the Church yard which, he said with great pleasantry, would be an effectual means of *consecrating* it. Immediately the disgrace of being buried there was removed, for soon after others ordered their remains to be laid in that place.

As he was never married he left no widow to deplore his absence, nor children to perpetuate his memory, but his bright example and wise instructions will for ever live in the affection of thousands who derived blessings through his ministry.

HIS WORKS

The Works which he published were "The Christian World Unmasked", a Volume of Hymns called 'Sion's Songs' and also a "Collection of Divine Songs" designed chiefly for the religious Societies of Churchmen in the neighbourhood of Everton. This Collection which was published in 1760 is very scarce, Mr. Berridge, after his change of sentiments, having diligently bought up and destroyed all he could procure.

Hunger Satisfied

Towards the latter end of the last century there lived at Harston, near Cambridge, a farm labourer named John Morden. At this time he was ignorant of his true state and condition and lived according to the course of this world, followed after its pursuits, living in drunkenness, revellings and such like, of the which says an inspired apostle "I tell you

before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Poor Morden had no real religion in his heart but, on the contrary, was foremost in the frolic of the village inn.

A rumour about Everton Church and its vicar, John Berridge, spread abroad and reached Harston. Morden and some of his companions, whose taste was kindred to his own, heard of the rumour, and on Saturday evening when their work was done, talked the matter over and agreed to go the next day to Everton Church to hear more particularly the fine singing. When they arrived there, after their long journey on foot, they found the Church crowded, the very windows being filled. Whilst all admired the singing, Morden was most impressed by the sermon, which none of them had come to hear. On that memorable Sunday evening, as they returned home, while his companions amused themselves by repeating the quaint sayings of the preacher, etc., Morden had thoughts of his own. He felt through all that was passing the grasp of the truth as it is in Jesus fixing on his conscience and heart. What he had heard was different from anything he had ever heard before. He felt, too, as he had never felt before. Though he did not cry out, as some of the hearers had done, he had the solemn deep conviction that he was wrong; that he was a sinner in the sight of a holy God. The home thoughts and great searchings of heart were that night in contrast with any that Morden's cottage had ever witnessed, and this centring in his heart, that what the preacher said was intended for him. The Lord had evidently met with him in Everton Church, and though he scarcely knew what it could all mean, a great work was already begun. When the next Sunday came, his wife, to whom his heart was yet unknown, was puzzled that he should be going there again. The whole day was spent at Everton. Mr. Berridge noticed the stranger in the church listening eagerly to his discourses, and saw him between the services walking in the churchyard.

This went on for several weeks, till one Sunday, after the morning service was over, as Mr. Berridge was passing through the churchyard, he abruptly accosted him; "What brings you here?" "Please, sir," said Morden, "I came first to hear the singing, but since that I've come to hear the sermon, and I want to learn more of what you've got to tell me." "Very well", said the minister, "I am glad to hear that you wish to *learn*. I would advise you to read your Bible." "Ah, sir," said the listener, "I've not got a Bible, and if I had, it would be no use to me. I never learnt to read." "Can't read" said Berridge. "Where do you live?". "Harston, near Cambridge, Sir." "Harston, that's a long way (12 to 14 miles) Do you mean to come again next Sunday?". "Please God to spare me, sir, I mean to come, and *after that, too*." "You mean

to come next Sunday? Come as early as you can. Call at my house, and I will lend you a Bible, and show you the lessons". Morden thankfully promised to come, and thus, in the bright noontide of that summer day, closed the first interview between the teacher and his new disciple under the shadow of the old church at Everton. From that day he felt a growing attachment to Mr. Berridge. True to his appointment to the succeeding Sunday morning, Morden was early at the vicar's house. Mr. Berridge gave him a hearty welcome, handed him a Bible, in which he had marked the lessons for the morning, and, tracing the lines with his fingers, he bade his pupil follow with his eye while he read the words aloud. The same course was pursued in the afternoon. After some time Morden brought with him a companion on his Sabbath day's journey. His wife became a hearer, and afterwards a convert too. When the days grew shorter, they could never get back to their cottage on Sunday till after dark, yet they were so desirous of all Christian instruction, and so delighted with the converse of some of the Christian friends at Everton who took knowledge of them that they would stay long in their company, and sometimes reached home so late that they scarcely thought it worth while to go to bed. On such occasions they would seek a short rest, would change their Sunday clothes for the work-day dress, and go forth, after an early breakfast, to begin the labour of the week. No condition of the weather could prevent their presence at Everton. Though they might push their way through deep snow-drifts to return to their home drenched with rain, they felt themselves well rewarded for their exposure and their toil.

Mr. Berridge began to feel a serious concern about these weekly journeys over bad roads and through all weather. He saw that these hearers were not such as he himself describes, who worship their God when the *weather suits* or their *inclination serves*. One Sunday, when the weather was unusually bad, he sent for this couple and gravely expressed his concern to his poor friends, earnestly dissuaded them from coming to Everton and advised them to go to their own parish church, a course to which they reluctantly agreed. After an absence of a single Sunday, during which the proposed experience was made, Morden and his wife reappeared at Everton Church. "So, my good friends," said Mr. Berridge, saluting them after the service, "you are here again. Why don't you do as I told you?". "Ask pardon, sir," said the wife, "we did. We went to our own church last Sunday.". "And why did you not go again?". "Could not get any food, sir," said the man, "and we did not like to go hungry all the week." (Harston Church at this time was one of four at some distance from each other, supplied by one curate who started from Cambridge on horseback on Sunday morning and visited each church successively during the day.) Mr.

Berridge recommended them to try another church nearer home than Everton, but this was only tried once. "It won't do, sir," said they to the vicar's inquiries; "we can neither get food nor comfort, and we don't mean to try again." "Well," said Mr. Berridge, "I think it is too far for you to come; we must think what else can be done. There is a meeting-house at Cambridge where I know you will hear the Gospel preached in a nice, plain way that you can easily understand. Go there." Thus Mr. Berridge acted in the spirit of his own avowal, "I neither regard High Church nor Low Church, nor any Church but the Church of Christ, which is not built with hands nor circumscribed within peculiar walls nor confined to a singular denomination". His simple friends were at first very unwilling to heed the direction to "go there," but, being urged, thither they went the next Sunday and found both food and comfort. Mr. Saunders, an excellent and godly man descended from a martyr ancestry, was at that time the minister in whom Morden and his wife at once recognised an instructor in Christ of kindred spirit to him who had been their father, and who had the privilege to say, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel."

They gave up Everton with great reluctance, only yielding to the urgency of Mr. Berridge by whom, being afterwards generously recommended to the notice of Mr. Saunders, they united with the congregation at Cambridge and found there a fellowship of Christians from which they were only sundered by the hand of death. They received much kindness from their new friends at Cambridge, particularly from one good man who attended Mr. Saunders' ministry and kept open house for all Christian people who came from a distance.

After a while Morden's wife died, but he still continued to go every Sunday to Cambridge until his extreme age prevented him from going. Then he would be taken once a month on the Saturday in a farmer's cart to attend the ordinance of the Lord's Supper and be brought back again on Monday. He was so grievously asthmatical that he was unable to lie down so sat up all night in a chair downstairs: and when he could not sleep spent the time in praying aloud and repeating verses of his old favourite Berridge's hymns. He was so poor that he received parish relief, and at last, at an extreme age, death released him on November 27th, 1804.

"Oh, happy soul, now safely past

Thy weary warfare here;

Arrived at Jesus' feet at last,

And ended all thy care."

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?"

From "The Sower" 1880.

Harvest Gleanings

DAVID L. WRIGHT

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"Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me" — Ruth 1:20

The Bible is the Book for surprises. As when walking among the hills or within the shade of old trees we may come suddenly upon a quiet burn framed by mossy banks, so within the Bible rarest gems in unexpected places await discovery. An example of this is found in the book of Ruth. Tucked away between the turbulent record of the Judges and the chronicle of warring beings, it is a story of life on a farm at harvest time.

Seldom do historians interrupt their recital of great events for what happened in a country cottage. But to God the individual is of no less worth than the nation. And so in the everlasting Word we have this moving tale of a widow. That her sorrows and struggles are recorded proves they were no less important than the victories of Gideon or the deeds of Samson or the exploits of King David, which shaped the course of history. On the contrary the detailed description of life and death on this farm shows God's intimate knowledge and conveys an assurance of Divine pity and help to all lonely souls, whose home and heart are shadowed by grievous loss.

Recall this surprising story. The scene is Bethlehem at harvest time Elimelech, a young farmer with a wife and two sons to support, is facing ruin and starvation. The crops have failed and there is no food for man and beast. There is nothing for it but to pack up their few belongings and leave as many refugees do to-day. So he and his family set out over the eastern hills to the foreign land of Moab. It is only fifty miles distant as the crow flies. But iron rations, excessive heat and drought make it a perilous journey. At length they arrive safely, settle in and fortune smiles on them. The two sons marry local girls and the Elimelech line seems well established.

However, in only ten years there are enough changes to last a life-time. Three times death knocks on the cottage door. First the husband and then the sons find graves in that strange soil. And three times Naomi turns from paying her last respects to face a world empty of those she loved. Widowed and childless and with two bereaved daughters-in-law as well, she does what country folk will appreciate. Hearing of bread again in Bethlehem, she trudges wearily home to her

own people like a wounded bird fluttering back to the safety of its nest. With heavy heart, she craves for a crumb of comfort from the familiar places of her childhood and marriage. When friends of long standing greet her, they enquire sympathetically, "Is this Naomi?" It is kindly meant but she replies, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me".

Naomi means pleasant and Mara bitter. Here is a play on words. "Call me not pleasant, call me bitter". Amid familiar haunts and faded hopes, her *reaved* feelings commit her to a hasty judgement that is utterly mistaken. "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me," is her complaint. What a scathing *indictment* of Providence! Is there no token of Divine help, no tree of healing by the bitter waters of Marah? "The Lord deal kindly with you", she had said gratefully to her daughters-in-law, "as ye have dealt with the dead and me." Yet back home their support is overlooked. Obsessed with grief, the burdens are remembered not the blessings, the painful loss not the practical care.

Recollect the bitter outburst by Job's wife. A succession of grievous calamities had bowed their bruised hearts and emptied their home of the music of laughter. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" she accused her sorely tried husband, "curse God and die." Was this the cynical jeer of an unbeliever adding insult to injury? More than likely it was the thoughtless railing of a bewildered and broken heart. Like Mara, grief had warped her judgement. And who of us, overwrought by tides of sorrow, has not hurled accusations around? The fire brigade and the ambulance were late. The doctor's diagnosis was faulty. The minister should have done something about it. Such outraged emotions are understandable. The bereaved have been forcibly deprived and suddenly shattered. They are broken up inside and are not themselves. Who in these desolate moments has not echoed Mara's lament?

A wiser course is to look honestly at grief, to accept it as part of life's sorrowful load. That was Jeremiah's attitude. "This is my grief," he confessed "and I must bear it." At the same time sorrow shared with a true friend is sorrow halved. When David wept for his son Absalom, all Israel mourned with him and went quietly about their business. But Joab spoke resolutely to the King and made him face up again to his responsibilities. At other times there is need for good listeners like Job's comforters, whose initial silence helped him to express his grief in words. And Christians at prayer have the best of all listeners. They enjoy a personal relationship which is particularly meaningful in grief, since the risen Saviour is able not only to support and heal but also to continue His fellowship with them and with their loved ones who died believing in Him. What a consolation our Christian faith is!

Similarly Naomi and Ruth, confiding in and caring for each other, experience the comfort of God's abiding love. Neither Orpah nor Ruth had discussed their future. They were too shocked to plan ahead. It had not registered that, as heathen outsiders albeit in Naomi's company, they would be shunned in Bethlehem. So on the borders of Judah, Naomi gets them together and makes them face things sensibly. In binding their lives to hers, they would be sacrificing any prospects of marriage. She herself is too old to bear sons for them. She even makes them laugh through their tears by drawing a picture of them waiting for her two babies to grow to men. At length Orpah takes her advice. Naomi knows that the worship of Jehovah, the one true God, has made no lasting impression on Orpah. She prudently looks after her own interests, as nearly everybody does in the world. Returning at the barley harvest in April, she goes back to a second spring, to start life anew among her people and their false gods.

Ruth on the other hand does not follow her sister-in-law. She has already made her choice for the God of Israel, Who made her heart captive. Her love to Him is reflected in love of her dead husband's mother, her dead husband's faith. Without calculating on gain or loss, she cleaves to Naomi and simply follows the love of her heart. Hers is a harvest of the spirit, a most touching confession of loyalty. "Intreat me not to leave thee or return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Further reasoning cannot dissuade steadfastly minded Ruth. Giving her all for love, she throws her heart before her, as Douglas threw the heart of Bruce and followed it down to the gates of death and through them.

Are we following in the steps of Orpah or Ruth, professing allegiance to alien gods or our Creator and Redeemer, exhibiting prudent self-interest or the loyalty of love? These issues are highlighted in that poignant passage from Paul's second letter to Timothy. The old gospel campaigner is in prison. In need of companionship, he pleads with Timothy to come to him soon. "For Demas hath forsaken me," he writes sadly, "having loved this present world and is departed to Thessalonica." Had Demas met someone in Rome who offered him an attractive position in Thessalonica? He may have talked it over with Paul. "You know how it is," he might have said, "I may never get this opportunity again. I have to think of my career. I have to the best for my wife and family. There is no guarantee about the future of the Church. I am sorry to leave you in prison and up against it. But you will understand. I have no option but to depart for Thessalonica." "Yes, I

understand," would be the disappointed reply. What else could the apostle say to one whose heart was edging away from him, whose little world rotated around self-interest? Sitting with bowed head in prison, having given his all for love of Christ, Paul was a greater figure by far than prosperous Demas. And so may we be if loyal to each other for love of Christ. Surely bereaved members of the Kirk should never feel alone.

That was the reason why Ruth was welcomed in Bethlehem. Her renunciation of parents and home in Moab for Naomi's God and people became widely known. The Jewish law had said, "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever." (Deuteronomy 23:3). But no law could bar the door to the loyal love of Ruth. Her entrance among God's chosen people met with acceptance and admiration. This was specially noticeable when she went to the gleaning in support of Naomi and herself.

Up at the main farm was Boaz the local laird, highly respected by his workers and cousin of the late Elimelech. It was not long before Boaz had discovered the identity of the Moabite damsel, who followed the reapers in his field. Not long before he showed her special kindness, protecting her from rude jests by allowing her at meal times to go among his people, because of her help to Naomi. "The Lord recompense thy work", he told her, "and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Not long before he had his farm servants at both the barley and wheat harvests drop handfuls, as if they had been overlooked by the reapers, for her to glean.

None are so destitute but that there are gleanings of happiness which God causes to fall to their lot, as Boaz caused to fall for Ruth. Gleaning in these ancient times was one of the rights of the poor. Owners of fields ripe for harvest were not to reap them a second time. The remnants made existence bearable for the deprived and starving. "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands." (Deuteronomy 24:19).

Likewise Public Worship in church should be a great field into which come needy folk to glean something of God's rich provision for their physical and spiritual sustenance. Here they may partake by faith of the Living Bread Who blessed the loaves and fish by the Galilean Sea; where they may "taste and see that the Lord is good." From here they may "send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this

day is holy unto the Lord" (Nehemiah 8:10). Thus under the preaching of the gospel hearts bowed in sorrow and perplexed at the tangled skein of events may find restful relief in learning of the Man of Sorrows, the Lord of our worship, Who binds up the broken hearted and pours in the oil of gladness.

Even so, successful gleaming is back bending work. Full aprons of grain never come to those unwilling to stoop. The manna of old did not fall on tables spread for meals. The people had to go out and gather it in from the ground. And the same principle applies to the spiritual harvest of character and service. In our Lord's parable the proud pharisee just prayed with himself but the humble publican, who pleaded for mercy, was answered. Before God we come empty-handed, confessing our sinful unworthiness, our poverty and hunger of spirit. For abasement before God precedes exaltation by God. The disciples, who wanted to reap high places of privilege in the kingdom, had this to learn. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister," said Jesus, "and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26,27).

So it was for Ruth and Naomi. According to custom, the next of kin could purchase Elimelech's farm and keep it within the family. How surprising that Boaz himself should accept this role and stoop to serve their interests. When Ruth told Naomi of her friend and that he had undertaken to be kinsman-redeemer to them, the older woman perceived that this was the Lord's doing. Then it was that the sadness and distress of Mara gave place to the gladness and confidence of Naomi. "Sit still, my daughter," said Naomi affectionately, "until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day." Naomi was persuaded of Boaz's reliability, that he would complete what he had begun. And in ways infinitely more wonderful the Lord of glory by abasement and humiliation became our Kinsman-Redeemer to pay sin's enormous debt at Calvary and to secure us for God. With that work finished, nothing remains for us to do but to praise our Saviour and to walk in His ways. With our salvation entrusted to Him, we can echo the apostle: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Most surprising of all was the way God worked out everything for good, how Ruth became Mrs. Boaz and pleasant Naomi a doting grannie to their son Obed. Imagine how this fascinating tale, touched by romance and with a happy ending, would charm the ancient Israelites. Many a harvest night, a family would sit in the halo of the fire-light listening with rapt attention to this story in all its intricate detail. "We have heard with our ears, O Lord, our fathers have told us,

what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old" (Psalm 44:1). And among the early Christians and our Covenanting heroes and heroines such were the marvellous works of God that regaled and warmed their hearts. Sitting by the fireside, before these Dutch tiles with their quaint Biblical pictures, mothers would teach the next generation of Jesus and His miracles including His crucifixion and resurrection. Would that these were the stories of the present age. that viewers and listeners believed that there is nothing so interesting as that which is true and nothing so moving as remembering the mighty acts of God recorded in Holy Scripture.

Of course the conclusion had a surprising twist to it. For the widow lass from Moab, who remarried in Bethlehem, was the great-grandmother of King David! Did loyal Ruth pass down to her Psalm singing descendant her aptitude for devotion? In addition her marriage to Boaz meant that God no longer belonged exclusively to His people, that the God of Israel was the God of Moab. Centuries were to pass before a reluctant Jonah preached repentance to the heathen Ninevites. And more centuries till Ruth's line led to King David's greater Son, the promised Messiah of the Jews, the Kinsman-Redeemer of the elect of God from all peoples. What a harvest gleaning that will be! Ah yes, the Bible is indeed the Book of surprises.

The Psalms.

"When we sing them we join with a multitude which no man can number; a long line of pilgrims in the most distant ages, who draw from them strength for their journeys and solace for the hardships".

John Kerr "The Psalms in history and biography"

Atonement.

The question "why is not atonement provided for all?" is answered by the question — "why is atonement provided for any?"

Dr. Hugh Martin in "Atonement"

Tossed by Rough Winds.

Tossed by rough winds and faint with fear
Above the tempest soft and clear
What still small accents greet mine ear?
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

Tis I who washed thy spirit white
Tis I who gave thy blind eyes sight
Tis I thy Lord, thy life, thy light.
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

These raging winds, this surging sea
Bear not a breath of wrath to thee,
That storm hath all been spent on Me.
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

This bitter cup I drank it first
To thee it is no draught accursed.
The hand that gives it thee was pierced.
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

When on the other side thy feet
Shall rest midst thousand welcomes sweet,
One well known voice thy heart shall greet
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

From out the dazzling majesty
Gently I'll lay my hand on thee
Whispering beloved thou lovest Me.
Tis I! Tis I! Be not afraid.

Anonymous author — No 529 in Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the elect of God compiled by Thomas Bradbury.

“Let them be thy choicest companions that have made Christ their chiefest companion”. Thomas Brooks.

BOOK REVIEWS

Wycliffe's Wicket. Sign of a Credible Faith. by Lewis Lupton. Published by the Olive Tree, 2 Milnthorpe Road. London. W4.3 DX. Hardback. Pp. 180. Subscribers £10.77; retail £14.84.

John Wycliffe died on Dec. 31 1384. Amidst conferences, (P.R.S.), films, meetings, new biographies, and doctrinal treatises, it is very fitting that six hundred years later, such a gem as this should be produced by a team of graduates connected with Oxford University.

"Wycliffe's Wycket", was the title of one of Wycliffe's most popular tracts, circulated in and after his time, but no longer extant. Mr Lupton aptly borrowed the title for this full and sympathetic biography. A further volume, "Trodden Thyme" is promised for next year, on the history of the Lollards, the preachers sent through the kingdom by the aged Wycliffe.

This volume differs from others in that it is not produced by a scholar who is far from the scene described. The author writes from the intimate student/graduate standpoint within the colleges concerned, and with access to their libraries, records, and art treasures. He shares the honour of the work with Brian Golding, who researched monasteries in Lincolnshire; Flora Lewis, expert on illuminated Books of Hours, and Dr Anne Hudson, who researched in Wycliffe studies.

The centre of interest in the book remains Oxford. But it traces the life of Wycliffe from his birth in Yorkshire, through student days, Westbury on Trym, Aust, Fillingham etc. to Merton College and Balliol, where he became one of the leading theologians and philosophers of the day. The turning point of Wycliffe's career was when he began his commentary on the whole Bible, which became so influential through England, and also Hus's Bohemia. From work on this commentary sprang the inspiration to translate the whole Bible into English, and to train itinerant preachers to preach the Gospel systematically throughout our land.

But forces of opposition from both Church and State led to his expulsion from Oxford, and his later years were spent in virtual exile, in Lutterworth. There he was still able to write and direct his preachers, in spite of distressing weakness and ill-health.

That the life and work of Wycliffe is quite contemporary and worthy of our careful attention is seen from this one fact. His conflict is the same as our conflict to-day. He found himself in opposition to the papal interpretation of the Gospel and the Scriptures. The Roman Church was moving away from the influence of Augustine, to that of Duns Scotus. The new trend, the 'modern way' as it was called, or

Nominalism, was replacing the Realism of the earlier church. 'Ideals and Universals' were replacing the facts of the historic faith. The modernists separated reason from religion, they forsook the ideal of a credible faith, they questioned the authority of the Scriptures, predestination, and the dominion of divine grace. They stressed freewill and good works as the means of salvation. Religion became a compound of mysticism and morality. (Compare to-day's Universalism which casts doubt on e.g. the Virgin Birth, the miracles, the resurrection of our Lord; and links faith to the universals, — the background aspirations, common to all religions. This is not compatible with the historic Christian faith!) The one good result claimed was the birth of modern science, but the philosophical scepticism and godless secularism of our times are equally claimants!

Thomas Bradwardine defended Realism against William of Ockham, and Wycliffe developed this theme. May God give us leaders to-day who will open to us the scriptural oracles of God.

This book has wonderful illustrations. They abound on every page, varying from Initial letters copied from mediaeval manuscripts, to Seals, windows, sketches of churches, places and people, maps and diagrams, Arms etc. The frontispiece is 'The Unicorn' (chaste, untamed, wounded, captive and chained to the fruitful pomegranate, one of the most moving of mediaeval images). It is more relevant to Wycliffe than appears at first sight. It was woven in tapestry for Anne of Brittany in 1499, and now preserved in New York Metropolitan Museum of Arts.

W.J.P.

"Lies and Slander", David Smith. Obtainable from Rushworth Literature Enterprise, Westbury Avenue, Wood Green, London N22 6SA.

This is a 32 page booklet outlining the evils of Lies and Slander. These things are a disease blistering modern society, and David Smith is anxious that Christian fellowships should know how to deal with outbreaks when they occur. His advice is sound, scriptural, and beneficial for both groups and individuals. It is a desirable for the Bookstall, and its circulation a preventative, its reading perhaps a cure, by God's grace. David Smith is now a well known Bible Expositor. One of his first publications was a reprint of 'Christ Manifested', by the saintly John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley 200 years ago, with an introduction and biography.

W.J.P.

Luther and His Katie, Dolina MacCuish, Christian Focus Publications, 79pp.

Here is an interesting booklet which deals with the domestic aspects of Martin Luther's life and underlines the vital role played by his wife Katherina von Bora. The date 1506 on page 7 should read 1505 but apart from this blemish the account of Luther's family life makes compelling reading.

R.R.

The Life of Edward Irving. The Fore-runner of the Charismatic Movement. Arnold Dallimore. Banner of Truth Trust. Pp. 188. £3.95.

Dr Dallimore, well known to readers in England on account of his two volume biography of George Whitefield, has again put us in debt to him by this simple, lucid, and sympathetic account of Edward Irving.

We read of his boyhood and student life at Edinburgh. He longed for a call to the ministry, but remained a teacher until invited by Dr Chalmers to be his assistant. The two men were very different in every way, but in Glasgow Irving learned to love the poor Calton weavers, a fitting introduction to his later charge in Billingsgate.

Leaving Scotland Irving accepted the call to the Caledonian Chapel in London. Here he soon became famous both for his preaching and his personal charm. Society flocked around, including his later biographers, the famous Thomas Carlyle, and Margaret Oliphant. His preaching however seemed to oscillate between the orthodox and the speculative. He was even charged with heresy, when he spoke of "Christ's sinful flesh". As the Caledonian Chapel became too small for the crowds, the trustees built the Regent Square Church. Then followed his visits to Scotland where he became more intimate with Campbell and Scott, and with Isabella and her sister Mary Campbell. Mary was the first to "speak with tongues". Tongues, prophecies, interpretations and faith healing now became the burden of his ministry. Society forsook him, but the poor filled the Church. To the elders and trustees, it seemd that disorder and hersey were triumphant and he was then dismissed from his charge.

However 800 followed him to the Newman St. Gallery, and soon a new church was formed, which later became the "Catholic Apostolic Church". He was then however charged with heresy by the Annan Presbytery, where he had been ordained, and deposed from the ministry. Then the new "Apostolic" Church also disowned him. He went to Glasgow but died of tuberculosis. To-day he is recognised as the first populariser of "pentecostal ideas" in this country.

Dr Dallimore analyses the lessons to be learned for to-day from Irving's experiences. They are three: 1. The prime principle is the authority of the Bible. If we bring in a new revelation to supplement the Scripture, it will ruin us as it did Irving. 2. Irving taught that sickness and ailment were totally against God's will; afflictions of Satan, and were to be healed by faith alone, no doctors. This is false. It was fatal to Irving in Glasgow at an early age. 3. The idea of two levels amongst Christians, that some are regenerate only, and some are also baptised by the Holy Spirit, is a false dichotomy. It brought Irving in practise under the rule of "the prophets" in his church, and this ruined his career. Such, in brief, were the results of expecting a revival of the apostolic gifts. In contrast were the honoured careers of other gifted preachers of the same generation, Chalmers, the Bonar brothers, R.M. M'Cheyne, Livingstone, Spurgeon, Muller and many others.

W.J.P.

**"The Shadow of Calvary" Hugh Martin. Banner of Truth Trust.
Pp. 298. £2.45.**

This is a series of thirteen discourses, expositions of the words and experiences of our Lord, during the time of the Passion in Gethsemane, the Arrest, and the Trial.

Several of the chapters concern our Lord's life of prayer. The Gospels present Jesus as a man of prayer on all occasions. This, our author teaches us, was in conformity with the fact that he was in all things made like to his brethren, in his state of humiliation. What a light this throws on the meaning of Philippians 2. 5-11. Though all the powers and authority of the Godhead were instantly at the disposal of our Lord, he was voluntarily made like his brethren. This was in fulfilment of the eternal Covenant, described in Psalm 2. "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." The divine nature of Christ was, in His mediatorial office, subjected to this necessity of prayer. Made like to us, he became our example, that we might learn the faithfulness of God.

The book abounds in such spiritual insights and we learn that scripture compared with scripture is its own best interpreter. It is a mine of spiritual riches. With good print it is suitable for private devotional reading; and for ministers it is a good guide to devotional exposition, and will deepen the spiritual life of all who read it.

Professor John Murray described Hugh Martin as second to none of the gifted ministers of the Gospel in Scotland in the second half of the last century.

W.J.P.

Memories of Sandfields. Bethan Lloyd-Jones. Banner of Truth Trust. Pp. 96. £1.25.

This book is not very large in content, but it has an excellence all its own. It tells the story of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones ministry at the Bethlehem Forward Movement Church, Aberavon, through the eleven years before his call to Westminster Chapel. Bethan described the happy background of their family life, together with the vivid sketches of his public life as a preacher. The Doctor was always an evangelistic preacher, and the results of such a ministry are colourfully depicted in the stories of his converts and church members.

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