

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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Editorial

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED how, in Psalm 37, we are counselled “Fret not” no less than three times within a few verses? Here is something that is very relevant for life today when there is so much to cause us to be fretful. This whole psalm is a source of strength and calm to those in trouble. It will repay careful study.

Fretting is a subtle thing — not easy perhaps to define, though everyone knows what it means. The Bible speaks of the moth fretting a garment — it destroys the very fabric. Fretting is self-destructive, it has quite devastating results.

It is possible to borrow trouble from tomorrow. Some fret about the future without the slightest reason for doing so. “They were in great fear, where no fear was” (Psalm 53:5) exactly describes the case of many. They contemplate the future, conjuring up for themselves trouble which will probably never come to pass.

Fretting is dishonouring to God. If He is the faithful Creator into whose hands we commit the keeping of our souls, we do not honour Him if we fret, as though we had the entire management of our own affairs. Furthermore, fretting robs us of strength, it drains our resources, we cannot cope with things as we should. It is not work that kills so much as worry and fret.

Again and again, the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount urges the disciples not to be anxious about outward things; He sought to encourage them in unwavering trust. Peace of heart is among the choicest gifts He gives. The legacy He bestowed upon His followers was a very rich one indeed — “My peace I give unto you”.

How thankful we should be for the lovely promise, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

“Remember Lot’s Wife”

A Sermon by the Editor

Luke 17:32

I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING about one of the nameless people that we find in the Bible in both Old and New Testaments. Much space is taken up by the writing of personal names, specially when you come to the great Genealogies, but certain names have been left unrecorded and the reason is not known and it is not possible to ask the reason why, and amongst the un-named personalities is the wife of Lot of whom our Lord said, “Remember Lot’s wife”. This is one of the shortest verses of the Bible. The other shortest is in John 11, “Jesus wept”. This is the next shortest, and our Lord says, “Remember Lot’s wife”. So, obviously, it is a subject and a personality of some significance when our Lord speaks as He does.

Now let me sketch in briefly the background of the text. Our Lord was speaking about the conditions that would prevail on the earth in the latter day just immediately prior to the coming again in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so He says in verse 28, “As it was in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded”. They were entirely taken up with materialistic ideas and pursuits — this was all they were interested in, buying and selling, planting, building, eating and drinking — no thought of spiritual values whatsoever. Darkness would cover the land again as it did in the days of Lot, and so our Lord issues a solemn warning. He says, “Remember Lot’s wife”, and He holds her up as a beacon to the Church. He didn’t bid us remember faithful Abraham or the gentle Isaac or the meek Moses or the gracious Ruth, but He singles out Lot’s wife, one who came to a fearful end, and surely few warnings are more solemn in Scripture than this, “Remember Lot’s wife”. It is solemn too when we remember from whose lips the warning came, none other than our Lord Jesus Christ who was full of love and mercy and compassion and of whom it was written, “He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax”; the One who could weep over Jerusalem and say, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”. The same loving Saviour thinks it wise and expedient to remind us of Lot’s wife.

I want you to notice that this warning was given to the disciples — verse 22, “He said unto his disciples”. This was not addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees who hated Him but to those who loved Him, and so He thinks it good to address a word of caution even to them.

1. THE PRIVILEGES SHE ENJOYED

Let us think for a moment or two about this un-named person, Lot's wife — Mrs. Lot, if you like, and that's as far as we can go, we just do not know her name. Think, first of all, of the privileges that she enjoyed because she was indeed a privileged woman. She had a very good husband. Peter in the New Testament speaks about Lot and he says he was a just man and he was a righteous man. He was upright, he was God-fearing. She had an inestimable boon in a good husband. She had a great favour too in the circles in which she moved, the family circle, because at this time the knowledge of the true God was confined to a comparatively few people, a few favoured families and the greatest part of the inhabitants of the world lived in darkness and ignorance, in superstition and in sin and, compared with millions of her fellow creatures, she was a favoured woman. She had a good husband, she had good family connections and, furthermore, she had Abraham the father of the faithful for her uncle by marriage, and religion with Abraham and his immediate family and her own husband was not just a matter of routine. The faith to them was a moving principle and the mainspring of their actions.

She had a tremendous lot in her favour and, at the same time, she seems to have been a rather ambitious woman if we may read between the lines. She wanted to see her man get on in the world and I don't think it is going too far to say that it was she who pushed him into the city of Sodom. You remember how when Abraham and Lot parted we read that Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom, and then, not far on, we read in the sacred narrative, there he is, he has taken up residence in that most wicked of cities. Peter says of Lot that "he vexed his righteous soul with their wicked doings day by day". Would it be too much to say that she got him there because she wanted to see him get on? And he did get on, he became a man of some standing in the city of Sodom. He stood in the gate, in other words he was a magistrate, he was a ruler. He got on well and, going on in the story, you will see she received divine intervention. When the angels came to Sodom and warned Lot to flee and when they took them by the hand she was one whom they helped to escape and yet we have to ask, What effect had these privileges on her? We can just answer in one word — "None".

Notwithstanding all her opportunities and her privileges and all the means of grace at her disposal it seemed to have had no effect on her whatsoever; despite the special warnings and pleadings and messages from heaven she lived and died graceless and godless, impenitent and unbelieving. The eyes of her understanding were never opened. Her affections were never really set on things above. Outwardly she conformed to her husband's ways and his lifestyle, but beyond that she never seemed to have gone. Her heart was not right in God's sight. The world was in her heart and her heart was in the world and thus she lived and thus she died and religion to her seems to have been nothing but a cloak, a mere veneer.

What a solemn story it is! It tells us that a mere possession of religious privileges is not enough. You may have the best of spiritual advantages, you may enjoy the best of preaching, you may sit under the choicest instruction, you may have godly relatives, but that in itself is not enough. It requires more than privileges if our hearts are to be in the right and the Bible has many a warning on this. It tells us about Gehazi the servant of Elijah in the Old Testament, and Elijah was one of the outstanding men of all time and yet he had Gehazi as his servant who listened to his ministry and saw the wonderful things he was enabled to do and Gehazi never really got beyond the itch for money and possessions. He was godless and he seemed to be graceless. What about Judas Iscariot, a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ? Enough said! Lot had a worldly and an unbelieving wife and, as far as we can see, these, as I mentioned, lived and died in their sins in spite of knowledge and warnings and opportunity. We need more than privileges. We need the grace of the Spirit of God. We need a mighty movement of the Spirit of God upon us. Yes, this is Lot's wife, a member of a spiritually-minded family, and it reminds us that we cannot enter heaven on the credit of someone else, that we must each of us know something of repentance before God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Doesn't it also tell us that nothing so hardens a man's heart as barren familiarity with sacred things. It is possible to become Gospel-hardened, to sit under the preaching of the Word Sunday after Sunday, to know it intellectually, to know it (I was going to say) inside out, and yet for the truth never to have entered into our innermost being. It was the same with Lot's wife, she heard gracious ministry but it never entered her being, and good Bishop Ryle says somewhere, "The same fire that melts the wax hardens the clay" — and it is true.

2. THE SIN SHE COMMITTED

What was the sin? It looks ever so small, "She looked back". It seems so trifling, doesn't seem worth speaking about, but it is a case of *multum in parvo* — much in little. A small thing! Let me try to open it up to you. You see, that small thing revealed her true character. Little things often do, don't they? It is not always the big things we do that betray what we are. Little things are much more accurate. A little symptom to a doctor will speak volumes. It may tell him the sign of a deadly and an incurable disease. A small crack in an arch doesn't seem very much, but it may prove that the foundation is slipping and the fabric is becoming unsafe, and a straw will sometimes show which way the wind is blowing. It revealed her character. And it told of her disobedience because the angel's commission was clear and unmistakeable, "Look not behind thee", and when God speaks plainly it is man's duty to obey. And it also told of unbelief. She seemed to doubt if God would really fulfil what He said concerning this most wicked of cities, Sodom, whose sin has gone down to the present day, and, when we speak of sodomy we are speaking of the vilest thing on earth. It gave its name

to that most despicable of sins which is rampant in our world today and in our own country too. She thought she knew better than God. "It is not imminent. I can take my time, no need for such a hasty flight." But when man thinks he knows better than God surely he is in a very dangerous position, and when we cannot see the reason for God's dealings, then we must just believe and act on what God says. It told also of her secret love of the world. Her heart was in Sodom though her body was out of it, and she left her affections behind and her eye turned to the place where her treasure lay, just as the needle of the compass will always turn to the North Pole, and so she looked back. She was not a murderess, she was not an adulteress, she wasn't a thief, she was just a mere professor of religion but lacking reality. How we need to beware of a half-hearted religion, beware of following Christ for any secondary motive, just as she seemed to fall in with her husband's way and his life-style. Doesn't it remind us of our Lord's own word and did our Lord have it in mind when He said, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God"?

3. THE PUNISHMENT INFLICTED

We have seen something of the privileges which this woman enjoyed, but I am going to look now at the punishment that was inflicted. What a solemn story it is! Her life was taken away in the twinkling of an eye. She was overcome by the most furious storm. She was transfixed where she stood and in a moment she was wrapped in a sheet of saline incrustation. This is what happened to her. She was nearly saved, but she was wholly lost. She looked back, and there are those who think she not only looked back, but she went back. Obedience would have saved her but disobedience proved her ruin. What a fearful end! Fearful to die in the very act of sin, hopeless. You know, we often hope against hope for souls that have passed suddenly from time into eternity, but surely there is an end of hope when a person is cut off as she was in the act of sin. It reminds us that God can punish sharply all those who sin wilfully and the Bible brings people to our attention. What about Pharoah? God gave him opportunity, but, says the narrative, Pharoah's heart was hardened and so came the day of reckoning. What about Ahab? He had the ministry of Elijah but he rejected it and spurned it, and let me remind you about Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, and all these came to an untimely end, no space for repentance. "They, being dead, yet they speak," and our Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife". What a solemn story! And it is given to us as a warning and oh! may the solemn words be engraved on our hearts — may they awaken us when we sleep and sharpen us when we are dull and warm us when we are cold. They are a spur to quicken us when we are tempted to fall back and a bridle to check us when we want to turn aside. Yes, here is a solemn warning that the day of grace is not always with us, but "Today will ye not hear his voice, harden not your hearts". Here is a call to

separate, to come out and be separate, and surely we ought to take warning, "Remember Lot's wife". Remember the exhortation of the New Testament to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith". These things are written for our learning and it is not for nothing that our Lord Jesus Christ, the kindest, the most gracious of any, could say to His own disciples, those who were nearest to Him, "Remember Lot's wife", and, if the disciples had need of the warning, how much more have we, you and me? "Remember Lot's wife." Her name has not been recorded, her experience has, and it was written for our admonition even in this day of grace, and so there comes the call to us —

"Take up thy cross the Saviour said,
If thou would'st My disciple be,
Take up thy cross with willing heart
And humbly follow after Me."

Amen.

M.H.

For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

PLANTING THE BULBS

HAVE YOU PLANTED any spring bulbs yet? Each autumn I go to the garden centre to buy some bulbs. They do not look very beautiful, but beside each box of bulbs there is a picture of lovely colourful flowers. There is a marvellous choice of tulips, hyacinths, daffodils and many others.

At home I plant some of the bulbs in a wooden tub at the back door, covering them completely with soil and giving them a good drink of water. If you were to come to my back door now and look at the tub, you would not know that there was anything there at all. But I would know that the bulbs were there because I planted them. If you were to come back in the spring-time, I hope you would then see beautiful spring flowers. The bulbs form roots and the sunshine and rain cause the flowers to grow.

You may sometimes wonder why you should bother to learn verses of the Bible. These Bible verses are like the bulbs — hidden away in your mind — perhaps nobody else knows that they are there. But if that knowledge is fed by the "Sun of righteousness" (that is the Lord Jesus), and by the rain or water of the Holy Spirit, what a difference everybody would see in your life. You would be enabled to trust in the Lord Jesus to save you from your sins. The Word of God would then not only be hidden in your mind but would blossom out in your life.

We recently met a man called Alec who had been brought up in a Christian home but had moved to another part of the country when he grew up and had drifted away from the Church. During conversation with him we found out that he knew a minister that we had also known.

"Mr. M. used to come to our house often," Alec said. "He once asked me to learn a verse from the Psalms. But he never asked me to repeat it the next time he came back." That had been a bit of a disappointment to him.

"But can you still remember the verse?" he was asked.

"Oh yes, it has never left me."

Then Alec sang the verse to quite a large company of people —

"Remember me, Lord, with that love
Which thou to thine dost bear;
With thy salvation, O my God,
To visit me draw near."

(Psalm 106:4)

Other memories of sermons heard long ago came flooding back to him — the word that had been hidden away for years began to surface.

If you plant any bulbs this autumn, watch out for them coming through the ground. Pray that God would bless His Word to you — even verses that you have already learned — that you would remember them in later years and that they would prove to be a blessing to your soul.

"My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

PUZZLE

Fill in the words missing from the verses. If your answers are correct the first letters will spell out one of the words in Alec's verse.

1. Now the parable is this: the _____ is the word of God. Luke 8.
2. Put on the whole _____ of God . . . and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Ephesians 6.
3. Those that be planted in the house of the _____ shall flourish in the courts of our God. Psalm 92.
4. Visit . . . this _____ which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. Psalm 80.
5. I have written unto you young men because ye are strong and the word of God _____ in you. 1 John 2.
6. He shall be like a _____ planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. Psalm 1.

7. Hear, ye children, the _____ of a father, and attend to know understanding. Proverbs 4.
8. _____ thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119.
9. I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my _____ food. Job 23.

Christ Marries the Church

PETER KING (Stanford, Beds)

Revelation chapters 20-22

WE NOW COME to the last of the seven visions of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The emphasis here is the destruction of the dragon (Satan) and the consummation of the marriage of the Lamb. As the various visions have unfolded to us we have seen how that the picture created gradually works towards this great climax. The different enemies of Christ and the Church are first introduced to us, and then their destruction is foretold and executed, the last great enemy being Satan himself. The other side of the coin is the creation, protection and final salvation of the Church of Christ, and in this last vision we see, for almost two-thirds of the revelation, the great act of the marriage feast.

The vision opens, as all the others have in varying detail, with a view of the first coming of the Lord. Verses 1-3 describe how, when He came, He bound Satan a thousand years. We must be careful, as always, with the symbols, and not take this thousand years literally, for if we do we are clearly contravening Scripture. Our Lord said that no man knew when the end of time should be. *"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father"* (Mark 13:32). What is clear, is that during the Gospel age Satan's power is curtailed and that after this, for a short time, that power will be allowed to persecute again (verses 7-8). Until Christ came, the grace of God was seen primarily in the Jewish nation, God's chosen people, but when Christ came the first time, Satan was stopped from deceiving the nations (Gentiles). Psalm 72 is a beautiful commentary on the Gospel, expanding on the work of grace and its effect on the growth of the Church. Listen to gems like, *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth"* (verse 6). *"He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor"* (verse 4). *"His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and*

mēn shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed" (verse 17). It is most fitting that the prayers of David, the man after God's own heart, should end with this prophetic prayer.

At verse 4 we have an insight into what is happening to those that have, and will die in the Lord, before he comes again. The Roman Catholic church talks of purgatory, an intermediate state before heaven, but there is plenty of teaching here to contradict that fable. *"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."* We borrow again from Hendriksen, who asks the question, "Where were these souls?". They were in heaven, with Christ, and they were there in the Gospel age (a thousand years). What do they do there? They sit with Him (chapter 3:21); they sing with Him (chapter 14:3). Jesus said to the dying thief, who had just confessed his faith in Him, *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43).

Having established the state of the chosen of God, we have the final destruction of Satan. We have seen this pattern before in the visions, where the protection of the Church is assured before the destruction of the enemy. How loving is our Lord to keep us from the hottest of the battle by putting over us the banner of His love. Satan is now loosed for a little season (verse 7) and he gathers the nations together for the battle of battles. One might expect that this event would occupy many verses, but it is dealt with very quickly: *" . . . and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are . . . "* (verses 9 and 10). So ends the reign of evil, and heralds the last judgment upon the earth. The books are produced and opened before Him who sat on the great white throne. The "video" of our life will then be played, and what will be said of us? The glorious prospect for all the redeemed is the trial of the Church has already taken place in Christ our redeemer. He stood for us and overcame, blessed be His Name for ever and ever, Amen. The second death can have no claim on the Church, but only on those whose names are not written in the book of life.

It would appear that the Gospel age (one thousand years) will not extend to the second coming of Christ, but there will be a short time when Satan has his final fling on the Church and the world. Informed opinion seems divided on this matter, but verse 8 gives some indication of a period like this. What is certain, is that Satan will be defeated and Christ will reign supreme.

The concluding chapters of this prophecy are kept for the description of the final state of the redeemed. John says, *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea"*. Some feel this earth will be remade, others that this "new heaven and new earth" is but a symbol of a new place to live. John had no other words but those he knew, so he described what he saw as a new habitation. We must be

careful to maintain the symbols all the time. There is a contrast to the first creation here. The world we live in is doomed to failure but the next world will last for ever. We need sun, moon, and stars, but there is no need of light there. In verse 1 John says there was no more sea, but this earth has most of its surface covered by sea. At the time Adam was cast out of the garden of Eden, angels guarded the way to the tree of life. That is they kept the way open for mankind. Here in the new Jerusalem, the saints have "right to the tree of life" (chapter 22:14).

Continuing on in the vision, John sees the "*new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" (verse 2). "*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*" This is the bride, the Church, finally and completely joined to her God. Then there shall be no more sorrow, or tears, or crying, "*for the former things are passed away*". There follows a dreadful contrast with the state of the wicked in verses 7 and 8, and John is instructed to "*Write: for these words are true and faithful*".

John is now carried away in the spirit to a mountain, where he is shown in detail the construction of the Holy Jerusalem. The Church is described as a great city, populated by those redeemed from among men. Her light was like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. In an earlier vision, He that sat on the throne was so described (chapter 4:3). It is therefore clear that the light came from the Lamb of God, who is the light of the world. We learn from verse 12 onwards some of the architecture of the city. First the security of a wall and twelve gates, established on the twelve tribes of Israel. Then twelve foundations containing the names of the twelve apostles. So the whole Church is included here, and as if to emphasise the point, John is given a reed to "*measure the city and the gates thereof*". The third vision gave us some insight into the measuring of the temple, and we found that it was symbolic of protection. We learn that the city was a cube, and this compares with Solomon's ark of the covenant which was also "foursquare" (1 Kings 6:20). However, there was a significant difference between the two, in that this city had no temple (verse 22), "*for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*". We have already noted that there is no need of light in this city, and now that the enemies are all destroyed there is no requirement to shut the gates. "*The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.*"

The vision is now drawing to a close. Peace and tranquillity reign supreme as John is shown "*a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*". So chapter 22 begins, and continues in like manner, expanding the horizon of the paradise above. The tree of life now available with all its fruits, yielding them every month. Our Lord is sometimes said to have been crucified on a tree, and this symbol reminds us of the healing nature of that vicarious death. The curse is removed, and we shall see His face

with no restriction. Read on through the verses of this last chapter of the Word of God, and you will discover mysteries no pen can record. John falls again at the feet of the angel as the sight is too wonderful to take in. *"I come quickly,"* says the Lamb, and so He will, as a thief in the night. John is told to seal up the prophecy for the time is at hand. Remember quickly does not mean the same as immediately. This is borne out in the fact that John wrote this prophecy some 1,900 years ago and the earth still remains. When our Lord does come He will not delay, but fulfil His words quickly. A last invitation is given at verse 17. Let the whole world hear these words:

**AND THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME
AND LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY, COME
AND LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST, COME
AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE OF THE WATER
OF LIFE FREELY**

A final warning as to the sacredness of the prophecy of this book is given, before the last benediction is pronounced.

**SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN
EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS**

**THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BE WITH YOU ALL
AMEN**

Tracts of Truth (2)

NIGEL W. BOWDEN (Plymouth)

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

" . . . THE IMAGINATION OF MAN'S HEART is evil from his youth"
(Genesis 8:21).

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"
(Psalm 51:5).

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

" . . . Man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation" (Article 9: 39 Articles of Religion).

Holy Scripture provides the only explanation of what is a matter of universal experience — the hereditary tendency to sin which sooner or later makes itself evident in every child. Notwithstanding, this biblical doctrine of Original Sin is vigorously repudiated by Christian and non-Christian alike. However, the news media affords daily confirmation of the now despised Christian doctrine; Terrorism, Child Abuse, Homosexual Perversion, Racial Antagonism, Public Immorality and Irreligion and increasing violence against the person — all corroborate the biblical teaching of man's inborn sinfulness.

However repugnant it may be to modern thought, the Bible declares that the consequences of sin have descended upon all men, particularly the inherent and persistent bias towards sin, referred to in the New Testament as the "law of sin".

The Teaching of Scripture

Passages such as Genesis 8:21 and Psalm 51:5 indicate that from the moment of conception man becomes subject to a persistent tendency to sin and rebellion against the Divine will. This condition is the reverse of "original righteousness" and he has lost the power to become, and habitually to remain, righteous. This is, as has already been observed, a matter of universal experience. The Medieval theologians used the word "deprivation" to describe this sad condition. The state of subjection to the evil principle continuously operating is one of depravity. The states of deprivation and of depravity are always transmitted at birth. Thus, in the Old Testament we have the question asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean", and answering, "not one" (Job 14:4); and our Lord, in His conversation with Nicodemus, states that, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). There is no evidence that anyone has ever escaped these birth-taints, save our blessed Saviour. Scriptural evidence for the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary is entirely lacking. By the Incarnation of our Lord, and only in the case of that Incarnation, was the process interrupted so that the Lord was free from this law as Him "... who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The condition of man is both negative and positive. Negatively, it may be stated that "... man is very far gone from original righteousness" (i.e., in a state of "deprivation"); positively, he "... is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit" (i.e., there is a condition of "depravity" or the persistence of an evil principle acting as a kind of downward force).

Total Depravity

It should be noted that this phrase was never intended to convey the meaning that man is as bad as he possibly can be, and that every trace of moral rectitude has been lost in fallen man. Total Depravity is intended to indicate that the evil principle above described has invaded each part of human nature, so that there

is no part of it which can now invariably perform righteous acts or invariably think righteous thoughts. That is to say, the totality applies rather to the field of operation of the evil principle, and not to the actual degree of evil in the individual. The depravity is also total in the sense that, apart from Divine aid it is irreversible.

It has often been pointed out (without sufficient attention having been paid to it) that the difficulties felt by some modern theologians to the individual's sharing in the fate of the race are unnecessary if the following be observed. It was open to God to organise human life on either an individual or some collective basis. In His wisdom He selected the collective method and bound men together. When sin entered, short of arresting the progress of human generation altogether, God could not prevent the perpetuation of "racial sin".

It has not been fully appreciated that the cross of Christ saved man from utter ruin. In the mediatorial and redemptive work of Christ there is, thanks be unto God, a constant provision for the uplift of our fallen race. God was able to apply the virtue of the cross both before and after the event (see Romans 3:24-26; 5:6, 8, 10 and 12-19). However, whilst the obedience of "the last Adam" benefits all men indirectly, its eternal redemptive value is experienced only by those who, having committed actual sin, renounce their own disobedience and obey the Gospel.

It needs to be emphasised that just as racial sin has descended upon all men under the collective system of human organisation, *on exactly the same principle*, the obedience of the new Head of the race, is able to benefit those who receive Him as their Head. If we allow the one, we must, to be consistent, disallow the other. In addition, it should be added that by virtue of the new covenant the penitent sinner who acknowledges Him as his Head is assured of all that Adam and the race could ever have attained had original righteousness not been lost at the Fall.

In conclusion, it has been well said that had there been no story of the Fall in our Bibles we should have been compelled to invent something similar to account for human history.

**"CASTING ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM,
FOR HE CARETH FOR YOU"**

(1 Peter 5:7)

"Low at His feet lay thy burden of carefulness;
High on His heart He will bear it for thee,
Comfort thy sorrows and answer thy prayerfulness,
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be."

J. S. B. Monsell

The Grace of Lowliness

G. C. J. BUTLIN (Sheffield)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven"
(Matthew 5:3)

ONLY THOSE PEOPLE who have suffered invasion and a cruel oppressive régime by enemy powers can really appreciate the feelings of the Jewish peoples of our Lord's day. The Roman soldiery was in possession and the Roman rule was supreme. It is no wonder that the Jews longed for the overthrow of Rome and the withdrawal of its forces. Only then would their own kingdom come into its own.

In such conditions the excited interest and rekindled hopes raised by John the Baptist announcing the coming of the Kingdom may be imagined. The excitement was intensified when Jesus went forth proclaiming the Kingdom to be at hand. His words had greater effect when His miracles of healing and power accompanied His teaching. Consequently crowds began to throng Him wherever He appeared. It was the sight of the great multitudes, with their mistaken views of His mission that induced Jesus to ascend a mountain to make His Royal Proclamation. After this there could be no doubt about the principles of His Kingdom.

THE PLACE CHOSEN

"He went up into a mountain" (Matthew 5:1). Mountains had often been the scenes of memorable events. These included Mount Ararat, Horeb, Sinai, Zion and Carmel. Jesus often resorted to mountains, sometimes for nights of prayer. At one place we read: "Everyone went to his own house; Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." It was on a mountain that He was transfigured. It was on Calvary's Hill that He suffered death. It was on the slopes of Mount Olivet that He ascended to His Father.

The prophets tell us that it will be to the Mount of Olives that He will return (cf. Zechariah 14:4). It is fitting, therefore, that the Laws and Principles of His Kingdom should be made known upon a mountain.

Some have likened His pronouncement of our text and its following Beatitudes to the giving of the Mosaic Law to the Hebrews long before. Actually there are many contrasts between the pronouncement of the Law at Sinai, and the Sermon on the mountainside near the lake. On the former occasion it is stated that there were thick black clouds, smoke, thunder and lightning and the shaking of an earthquake, so that the people trembled for fear (Exodus chapters 19 and 20; Hebrews 12:18ff.). We are told of the mount which burned with fire,

blackness and darkness and tempest, the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. . . . So terrible was the sight that Moses said: "I exceedingly fear and quake."

In the New Testament giving of the Laws of the Kingdom, there is the sweet air of the lakeside, the song of the birds and the warm sunshine; other contrasts are seen also. In the earlier scene the multitude kept their dread distance, shutting eyes and ears. In the latter, the New Testament scene, "the people drew near" to hear Him who spake as never man spake, to hear words of grace and truth. At Sinai the Laws of God were inscribed on hard stone tablets, whereas the Laws of the Kingdom as pronounced by Jesus were to be written on the fleshy tables of human hearts. In addition the earlier Laws were concerned principally with what man must or must not *do*. The latter with what man must *be*; poor in spirit, merciful, meek, pure in heart, and peaceable.

THE PEOPLE CONCERNED

For whom was the sermon intended? To whom were the words primarily addressed? We know that near Jesus were the disciples. Beyond those the great crowds from Galilee, from Judaea and beyond Jordan. From farther away still, in time and space, those who became followers down the centuries. It would seem that the sermon was primarily for believers. Only followers, Spirit-led believers, could hope to attain such high ideals in character and conduct as were set before them. The Laws of the Kingdom would appear to apply to individuals rather than to countries. Although there is no country whose inhabitants are ruled by the Laws of the Kingdom of Christ, the Word of God nevertheless states that a time is coming when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of Christ. In that day all peoples shall be governed by the principles of this great pronouncement of Christ. However, if the laws, here given, do express the mind and will of God for the subjects of the Kingdom, then they must be the standard for committed believers today. We do not question the fact that the New Testament Epistles and their teachings are relevant for the Church today. Then so must be the Sermon on the Mount upon which the teaching of the Epistles is based. It may well be in these days that we need to go back, in humility and dependence upon God, to the Sermon on the Mount. The promised blessings there promised are for those who hear and obey: they are for the subjects, the children, of the Kingdom.

THE PRIMARY CONDITION

It may be asked: "How does a person become a subject of the Kingdom of God?" Jesus, who is the sole authority, made it clear that only one way of entrance exists — entrance is not by merit, or class, or cleverness, or by any other way but by the new birth. First birth (by nature) brings one into the human

family. Second birth, spiritual or supernatural, brings one into the Divine Kingdom. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born anew, born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Jewish ruler, to whom the words were addressed, was not advised to become a better man, but he needed to become a different man. He needed, by grace, to enter a new sphere, be governed by new conditions. Answering a question of the disciples, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?", Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . ." (Matthew 18:1, 3). Again, in Matthew 9:13, Jesus said: ". . . I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Through this sole way, through repentance and faith, do beings become sons of God, regenerated, born anew, by the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then, are men enabled, by Divine grace, to obey His laws. It is to these, therefore, that the Beatitudes seem specially applicable. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

"Blessed" is sometimes translated as "Happy"; yet the former has a deeper meaning than happiness. We are apt to count men happy when things go well for them; when they are well fed, jocular and popular, yet we do not call them blessed. That word, it is felt instinctively, implies a deeper, holier joy. Blessedness is inward and abiding serenity. Outward prosperity cannot bestow it, nor adversity remove it. Blessedness is in the heart, the very gift of God, wrought into the inner being of the believer. This blessedness is a human tasting of the blessedness of heaven. In the very nature of things, a person needs to be blessed here, to be blessed there. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven."

It has been suggested that this Beatitude is the sum and substance of the whole sermon, even its text. It has been noted that it is similar to Christ's pronouncement in the synagogue at Nazareth: "God has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor". Were not these the spiritually impoverished, the broken-hearted, the bound, the blinded and bruised in life? These are the poor, the spiritually humbled, those who had come to the end of self. This blessedness then is for those poor in spirit; those who confess their need of God's grace, and their own emptiness and insufficiency. Their righteousness, they confess, is not, and can never be, in themselves, but in Christ alone. Thus led by the Spirit, they are brought near to Jesus, and learn the grace of lowliness. They learn from One who "being in the form of God . . . made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant . . . humbled himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. . . ." (Philippians 2:6ff.). It is well to note that poverty of spirit begins the blessed life, as it is the first of the Beatitudes. Humility is the first lesson in the School of Christ, even as it is the first rule in the Kingdom. As one man has said: "Stoop man, stoop, for the door into the Kingdom is low."

Then, the End Will Come

GORDON D. BUCKLEY (Winchcombe, Glos)

Matthew 24:14

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST knew how very near He was to the great goal and climax of His earthly life and ministry as He spoke these words. He uttered this statement on the subject of the termination of final events and the coming of the end, just two days before He suffered that bitter yet triumphant achievement of Calvary's hill.

God's central purpose of salvation and redemption was about to be enacted at Jerusalem. The Cross itself loomed before the Lord Jesus as a towering mountain filling heaven and earth. This particular end was to come so soon, and the holy, impeccable, spotless Son of God must die bearing the guilt and the punishment for the sin, and for the sins of His own predestinated people at this appointed time.

Of course, men and women cannot but think of the termination of their own earthly lives. Whatever is to be the experience that lies before us, they wonder? Sadly and ignorantly many conclude, and like to reckon, that the great finality for them might possibly bring oblivion, voidness, nothingness, emptiness, something like a Sanskrit Nirvana — a total unconsciousness in the hereafter. However, the propositions of the Bible, the Word of the living God, plainly tell that a finished life down here is indeed only "the end of the beginning". For weal or woe, human life is everlasting and endless in its very real and actual essence.

How challenging and heart-moving are the last parables and statements made by the Lord Jesus Christ as He concludes His final address on the last things: "These (the unrighteous) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). **This end must come!**

THE END WILL COME

This statement, of course, relates to a much wider panorama than that of an individual life. It envisages matters of world-wide Divine purposes and of universal concerns, of things heavenly and of things earthly.

The last book of the Bible, the Revelation given to the Apostle John, is certainly eschatological in character, dealing with these last things in cosmic and comprehensive terms. It indicates the various major elements in God's purposes and plans, in and through the history of the world to the time when finality ultimately arrives, and God's new and eternal order is finally ushered in.

The age of sin will be brought to a complete close, and the everlasting eternity of God's glory in heaven and on earth will bloom to provide the unending joy

of the redeemed and of the holy angels. "The former things will have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

"He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone which is the second death" (Revelation 21:5-8).

But God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of His redeemed ones, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4). **This end will come!**

HOW THE END WILL COME

The end of the first millenium A.D. found many people expecting and waiting for what they thought would be the day of final judgment. There was apparently great religious concern, and considerable activity developed at the time on this awful topic. We are told that even some fields remained unploughed, and that some crops were not sown, so real did the oncoming events appear to the gullible and undiscerning people. But whoever made the forecast and encouraged the build-up of this particular outlook proved to be seriously in error. The year 1000 A.D. came and it passed!

It now appears that certain imposters are already making similar forecasting efforts about the end of the second millenium. A Jewish rabbi in the U.S.A., with a substantial following, is being promoted as yet another of the many messiahs that have already made their many claims down the centuries of the Christian era (Matthew 24:5). As John Calvin fittingly observed, "The greater part of the world ever seeks to deceive or to be deceived".

Reference to the Holy Scriptures should have clearly resolved this issue, because, referring to the moment of His coming again, and the final judgment, the Lord Jesus affirmed that nobody had ability to estimate that time — the day nor the hour — when He would return in glory to the earth, for that knowledge alone lay within the determination of the Father God (Matthew 24:36). False prophets are ever with us!

The Lord Jesus will return in person — The angels informed the amazed apostles following the Lord's ascension to heaven from the Mount of Olives, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The Lord Jesus will gather together all His redeemed — "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The Lord Jesus will come with great suddenness — “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4).

The Lord Jesus will come for the prepared — “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come” (Matthew 24:42). The parable of the wise and foolish virgins of the following chapter 25 emphasises the necessity of being one of the ready and waiting for Him and His glorious return. **The end will certainly come!**

WHEN THE END WILL COME

The schedules for the return of airborne craft from the realms of space that have so amazed the world in the past ten or twenty years have often been calculated with great accuracy, but on occasions have seriously gone wrong. However, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven is absolutely sure and certain, for it is in the hands of the living God and its timing will be unerring, and the great event will come to pass at the chosen and appointed time. God has fixed it and it is unalterable. It is known only to Him.

The Scriptures do not tell us the day or the hour, the month or the year of this glorious return of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, but they do bring to our attention important information that gives us a very real context for that wonderful coming event.

1. The world commission

Matthew 24:14 particularises a definite and clear-cut fact regarding the return of Christ: “*Then* shall the end come.” That is certainly a time-related subject! The disciples of Christ had asked “*when* will these things be?”. Clearly “*when*” and “*then*” are very precise and pinpointing. The Lord Jesus gives the key to understanding about the timing of His appearing: “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all* the world for a witness unto *all* nations; and *then* shall the end come.”

That event of world-wide import will indicate the completion of the Great Commission given by Christ and recorded in Matthew chapter 28: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the *end* of the world. Amen.”

The Gospel, the *good news* of the salvation of God in Christ Jesus to repenting sinners in *all* the nations is the target. The answer to the disciples *when?* lies in the one word *then*.

What has been done to bring the good news of Christ to the nations of the world by this year of grace 1994? How much is it possible for us to know?

2. The world proclamation

Never has communication of information been so speedy as it is today. Never has travel to any country been so easy and so much used as today. There are some 200 nations in the world and it is said that there are now Bibles, New Testaments or Scripture portions available for printing and distribution in nearly 2,000 languages and dialects which *could*, in fact, reach over 90 per cent of the world's population *if* the people concerned could obtain them, and assuming they were all literate, able to read for themselves, or to hear the good news from the reading of others.

It is also claimed that radio and television broadcasting of the Gospel of Christ is carried out by over 1,500 agencies to reach the people of fifty major countries which contain a total of one third of the population of the world. It has been estimated that there are almost a billion regular listeners to these Christian broadcasts.

With the witness of nationals and missionaries, and the impact of Gospel recordings in over 4,000 languages and dialects, plus the spread of Christian literature and Bible correspondence courses, there must be but few nations in which the good news of Christ has not been declared in some measure.

3. The world response

Though many are called and but few are chosen, yet from *every* tribe and tongue and people and nation shall the redeemed of the Lord be gathered at that last great day (Revelation 5:9 and 7:9). The world proclamation of the Gospel of Christ must continue to the very end: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). "And I took the little book out of the angel's hand . . . and he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Revelation 10:10-11).

But what is the general reaction to the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ through the world today? Has the good news been largely accepted or sadly rejected? When the Son of Man comes will He find the faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8). "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37).

"When he had opened the sixth seal . . . there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth . . . the heaven departed as a scroll . . . and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the

earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves (how very like Adam) . . . and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:12-17).

Out of the world's 5½ billion people it appears that: over 1 billion Muslims reject the Gospel and deny the deity of Christ. Over 1½ billion Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists do likewise. Over 1 billion Papalists and their allies reject the biblical Gospel and deny the sole truth and sole authority of the Holy Scriptures. Over 1 billion Communists/Atheists reject the Gospel and deny the claims of God and the Son of God. And who can measure the number of so-called Protestants who really deny the true Gospel of Christ? *When* the Son of Man comes will He find the faith on the earth? Will He find the faith, *saving* faith, *living* faith, *biblical* faith? **Then the end will certainly come!**

THE UNFINISHED TASK

One of the last parables which outlines our privileges and responsibilities in the light of the coming of our returning Saviour is that of "The Talents" (Matthew chapter 25). What is one of our major responsibilities, but to play our part in the Great Commission which the Lord has given to us, that is to aid in the spread of His Gospel from our Jerusalem to the very ends of the earth?

So many avenues are open to us in these times, and what a joy it has been in the last few years to send Bibles and Christian literature and support to the believers in the countries of former Eastern Europe and the old Soviet Union. Many new fields have been opened to us in our own lifetime. Sadly the slothful and neglectful servant with serious responsibility placed on him did nothing, and abandoned everything in order to satisfy his lowest instincts. On the other hand, the faithful servants were actively and devotedly engaged in the important business of their Lord, and in due course received His valued approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord".

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13). **Then the end will come.**

"The storm is changed into a calm
At His command and will;
So that the waves, which raged before,
Now quiet are and still."

(Psalm 107:29)

Faith and Love at Bethany

JOHN H. ALGAR (Tipton, Staffs)

John 12:1-8

LET US LOOK at an event which took place just a day or two before our Lord's death, where He was anointed in that house in Bethany. The account is written in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John; we have quite a full account of it. It seems to be an act which is strange to us, something we don't do nowadays, yet we must realise it was something quite normal in those days for a guest to be anointed. Perhaps the guest's feet would be anointed with perfume.

Now the way which Jesus was anointed by Mary was unusual, as He reclined at the meal table there at this house in Bethany; Mary was the sister of Martha and they were sisters of Lazarus. Mary's gift of perfume was extremely costly. Three hundred pence, we remember from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, was a year's wages. So to get the equivalent today, we must think of a year's wages being spent on one flask of perfume and that being broken, and the entire contents placed on our Lord's head and indeed upon His whole body, running down onto His feet as well.

Another interesting thing is that we might think it was a spontaneous thing that she did. I know how sometimes we get carried away by something and perhaps give more than we mean to, being moved on the spur of the moment. Now it wasn't like that for Mary, because in John's Gospel we read that this alabaster flask of ointment was something which she had kept for this very purpose, for the opportunity when it should occur. More important than all that was what is revealed to us by what Jesus said to her — that this act was an act of real faith and hope and love.

It was so far above a normal act of courtesy or kindness to a guest. It was a real expression of Mary's deep feeling about the coming passion, the coming death and burial of her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In other words, by anointing our Lord in that room as He reclined at the meal table, she was saying something about herself, and about Him; she was recognising Jesus as truly the Lord's anointed. She anointed Him with perfume, but it was an expression of her faith in Him — of the unspeakable worth of His person — of honour in the sight of God — and of the sacred meaning that would be attached to His coming suffering and death and burial. She was expressing her personal understanding and belief. She understood so much more about what was coming than the apostles at this stage. I don't think it was just a coincidence, something that just fitted in nicely. She knew, she perceived and understood what was coming even more than the other disciples did. Jesus said quite clearly: "She has done this for my burial" and so, as an expression of her faith in His coming death — the death

that would have, shall I say, a sweet fragrance for the world — she anointed Him, expressing her faith that something wonderful was going to arise out of the coming suffering and death and burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was the kind of thing she was expressing in the anointing of the Lord. It was a wonderful expression of her faith and hope and love, expressing her personal feeling towards the Lord and seeing right through to a deeper meaning of His coming suffering and death.

Now we might think that an act like this could have very little practical relevance to us. We can't anoint our Lord, we can't show our feeling towards Him in practical ways like that because He is now in heaven. Yet our Lord said, and what a wonderful thought-provoking statement it was, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9).

It shows that He was truly God because He knew this, that the Gospels would be written down and He knew what would be written in them and said, long afterwards, that what this woman has done will be recorded, spoken of as a testimony unto her, and these words are being fulfilled continually. Our Lord, in including that record in the Gospel, clearly thought that the event was of significance for His Church down to the end of time. So now, we try to see something of what that significance is.

The first point is that you and I reveal our personal experience of Christ and His Gospel by our feelings and devotion to Him. Mary revealed what she thought about the Lord's death, what she felt toward Him, she was revealing this by what she did, by that costly devotion which she expressed in that practical way. Now it is the same for us; we cannot anoint Him but we can have communion with Him. We can speak to Him and express our faith, our love, our trust in spiritual communion with Him in our private devotions. We reveal by that, by our personal devotion to Christ — or sadly by our lack of it — we reveal by its weakness or strength, our real understanding, our true faith and hope and love concerning His suffering and death and passion and all that it involved.

Before this, there had been a similar incident, you may remember, where another woman came to our Lord in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and there she too anointed our Lord's feet. She wept and wiped His feet with her hair. Our Lord interpreted what had happened to those around Him. He said this: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). Jesus was saying that she is living proof of the fact that she has tasted God's forgiveness. She had begun to know Jesus in a personal way as her Saviour. Jesus knew that, because of her love expressed toward Him. Her devotion to the person of the Lord revealed, in fact, that she had begun to taste and experience the Christian Gospel of forgiveness. Jesus said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little". So if our love toward Christ is cold and weak, it really says we have little experience of His forgiveness, because the two are linked. The more we know of God's

forgiveness, the more we know of Christ as our Saviour, the more we shall love Him.

So when we read about what happened at Bethany, we don't say, "Now we must go and do the same", because you can't do it. You cannot work up the same sort of love toward Christ just like that. We must rather use this and ask, How deeply have we experienced God's forgiveness in Christ? And let us use our love for Christ, or lack of it, to see if our sins really are forgiven, so that our experience of the Gospel will be reflected in the measure of our love for Christ.

The point to emphasise here, is that we are talking about love for Christ; we are not talking about serving Him, or serving other people in His name. That is a very important part of the Christian life, but when all is said and done, we are called — we who know and understand the Christian Gospel — we are called, to express our devotion to Christ personally, to have communion and fellowship with Him and love Him and trust Him and worship Him. And that is what we might describe as a basic difference between what we might call philanthropy (love of mankind) or doing good, and true Christian faith.

True Christian faith has at its heart, at its centre, that personal devotion to Christ. All the good that it does has love of Christ at its foundation. Jesus said about Mary, "She hath wrought a good work on me" and that is the fundamental good work, to minister to Christ, to express our faith and trust in Him, our love and devotion to Him. In the words of the hymn:

"O dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too",

or as the Psalmist puts it: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12).

And so we ask ourselves, "What is my true position toward the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and does all that I do as part of my Christian life flow from that and what He has done for me?"

Secondly, our response to Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us is not a measured or a calculated thing. Those that looked on as Mary anointed Jesus had it all worked out, didn't they? They said, "Why was this waste of the ointment made, it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, to be given to the poor", and they were wrong. If it were only a matter of calculation, that ointment may have been used to help several people instead of just one. Yet the Lord accepted what she had done. He said she had done rightly, she had done a good work, she had done something which should be told and explained throughout the world and unto the end of the world, because again, you see, true Christian experience is not a matter of calculation.

Or perhaps I should put it this way. At the very heart of the life of Christian experience there is something which cannot be calculated. A person who really comes to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour begins at a point where they forget everything and everyone else and they don't measure

and calculate. They don't say those things which we so often hear people say — "Well, we musn't go too far about our religion, we must do things in moderation, we musn't be too excessive". They don't say that they think they are doing enough and weigh up what they are doing against what they are not doing, or weigh up what other people are doing or not doing. That element of calculation is completely lacking when the soul comes into contact with the Lord as Saviour. There is an experience there which can only be between Christ and ourselves personally.

So we must beware of making calculation in the Christian life. I know there come times when we have to weigh things up and work them out, but I am saying that at the heart of the Christian life there lies an experience like this which Mary had, and so for that time and that period, it wasn't wrong to forget all about the poor and give all her heart and all her devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ because of who He is and what He had done for her.

Then I say that if that experience is at the foundation, then we shall serve others all the better later on. In fact, we can never truly serve others unless that kind of experience of true faith, hope and love toward the Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of it. This, I think, is what was lacking in the rich young ruler, for when the Lord asked him to express that kind of love, he was unable to do it and went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

Finally, there were some who had indignation within themselves and said, "Why was this waste made?". It was a dreadful thing to say; John tells us why Judas said it, but we can only wonder why the other disciples said it. We can only hope that they didn't really see the implications of what they were saying. They saw our Lord anointed by Mary, expressing her faith and devotion, and they said, "Why this waste?" — wasted on the Lord Jesus Christ? Could that be?

Yet that is what many people say and think today. They seem to think that it is a waste to spend too much time on the Lord; spend some time, yes, but it's a waste if you are thinking all the time about the Bible or prayer or what Jesus has done for you in His love. In moderation, yes, but fancy giving up your life to these things, fancy thinking about them every day or spending the whole of Sunday on them. It's a bit of a waste, they say, well-meaning people very often.

Now the great truth here is that nothing is ever wasted on the Lord Jesus Christ and we can perish that thought that anything could be wasted on Him. We see that so clearly with Mary here and you feel so thankful that it happened. It was a kind of last honouring of our Lord before He suffered, before any wicked hands were laid upon our Lord, as they would be in a day or two, before people came to spit on Him and drag Him away and bind Him. Before anything like that was laid upon Him, or touched Him, God ordered it that these loving hands should touch Him and anoint Him.

It was a wonderful introduction to His passion that He was anointed and consecrated and dedicated to it in that kind of way, just this day or two before and before men's hatred was poured out on Christ. God appointed someone,

just an ordinary humble woman in her home, someone who was even misunderstood by her own family and friends. God appointed her to express her overflowing love toward Him before all that hatred came upon Him. Now today, in more than a thousand different languages, it has been written and told all over the world and will be until the Lord comes again in glory. How surprised she would be, and yet it must have seemed such a little thing at the time.

So we learn rather strikingly, that nothing is ever wasted which is dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. Never let us feel rather anxious or nervous when people say we spend too much time with our Bibles or too much time thinking about the Lord, for He will not allow it to be wasted. Even though we see things slipping away from us sometimes and we wonder — should I be doing this? Shouldn't I be out doing something else? Jesus said through His apostle: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Nothing is ever wasted which is dedicated to the Lord, however simple it may seem, if it is a true expression of our faith, hope and love concerning Him.

It is wonderful to think that what Mary did here was a kind of beginning of a long procession of work and dedication which has been offered ever since. One of its descendants is our communion service, where we gather together to express our feelings about the Lord's death. That is what Mary was doing, and we express *our* feelings, and *our* love and *our* worship and thankfulness for the Lord's death at the communion service.

We must do it in many other ways too; so let us pray that we may be part of that great procession of faith and worship and dedication to the Lord which began here at Bethany with Mary. And to see if we are part of that great procession, let us sometimes ask ourselves if we know that feeling of love and devotion toward Him for what He has done? Do we know what it is to love Him without calculation, not wondering if we are going too far? And are we feeling quite clearly and definitely that nothing which is directed to the Lord will ever be wasted?

SATISFACTION

"My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:14).

"I shall be satisfied with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

"We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple" (Psalm 65:4).

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days" (Psalm 90:14).

Lessons in Prayer from the Birth of Samuel

P. D. JOHNSON

Some Expository Thoughts on 1 Samuel chapter 1

ONE OF THE MANY IMPORTANT SUBJECTS dealt with in the Holy Scriptures, and perhaps one that is handled more frequently than some others, is the great work of *prayer*. It is as though the Holy Spirit, foreseeing the difficulties which many, if not most, of the Lord's people experience in this matter, has taken special pains to record in the pages of Holy Writ doctrinal teaching, promises and illustrative narratives, all of which are designed to promote, in different ways, the believer's communion with his Lord.

A good example of an Old Testament passage containing much light on this difficult subject of prayer is found in the first chapter of the first book of Samuel, where we have a record of the Lord's dealings with one of His spiritual daughters. Let us turn, then, to the divinely-inspired account of Hannah's experiences in prayer, at the time of the birth of her first-born, and seek to discover, with God's help, some lessons for ourselves in our own day.

1. Hannah's aggravated affliction

Before we look at Hannah's remarkable prayers, and the wonderful way in which they were answered, we must spend a little time in reminding ourselves of the affliction that was causing her so much heaviness of heart at this particular period of her life. Only as we understand the trial that was continually pressing on her spirit can we appreciate *why* she became so exercised in prayer. There are two main points to notice here:

(a) *The nature of Hannah's affliction*

The narrative does not leave us in any doubt as to what it was that was really troubling Hannah. It is summed-up for us in a few words in verse 2: "... but Hannah had no children." Despite being married to a godly husband for several years, Hannah had never been able to conceive a child. Not that she and Elkanah had ever taken any unlawful steps to prevent the conception and birth of a child. Like Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, Hannah longed to be "a joyful mother of children" (Psalm 113:9), but no baby had yet appeared on the scene, and she was obviously deeply aware that her continued failure to conceive was because "... the Lord had shut up her womb" (verse 5). This is a reminder to us that the

Lord not only selects the type of affliction with which to try the faith of His people, but that the affliction He chooses may also seem to go against the natural and perfectly lawful desires He has implanted in them.

(b) The aggravation of Hannah's affliction

Hannah's affliction was aggravated by other factors involved in her situation. If we look carefully at the first eight verses of this chapter, we shall find that these arose from three different sources. Firstly, there was the **length of time she had been barren**. The words "year by year" in verse 7 are very instructive, for they give us an insight into what Hannah must have felt during those annual visits to Shiloh. Every year, when she accompanied the other members of her family to the temple, she would have been constantly reminded that another year of her life had slipped by, and there was still no sign of a child. Prolonged afflictions often become aggravated afflictions. Secondly, there was the **cruel behaviour of Peninnah**. It must have been difficult enough for Hannah to live in the same house as Peninnah and her children, but even worse to experience Peninnah's provocations every year at Shiloh. Whether Peninnah behaved like this through pride, or from jealousy over the "worthy portion" Elkanah gave to Hannah each year (see verse 5) is not clear. One thing is certain, however, and that is that Peninnah's unkind behaviour aggravated Hannah's trial. "And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb" (verse 6). It is still not unknown for Christian mothers to "display" their offspring at public meetings and private gatherings in such a way that other Christian women, who have not been blessed in that particular way, feel deeply provoked. And it is not difficult to see how Satan, who is ever ready to give afflicted believers his version of events, can exploit such insensitive behaviour to his own ends. Thirdly, there was the **attitude of Elkanah**. What is the response of Hannah's husband when he finds his godly wife crying and neglecting food? "Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?" (verse 8). In other words, Elkanah simply told Hannah to be content with what God *had* given her, and accept that her continued barrenness was God's will for her. Many a tried believer can still find his affliction aggravated by the short-sightedness and lack of spiritual understanding of a godly partner!

2. Hannah's persistent prayers

Although the Lord was pleased to try Hannah's faith in this way for so long, He did not leave her without relief. At the very time when this godly wife must have felt that all things militated against her obtaining the desire of her heart, she was given a remarkable spirit of prayer. It is important for us to see the two main features of Hannah's persistent prayers:

(a) They were fuelled by a continuing sense of need

It is clear from verse 9 that none of Elkanah's well-meant reasonings carried any weight with Hannah. Her sense of need only deepened, and she felt that the only sure way to obtain relief was to give herself to prayer. Now notice how she slips away from the rest of the family "after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk" (verse 9) and gives herself to prayer. What a fine illustration this is of one aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in prayer! Knowing the time the Father has appointed for the Christian to receive a particular blessing, the Spirit first burdens that believer with a sense of need, maintains it in the heart, and gives him a real and continuing spirit of prayer for that particular blessing. Let no tried believer, therefore, start drawing wrong conclusions from his continuing sense of need. Rather let him give himself to special times of prayer, just as Hannah did in the temple at Shiloh. "And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord . . ." (verse 10).

(b) They were of a truly spiritual nature

It is equally clear from the narrative that Hannah's prayers at this time were of a truly spiritual nature. What we have before us in this chapter is not a list of cold, formal, polished petitions, but a record of the outpourings of a burdened heart. Notice, too, that her requests were made with weeping (verse 10), accompanied by a solemn vow (verse 11), and inaudible to human ears (verse 13). And what an insight into the real nature of her prayers Hannah herself gives us in her touching reply to Eli — that priest who was so quick to reprove this godly wife, and so slow to deal with his own vile sons — "And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto" (verses 15 and 16).

There is further insight into the Holy Spirit's work in prayer here. Besides burdening the believer, and maintaining a spirit of prayer within him, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity enables the tried Christian to pray with an inner fervour that is not discernable outwardly to other people as prayer. In other words, when the Holy Spirit is "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26), the exercised believer may well find himself behaving like Hannah in the temple at Shiloh, quite unable to put into audible words the prayers that are coming from his heart. Let no exercised soul wrongly conclude, then, that because his prayers are of this broken, inaudible kind, he is somehow not praying in a way that is acceptable to the Lord.

Real prayer, especially when the believer is pressed-down with a deep sense of personal need, is often of this type, and will bring its own relief, enabling him to leave the place of prayer as Hannah did the temple at Shiloh, with his "countenance . . . no more sad" (verse 18).

3. Hannah's wonderful deliverance

It was not long after that remarkable time of prayer in the temple at Shiloh that Hannah received the first indication that God had begun to answer her prayers. "And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her" (verse 19). But it is only when we consider the actual birth of her child that we see how fully God had answered her many petitions:

(a) Hannah was given the exact blessing she desired

Although Hannah had not spoken aloud while praying in the temple, her Father in heaven had not missed a single one of her petitions. "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). It is clear from the vow recorded in verse 11 that Hannah had been praying all along for a son, and the Lord did not disappoint her by allowing her to miscarry, give birth to a still-born babe, or even present Elkanah with a new baby daughter. It is not difficult to imagine the joy that must have filled Hannah's heart when the midwife announced that the new arrival was a boy. All Hannah's subsequent actions — the name she gave the child (verse 20), the way she fulfilled her vow (verses 24-28), and her song of thanksgiving (chapter 2, verses 1-11) — prove beyond doubt that Hannah saw clearly the Lord's hand in the birth of her son. And years later, when she took Samuel up to Eli at Shiloh, the sense of wonder at that answer to prayer was still with her — "And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him" (verses 26 and 27). Similar experiences await all true believers today who continue earnestly in prayer for specific blessings. Although the Lord may seem to tarry, His delays in answering His people's requests are only *apparent* delays, and in His own sovereign time and way He will answer the prayers He has indited in their hearts by His Spirit. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Psalm 145:19).

(b) Hannah was given more than the blessing she desired

The narrative does not show that Hannah had any real appreciation of the distinguished future awaiting her infant son. True, she had determined from the outset that, if God did answer her prayers for a "man child", she would devote him to the Lord as a Nazarite, and she certainly fulfilled her vow to the letter. But it would have been impossible for even so exercised a believer as godly Hannah to foresee the remarkable career God had in store for her young Samuel. That little boy, now giving her so much pleasure, was destined to

become, through the sovereign providence of God, the last, and perhaps the greatest, of the Judges God gave to Israel, and certainly one of the most faithful prophets He blessed the nation with in those Old Testament times. "And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (1 Samuel 3:19-21). Neither could Hannah have foreseen that her baby Samuel was but the first of several blessings as far as children were concerned. "And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters" (1 Samuel 2:21). How frequently this proves to be the case when God answers His people's prayers today! When believers first hold in their arms, so to speak, the blessings for which they have been praying for so long, they are apt to think they have all that God intends for them. But time often reveals that the Lord has purposed much more for them, and for His Church, than they ever anticipated.

The Covenant of Works

PHILIP J. RIMMER (Bolton)

Genesis 2:16-17

IN THIS ARTICLE we will look, with God's help, at what is called either the Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Life. It is of vital importance for believers to have an understanding of this covenant, or contract. This doctrine introduces us to the fact that we are guilty sinners before a God who is holy and just, and that we are in need of a Redeemer to save us from our sins.

In looking at this passage it should be remembered that Adam had been created in the image of God. This means that Adam was created with three important attributes. Adam was created in the knowledge of God, in righteousness and in holiness. No other human being has had so close a communion with God as Adam did when he was first created. Adam had a copy of God's Law written in his heart and he had the ability to keep it.

Our text reads: "*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

We are told in these two verses that God entered into a Covenant of Life with Adam. Upon the condition of his perfect obedience in not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam would not die but would have eternal life.

This transaction is not expressly referred to as a covenant in the Scriptures, but it is called a covenant for two reasons. Firstly because it fulfils all the requirements that are needed in a covenant. God made a promise to Adam upon a certain condition and in the case of disobedience there was a penalty to be paid.

In the second place the word covenant is used because in the New Testament we find that God's plan of salvation is constantly represented as the new covenant. For example, in Hebrews 12:24 the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the mediator of the new covenant". If there is a new covenant which is of faith, it follows that perfect obedience must also be a covenant because the Scriptures teach only these two ways of salvation.

The covenant is called the Covenant of Life because life was promised as the reward for perfect obedience or the Covenant of Works because works was the condition of the covenant. In other words, working was the ground and the condition of man's justification before God. He would obtain everlasting life because he deserved it.

Let us now look at the promise of the covenant, the reward for perfect obedience was to be life. If to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was to die, then not to eat of it would have resulted in not dying. Perfect obedience would have resulted in eternal life.

Throughout the Scriptures there are many examples to show that these two principles of eternal life and perfect obedience go together. For example we find in Luke 10:25-28 a lawyer asking the Lord Jesus Christ how to inherit eternal life? *"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."*

God in Scripture is presented as a judge or moral ruler who according to Romans 2:6, "will render to every man according to his deeds". Man will be dealt with according to the principles of justice. If there has been no transgression there can be no punishment and that person can continue in the favour and fellowship of God in life eternal.

The life promised in the covenant would have been a happy life, a holy life and an immortal life. The life secured by the Lord Jesus Christ for His people was the life that they forfeited by their sin, by their transgression of the Law of God.

The promise of the Covenant of Works was eternal life, the condition that God required for it was perfect obedience. Remember that sin involves the destruction of the fellowship between God and man. Sin separates God and man, and it incurs divine displeasure on the sinner. The person who breaks the Law in one point is guilty of breaking the whole Law.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Church at Galatia, said in Galatians 3:10: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the

book of the law to do them.” This is the argument that Paul uses in the book of Romans also. The Law of God demands perfect obedience and this is a principle which still applies today.

The command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was an outward and visible test given by God to determine whether Adam would obey God in all things. Adam was created in holiness with pure affections, it was possible for Adam to have obeyed but instead he sinned. The consequence of this transgression was the loss of the image and favour of God, and all the evils which have flowed from that loss.

The death incurred by the sin of our first parents is the death from which the children of God by adoption are redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ who delivers the body from the grave and saves the soul from spiritual and eternal death.

So who was involved in this Covenant of Works? By its very nature there must be two or more parties involved. The parties in the Covenant of Works were God and Adam. Adam not only represented himself in the covenant, he was also the head and representative of all mankind. The promise and threat to Adam equally apply to us — do and live or do not and die.

It is an undeniable fact that the penalty which Adam received as the penalty for his disobedience has fallen upon all of mankind. The earth is cursed to us, as it was to Adam. Like Adam we must earn our bread by the sweat of our brows. The pain of childbirth is a common heritage to women of all generations. We are all subject to disease and death. We are all born in sin without the moral image of God. In other words every evil consequence of Adam’s sin still affects us today.

The teaching of the New Testament confirms that Adam represented mankind in the Covenant of Works. In 1 Corinthians 15:22 the apostle Paul writes, “For as in Adam all die”; in Romans 5:18 he states, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation”; and in Romans 5:19 — “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners”.

The good news of the Gospel is the plan of redemption. As we fell in sin through Adam, the elect of God are saved in Christ — “so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous”. To deny the principle of our representation in Adam would be to deny our representation in Christ in salvation.

If Adam was the representative head of all mankind, is the Covenant of Works still in force today? Yes, the Covenant of Works is still in force today. Where there is no sin, there is no condemnation. The Scriptures say, “this do and thou shalt live”. The eternal principles of God’s justice are still in operation. If a person can present himself before the bar of God and prove that he is without sin in any form, he will not be condemned. The truth is that we are all sinners under the Covenant of Works.

Of course, God knew that Adam would sin and in His mercy and love God provided a better covenant, the Covenant of Grace. In this Covenant of Grace works are not the grounds of justification or the cause of our salvation, but the

confirmation of our love to God, evidence that we have been made the children of God by adoption.

People who look for righteousness and salvation by the power of their own free-will, or the inherent goodness of their nature, or by the virtue of their own merit, are all under the Covenant of Works. They do not lay hold of righteousness by faith in the finished work of Christ and they are, therefore, under the obligation to keep perfectly the whole Law of God. If they fail in their obedience they will be condemned. The Covenant of Grace on the other hand says to sinners who see that they cannot save themselves, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

The Covenant of Works or the Covenant of Grace, under which covenant do you stand? Are you under the condemnation of your own works or under grace?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Amen.

The Door of Hope

FRANCIS WILLIAMS

"And I will give her (Israel) vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my Husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely" (Hosea 2:15-18)

UNTIL SCRIPTURE expressly informs us that a prophecy is fulfilled, as in the case of the Incarnation, then it is running, and may have more than one fulfilling before it is fulfilled. This wonderful prophecy to those "who were not my people" is still very active. It can be seen to apply to both Jew and Gentile, in the diaspora of Hosea's time and in the Gospel advent. It has that strange prophetic property of a key that fits many locks to the establishment of faith, and the truth of the written word. An example is to be seen in Paul's usage of it in Romans 9:25-26.

All statements in Scripture have significance, and the meanings are constant in usage. Here the rule of "first mention" is of value in finding an understanding of the phrase "the valley of Achor for a door of hope". It originates in Joshua 6:18, and refers to the place where Achan, an Israelite, disobeyed the strict

commandment not to take personal spoil in the destruction of the city of Jericho by taking a Babylonian garment and silver and gold and hiding them. The taking of the "accursed thing", the stealing and dissembling, and the mixing of them with their own things brought Israel into judgement, and unable to stand before their enemy. (Perhaps you would like to read it for yourself, for it illustrates another interesting scriptural phenomenon, an "historical parable"). Achan gave his name to this valley where he met with retribution, and Israel met with defeat at Ai, and it was not until the sin was dealt with that victory was assured.

So in the world; because men transgress all suffer, innocent and guilty alike; wherefore Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, for there had been an earlier and deeper taking of the "accursed thing" (Genesis 3), which had brought mankind under the heel of the oppressor, and into judgement. As Israel was powerless under the heel of the Assyrian and God opened for them a door of hope in Cyrus and the return to Jerusalem, so it is in Christ. The taking of the "accursed thing" in Eden activated the disobedience that put Jesus on the Roman cross, which disobedience God has turned into an eternal door of hope for the salvation of mankind.

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and to destroy the works of the devil. He it is who can say unto us, "I am the door" (out of the valley of Achor with its consequent destruction, darkness and death). "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture".

To those who will enter the "door" is given *Faith* which will remove mountains, thus indicating the great power of the Spirit to remove our carnal mountains, and sanctify us in our daily walk; and *Hope* whereby we are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life"; and *Love* where it is no more "Lord" but "Husband". Isaiah confirms this interpretation by saying: "And Sharon shall be a fold for flocks and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me". And Peter adds to the greatness of the door when he records by the Spirit in 2 Peter 1:4 that the Lord Jesus has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust".

To our Lord Jesus Christ then be all power and glory and blessing and honour, who is the door of hope by which we are sanctified and preserved to that final glorious fulfilling, the day of His coming, when we shall sing as Israel when she came up out of the land of Egypt (see Hosea 2:15). Not us only, but the whole of creation shall respond to the day of the coming of the "sons of God", when all shall be made new (Romans 8:19).

3

"We are never acquainted with true pleasure until we are acquainted with Christ."

Matthew Henry

Book Review

Glory Over Calvary. Peter Trumper. Evangelical Press of Wales. pp. 84. £2.95.

Alexander Maclaren once said, "The Cross is the centre of the world's history. The incarnation of Christ and the crucifixion of our Lord are the pivot round which all the events of the ages revolve." This truth is re-enforced by our author who describes the people who were present at the Calvary scene — Simon of Cyrene, the soldiers, the centurion, the priests, the two thieves on the other crosses, the little group of Galileans, and the caring councillors. Their reactions are a preview of reactions worldwide; and the whole scene, including the resurrection, is the climax of the revelation of the glory of Christ in the work of redemption.

The whole of this book is a brief but telling testimony to the attraction of the Cross, and the message of the Gospel. It deserves wide circulation.

W.J.P.

SECRETARIAL NOTES

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