

ARTICLES IN THE TESTIMONY

by Bernard Burt

A collection of articles by Bernard Burt published in The Testimony magazine, addressing various topics of Christian doctrine, biblical interpretation, and practical Christian living.

14 Chapters

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'Ascended on high'

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Bernard Burt The Testimony, May 2000, p.176

ACCORDING TO its title, Psalms 68:1-35, from which the title of this article is taken (Psalms 68:18), is a psalm of David. It opens with a quotation of the words of Moses (Numbers 10:35), spoken when Israel took up the ark and continued on the next stage of their wilderness journey. Further reference is made to that journey in Psalms 68:7. Later verses imply that the ark is on the move again (Psalms 68:24-27), journeying up to Jerusalem (Psalms 68:16, Psalms 68:18, Psalms 68:29).

I believe, therefore, that this psalm refers to the events of the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem in the early days of the reign of David over all Israel (2 Samuel 6:1-23). The ark, the symbol of God's presence in Israel, was literally 'ascending on high'. That which had been captive in the low-lying land of the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:1-22; 1 Samuel 5:1-12; 1 Samuel 6:1-21) was now being taken in triumph into the mountainous city that David had captured from the Jebusites. Thus the ark was to be physically elevated in its new resting place on Mount Zion. It was also spiritually elevated, for, although Israel "enquired not at it in the days of Saul" (1 Chronicles 13:3), it was now going to be at the very heart of the nation, located on "the hill which God desireth to dwell in" (Psalms 68:16).

How fitting and appropriate, then, is the quotation by Paul of this psalm in Ephesians 4:8! Jesus, in the days of his flesh, had been "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3), just like the ark in the days of Saul. Now he had "ascended on high"—both literally, by going up into heaven, as Ephesians 4:10 shows, and spiritually, for Ephesians 1:1-23 speaks of "the working of [God's] mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:19-21). The ascension of Jesus is therefore much more than just his physical exaltation to the right hand of his Father. Jesus's resurrection proof of his worthiness. The notion that Jesus died instead of us was refuted in the following way: "if Christ died instead of us, then we ought not to die (which we do); and if he paid the penalty naturally due from us—death—he ought not to have risen (which he did)". (The Blood of Christ, Robert Roberts, second paragraph) Jesus did die, and he was raised from the dead by the power of his Father. There is abundant Scripture testimony to the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was a consequence of the life that he lived and the death that he died. Consider the following passages:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17);

".. . whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24); As God's Holy One he was not suffered to "see corruption"

(Acts 2:27);

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:18-19);

".. . knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9);

"and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Php 2:8-10);

"But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:8-9).

Passages such as those listed above show that Jesus was blessed because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. He chose to become obedient unto death. Because of this obedience, because of his willingness to lay down his life in accordance with the will of his Father, the grave could not hold him and he was not suffered to see corruption. These things are clear and straightforward, written evidently upon the pages of the Word. The converse should be no less clear: Jesus could have loved iniquity and hated righteousness. He could (like Adam) have disobeyed his God. It follows that temptation and trials to him were real. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). When he was in an agony in the garden of Gethsemane, saying, "not my will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42, Luke 22:44), he was faced with a choice: to go his way or his Father's way. Because he chose the latter and not the former he was raised from the dead and ascended to the right hand of his Father—thus demonstrating beyond doubt the nature of the victory that he had won.

All power given unto him the days of his flesh Jesus did not have power over the angels. In Gethsemane he said to the disciples: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). After his ascension, however, he is "on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Peter 3:22). This illustrates the fact that, although he did miracles during his ministry such as had not been seen since the foundation of the world, the power and authority given to him after his resurrection were far greater: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18); "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10). Brother Thomas, in *The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth*, (Originally published in three parts in *The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, Vol. 9 (1859), and subsequently printed in other formats.) shows that in A.D. 70 Jesus came at the head of the Roman armies, "and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matthew 22:7). Jesus's coming, or parousia, was not visible to Jew or Gentile, but nevertheless he used the power and authority given unto him (in a similar way to the work of Gabriel and Michael in Daniel 10:13) to carry out the Divine purpose.

However, a study of the passages that speak of the present position of the Lord Jesus Christ will show a complete absence of words such as 'rule' and 'reign'. As will be shown below, Jesus will not take his kingly authority until he sits on his throne and begins his appointed reign over the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit gifts When Jesus ascended on high he "gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). Throughout the history of the Truth in these latter days there has been conflict over the nature of these gifts. As early as October 1834 John Thomas wrote: "Do not the clergy teach . . . that 'the word of God . . .' is a perfect dead letter, and cannot be comprehended unless applied by some ghostly action to the hearts of sinners? . . . Cannot our readers perceive the marked difference between our denying the Holy Spirit, and denying the Clergy's theory of his operations? . . . we deny the position assumed by the Clergy that the Holy Spirit's operation is physical, and independent of the word . . . The genuine faith recognized in the Scriptures, is that produced by the Holy Spirit, that is, it is the belief of the testimony of the apostles and prophets, who wrote what the Spirit dictated concerning the Christ... faith is the effect of the operation of the Holy Spirit on [the] understanding, by the power of testimony alone". ("Elder Southwood's Sermon", The Apostolic Advocate, Vol. 1, pp. 129ff.)

Twelve months later he wrote thus to Alexander Campbell: "Since the days of the apostle John, we have no credible testimony of the bestowing of a single gift of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit, however, are to be distinguished from the fruits of the Spirit. . . The former are the result of inspiration; the latter flow from the truth believed and obeyed". (Cited from Dr. Thomas: His Life and Work, 1873 edition, p. 48.)

After his baptism into the Hope of Israel, Brother Thomas consistently maintained this understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. (See Clerical Theology Unscriptural, published in 1850 and "The Baptism of the Spirit", The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come, Vol. 11, No. 6 (Jun. 1861, p 131).)

Faithful brethren (For example, 'Spirit' in the New Testament, Edward Whittaker and Reg Carr, published by The Testimony.) from the time of Brother Roberts to the present day have maintained the same truths. The most comprehensive list of the gifts of the Spirit is that given in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, where nine gifts are listed (Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and the interpretation of tongues.)—all of power to do things. (For a more extensive exposition by the present writer of 1 Corinthians 12:1-10 see The Bible Student, Vol. 21, Nos. 3-6.) This is the consistent testimony of Scripture. Bezaleel and Aholiab were miraculously endued with skill and wisdom to make the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1-6)—yet they died in the wilderness because of their rebellion. The twelve disciples of Jesus were given "power" (Mark 3:15; Mark 6:7)—yet they argued about who should be the greatest, and one betrayed the Lord who had given the gifts. The gifts were given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). This was done by the means of teaching, communicated through the prophets and teachers, and by the confirmation of their messages with signs following.

It is clear from the Scriptures that the gifts were only given for a relatively short period of time. They were given for the purposes defined above, "till we all come . . . unto a perfect man ..." (Ephesians 4:13). Paul wrote in another place: "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For

we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). It is evident that "prophecies", "tongues" and "knowledge" must refer to the Spirit gifts that are the subject of this section of 1 Corinthians. The key to the understanding of this matter is the word teleios, which is translated 'perfect' in both 1 Corinthians 13:10 and Ephesians 4:13. A study of all of its occurrences in the New Testament (Matthew 5:48; Matthew 19:21; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 13:10; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:13; Php 3:15; Colossians 1:28; Colossians 4:12; Hebrews 5:14; Hebrews 9:11; James 1:4, James 1:17, James 1:25; James 3:2; 1 John 4:18) will show that it relates not to the perfection of the immortal state in the Millennium but to the maturity of understanding of the Truth which was attained in the days of the first-century ecclesia; see 1 Corinthians 2:6, Php 3:15 and Hebrews 5:14, for example. Shortly thereafter, as the testimony of these scriptures foretold, and the evidence of historians records, the gifts ceased to be given. They were "the earnest" (2 Corinthians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5) of "the powers of the world to come" (Hebrews 6:5), and will not be bestowed again until the one who gave them from on high is manifest again in the earth. The name above every name The name Yahweh appears very early in the text of Scripture (Genesis 2:4). I believe that it was known, and to some degree understood, from the earliest times of the human race. Eve said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD [Yahweh]" (Genesis 4:1).

Before the Flood men began to "call upon [or call themselves by] the name of the LORD [Yahweh]" (Genesis 4:26). Abraham called Mount Moriah Jehovah-jireh (Yahweh Yireh) (Genesis 22:14). The statement, "and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty [El Shaddai], but by My name JEHOVAH [Yahweh] was I not known to them" (Exodus 6:3) has been advanced as a difficulty with respect to the above view. This is taken to imply that the patriarchs only knew the Deity as El Shaddai, and did not know (or if they knew, did not understand) the name Yahweh. What is the evidence? The name El Shaddai is rare in Genesis. (Genesis 17:1; Genesis 28:3; Genesis 35:11; Genesis 43:14; Genesis 48:3; Genesis 49:25) God spoke once each to Abraham and Jacob by this name, changing their names at those times. Isaac used it once when blessing Jacob, and Jacob used it three times when speaking to his sons. By contrast, there are twenty-one places in Genesis where the text says that Yahweh spoke to individuals, and forty-six places where individuals used the name Yahweh in addressing or speaking of God (the above exclude passages which have Yahweh Elohim).

I believe that there is good evidence for reading Exodus 6:3 as: "I suffered Myself to be known unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of El-Shaddai, did not I suffer Myself to be known unto them by My name Yahweh?". Similar Hebrew constructions are found in Exodus 8:26, Job 2:10 and Jonah 4:10-11, where in each case a positive answer is implied by the text.

It was therefore revealed to men from the beginning that Yahweh would "provide" (Genesis 22:8) "a man" (Genesis 4:1). In due course the man Moses was caused by God to lead His people out of Egypt. God said to Moses: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18). Concerning David's seed, God said: "I will be his father, and he shall be My son" (2 Samuel 7:14). Then the prophet Isaiah said: "the glory of the LORD [Yahweh] shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah 40:5); "For thus saith the LORD [Yahweh] . . . unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:23).

How were these prophecies fulfilled? "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). John recorded: "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Here was Yahweh manifest in a descendant of Adam who could say: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9); not that he was the Father, but that he perfectly manifested the character of the Father in his life.

If these things were so in the days of his flesh, what of the time after he "ascended on high"? The inspired Apostle Paul picks up the words of Yahweh from Isaiah 45:23 and interprets them in his Epistle to the Philippians: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name [RV, the name] which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Ephesians 2:9-11). Thus the one to whom every knee will bow in the millennial age will be the Lord Jesus; but those who bow will acknowledge that the name which he bears and the honour to which he has attained were bestowed upon him by his Father, as a result of his obedience. The assurance to believers

Shortly before his death Jesus said to his disciples: "because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). He was clearly speaking of the life that was to be given him by his Father rather than the life he then lived. This assurance then became a wonderful part of the gospel that those men, and the Apostle Paul, preached after Jesus had ascended on high.

Throughout the Acts of the Apostles (For example, Acts 4:2; Acts 5:30-31; Acts 13:32-34; Acts 17:31; Acts 26:6-8, Acts 26:23.) the teaching concerning the resurrection of Jesus is linked with the hope or promise that God has made to men in him. These things are summarised by Paul in the following passages:

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if , when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:8-10);

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). The sacrificial death of Jesus provides the means of our reconciliation to God, but it is the resurrection of Jesus that gives us the hope of rising like him from the grave to newness of life. To return in glory as King

There are two thrones spoken of in the books of the New Testament. From Matthew to Hebrews there are six references to the throne of God in heaven and five to the throne of Jesus. The latter is described as "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32), and Jesus's occupancy of it is described as a future event. The matter is expounded for us in Revelation 3:21, where Jesus says: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne". It is clear that Jesus's leaving the throne of his Father in heaven and taking the position of King of kings and Lord of lords upon the earth is a future event. Jesus's parables about kingship

Although Christ is described as the head of the body or the ecclesia, it is important to notice that Scripture never calls him the king of the ecclesia. The study of the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ is too large a subject to cover in depth in this article, but the basic facts are these:

1 There are references in the Gospels to Jesus as King of the Jews. These are mainly accusations by Jesus's enemies (for example, Matthew 2:2; Matthew 27:11, Matthew 27:29, Matthew 27:37, Matthew 27:42).

2 To Jesus, in the days of his flesh, God was "the great King" (Matthew 5:35).

3 Enemies of the truth accused the disciples of preaching Jesus as a rival king to Caesar (Acts 17:7), but there is no evidence in the Acts or epistles that they ever did this.

4 The only references in the epistles of Paul and Peter to any other than earthly kings are to God (1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:15).

5 Only when the Lamb appears at the head of his armies is he described as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16).

Thus the concept of Jesus ruling now in the hearts and minds of his servants is entirely absent from the New Testament Scriptures, but when he returns and takes David's throne every knee will bow to him. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus are the confirmation by the God of heaven that the Lamb is worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:12). God will judge the world in righteousness and set His King upon His holy hill of Zion. Given the certainty of these things, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND BIBLE STUDY (1)

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BERNARD BURT The Testimony 1997 p.42 This is the first of two articles by Brother Burt with which we conclude the present series analysing Bible texts and versions.

IT WOULD BE reasonable to suppose that the great majority of subscribers to The Testimony are unable to read Hebrew and Greek. The writer of this article is very firmly in that category. If we want to read the Bible (which was originally written in those languages) it must therefore be translated into the language which we can read, that is, English.

However, because God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and because there are some things in Scripture which are "hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16), the Bible translator has a difficult task. When he comes to a 'difficult passage', should he translate the original text exactly into English, complete with all its difficulties, or should he attempt to make its meaning clear to the average reader? What if the translator does not understand the meaning intended by the Spirit? What if the translator has strong views on certain doctrines and allows these views to colour his translation? What is (or, perhaps, what should be) the true spheres of operation of the Bible translator? The purpose of translations

I believe that a Bible translation should tell us as clearly as possible what the original text says, however difficult it may subsequently be for us to understand it. It is not the job of the translator to try and tell us what the text means—that is our task. We should be able to take any accurate and faithful translation and, by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, establish the true meaning of a passage. Any translation which enables us to do this is, in my judgement, a 'good' translation. 'Translations' which interpret meaning by means of paraphrase, etc. are nowhere near as valuable to us, because they may give us a meaning which is incorrect and thus hide the meaning which God intended us to understand. So what translations are there? The list in the table at the top of page 43 is not exhaustive, and includes only translations of the whole Bible. The abbreviations given are those which will be used in the text of these two articles. These articles cannot possibly attempt an evaluation of all of these translations. What it is intended to do is to highlight some of the significant features of six of the translations, and make comparisons between them and the AV.

Manuscripts The Bible has been translated from copies of the original writings of the prophets and apostles. These copies are called manuscripts, and generally the older the manuscript the more valuable it is considered to be to the translator. The Hebrew manuscripts from which the Old Testament has been translated have for many years been regarded as accurate and reliable, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has confirmed this view. There is therefore little argument amongst scholars and Bible translators as to what the true Hebrew text of the Old Testament is. A very different situation exists with the New Testament manuscripts. The AV was translated from manuscripts dating back to the ninth century A.D., which were the oldest then known. Since 1611

several very much older manuscripts, going back to the fourth century A.D., have been found. There are many differences between the two groups of manuscripts: for example, the last sixteen verses of the Gospel of Mark and the first eleven verses of John 8:1-59 are not found in most of the older manuscripts. The translators of the RV were instructed to make a revision of the AV using the same manuscripts as used by the AV. They did this in the Old Testament, but the Cambridge scholars Westcott and Hort persuaded them to use for the New Testament a text based on the fourth-century Greek manuscripts. Most of the translators of versions published since the RV have followed the same course, and examples of the effects of this practice will be highlighted in the consideration of particular translations.

Precis

Paraphrase is the expression of the sense of a piece of writing in different words; precis is its expression in fewer words. Some of the more modern translations freely admit that they are paraphrases of the original. It is a concern that the translators of the LB and the GNB appear also to have done a precis of the Old Testament and reduced its length by about fifteen per cent, as the following table shows: The writer's copies of the RSV and LB have New Testaments of similar length, yet the Old Testament in the latter is over 250 pages shorter—what has the LB omitted? It is difficult to say in detail without an exhaustive reading of the two versions, but here are a couple of examples:

Judges 21:24 "And the people of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and they went out from there every man to his inheritance" (RSV; 29 words); "So the people of Israel returned to their homes" (LB; 9 words).

2 Chronicles 12:9

"So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took away everything. He also took away the shields of gold which Solomon had made" (RSV; 43 words); "So King Shishak of Egypt conquered Jerusalem and took away all the treasures of the Temple and of the palace, also all of Solomon's gold shields" (LB; 26 words).

There are some slight differences in wording between the American New King James and the Revised Authorized versions. While the overall sense of the above verses is given in the LB, there are clearly details omitted, and these details are part of God's revelation to us. We cannot say that they are not important and may be left out.

Paraphrase

There are examples of paraphrase in the text of Scripture itself. For example, John 21:1-25 records Jesus as saying: "If I will that he [John] tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"; and then continues: "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:22-23). Jesus's words were not easy to understand, so the disciples paraphrased them into a saying which had a clear and unambiguous meaning—but it was the wrong meaning. This is the danger of paraphrase: unless it is well done, it can distort or even destroy the meaning of the original. The GNB paraphrases Genesis 3:15 : "I will make you and the woman hate each

other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies, her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite their heel". It is certainly easier reading than the AV, but in the process of paraphrase the meaning of the verse has been changed and the GNB will not lead its readers to anticipate that an individual male descendant of the woman would ultimately fulfil these words.

Similarly, in 2 Samuel 7:16 the GNB has: "You will always have descendants, and I will make your kingdom last for ever. Your dynasty will never end". Here, the paraphrase has created a 'prophecy' which has failed, for it is evident that the dynasty of David ended with the de throning of Zedekiah by King Nebuchadnezzar. The GNB also fails to show that this verse is a prophecy of an everlasting Kingdom in the presence of David: "thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee" (AV). Thus the implicit teaching of the resurrection of David is completely missed. The GNB paraphrase of John 20:17 clearly implies that Jesus existed originally in heaven with God: "'Do not hold on to me', Jesus told her, 'because I have not yet gone back up to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to Him Who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God'". It takes less than five minutes' work with a concordance to demonstrate that the Scriptural meaning of the Greek words translated 'ascend' and 'ascended' in the AV, and paraphrased as 'go back up' and 'return' in the GNB, is 'to go up' or 'to rise up', and the 'return' sense introduced by the GNB will not fit the other contexts. For example, Acts 2:34 says: "For David is not ascended into the heavens ..."; is it suggested that David was in heaven before his birth?

Turning now to the LB, in John 1:1-3 it paraphrases the text: "Before anything else existed, there was Christ, with God. He has always been alive and is himself God. He created everything there is—nothing exists that he didn't make". There are no words in the Greek text that correspond to "existed", "Christ" and "been alive"; this is not in fact translation at all, it is interpretation, and interpretation which is clearly at variance with other Scriptures. In 1 Peter 1:3-6 the LB is very easy reading, but it introduces heaven-going into a text which, when properly translated, teaches the opposite: "Now we live in hope of eternal life because Christ rose again from the dead. And God has reserved for His children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you . . . And God in His mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it, because you are trusting Him". This is just one of a number of passages where the LB forces in the concept of heaven-going: "Good Teacher, what must I do to get to heaven?" (Mark 10:17). Here the Greek is 'the life of the aion', and the passage is concerned about the quality and time of this future life, and not about its location. To summarise, paraphrases can help us to understand passages which are difficult in the older translations. But any ideas that we find in them need to be carefully checked before we accept or use them.

(To be concluded) BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND BIBLE STUDY (2)

BERNARD BURT *The Testimony* 1997 p. 73 In the previous article Brother Burt considered the limitations of the Bible 'translations' which paraphrase or even in some cases precis the Scriptures. He now looks at some of the more literal versions.

Psalm titles and the New English Bible

MUCH HAS been written about the titles of the Psalms, but the first consideration is to recognise that they are part of Scripture. This fact can be easily demonstrated by comparing the titles of

Psalms 18:1-50 and Psalms 18:1-2 with 2 Samuel 22:1-2. The psalm is repeated in the passage in 2 Samuel, and the title of the psalm appears there as the first verse of the chapter. I would therefore suggest that when brethren are called upon to read a psalm they should always read any title that the psalm may have. However, some of the modern versions, particularly the NEB, LB and GNB, either leave them out or significantly change their meanings. The effect of this is to lose or corrupt many verses of Scripture. Several examples from the GNB and LB have been considered, so what is the NEB like? It translates Genesis 1:1-2 as follows: "In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters 7'. Thus where most other translators have, "the Spirit of God", the NEB has, "a mighty wind". This is not the place to ask, Why did the NEB translators use the phrase 'mighty wind'? But we can legitimately ask if they have been consistent with this rendering, and how it fits in other contexts. In Genesis 41:39 the NEB translates Pharaoh as saying: "Can we find a man like this man, one who has the spirit of a god [mg. the spirit of God] in him?". "Mighty wind" just will not fit the context in Genesis 41:1-57. Spirit of God will fit both Genesis 1:1-31 and Genesis 41:1-57, therefore the NEB is unnecessarily inconsistent in this piece of translation.

There are, however, passages where the AV is obscure in its meaning and the NEB can be very helpful. "If a person hears a solemn adjuration to give evidence as a witness to something he has seen or heard and does not declare what he knows, he commits a sin and must accept responsibility", is the NEB rendering of Leviticus 5:1. Comparison between this and the AV translation soon reveals that the NEB is much more comprehensible. One of the least readable books in the AV is 2 Corinthians; in the NEB it becomes very much easier to follow Paul's arguments—compare, for example, the respective renderings of 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 3:12-13; 2 Corinthians 6:7-10; and 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. To return to the titles of the Psalms, many of the modern versions make some attempt at translating them, but "not according to knowledge"; for example, Moffatt translates the title of Psalms 22:1-31 as, "From the Choirmaster's collection. To the tune, 'Deer of the Dawn'. A song of David"; whereas (as Brother Leen Ritmeyer has shown) an accurate translation is, "To him that overcometh the powers of darkness, the best fruits of the beloved".

Words such as Selah and Higgaiion, which appear in a number of psalms, are omitted by Moff., the NEB, the GNB and the LB. These words are part of the text of Scripture, and therefore the versions which omit them are not being faithful to the originals. The Revised Standard Version in many places the language of the RSV is easier to follow than the AV; for example: "So she called the name of the LORD Who spoke to her, 'Thou art a God of seeing'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing Him?' (Genesis 16:13); "My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon Thy promise" (Psalms 119:148);

"Are you better than Thebes that sat by the Nile, with water around her, her rampart a sea, and water her wall?" (Nahum 3:8); "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). In some areas the RSV is more accurate than the AV; for example, it omits 1 John 5:7, which, although it appears in the AV, is said to be found in only one of 113 extant Greek manuscripts. However, in other areas the AV is more dependable than the RSV and the best of the other translations of that era. In Genesis 22:17-18 the RSV and most of the modern

translations have 'de scendants' (plural) or some equivalent, instead of the singular term which is required by the context and Galatians 3:16.

One of the great virtues of the AV is the consistency with which it generally renders a particular Hebrew or Greek word by the same English word. Consider the following RSV passages where (in the AV) the Hebrew word *ra* is translated "evil":

"an evil spirit from the LORD" (1 Samuel 16:14); "a company of destroying angels" (Psalms 78:49); "I make weal and create woe" (Isaiah 45:7); "by bringing upon us a great calamity . . . all this calamity has come upon us" (Daniel 9:12-13).

If the RSV is used consistently then this sort of link which the Spirit has built into the original text will never be seen. A translation needs to be reasonably consistent in the way in which it renders original words, and to do this the English word which will be used to translate a particular original word has to be chosen with great care. A number of the translators of the modern school have not given evidence of this degree of care in their work. For the most part the RSV translates the original—there is little of the interpretation which has been noted above in some of the modern paraphrases. One notable exception is found in the final chapters of Ezekiel, where there is a serious inconsistency of rendering the terms 'reed' and 'cubit'. In Ezekiel 40:5 the reed is defined as "six long cubits", but in Ezekiel 42:16-20 the Hebrew word for 'reed' is 'translated' 'cubit', which has the effect of reducing the overall dimensions of the future temple to one sixth of the size given through the Spirit to Ezekiel. 'Translations' of this sort give incorrect substance to the view that the future temple will not be of the great size which will be needful for the worship of the Kingdom age. In John 1:18 the RSV completely fails to translate a Greek word which (as I understand the matter) occurs in every known text of this Gospel. Thus it reads "the only Son [mg. the only God]" instead of "the only begotten Son". Having said all this, the RSV (like the NEB) can be very helpful, but I would strongly counsel against using either version on its own, and that any unusual 'translations' should be carefully checked. The New International Version The NIV appears to have achieved a greater level of popularity and acceptance than any other modern version. Yet it contains many of the defects which have been noted to exist in the versions considered so far. The NIV translators frequently use paraphrase. For example, in Joshua 24:14 the AV reads, "serve Him in sincerity and truth"; while the NIV has, "serve Him with all faithfulness". The NIV masks the fact that two distinct aspects of service are being asked of Israel (neither truth nor sincerity being sufficient of their own), and also makes it impossible for the reader to notice that this is one of several linguistic links between Joshua 24:1-33 and John 4:23 ". . . worship the Father in spirit and in truth" . The way in which the RSV translates the Hebrew word *ra* (usually 'evil' in the AV) has already been noticed. The table above shows that the NIV has an even greater variety of 'translations' of the Greek word *sarx*—which the AV almost always renders as 'flesh'. In this table are ten references, all with a different 'translation' of *sarx*. The average reader of the NIV is never going to realise that a common thread runs through all these passages. Of particular concern is the apparent avoidance by the NIV of any rendering which would support the Biblical doctrine that Jesus had the same flesh as we do. In John 1:18 the NIV translators perpetrate a similar error to the RSV (omitting the word 'begotten' and adding 'God'), coming out with "God the only [Son]". In Romans 8:6-9 the word 'controlled' is inserted into the 'translation' three times, without any warrant in any Greek manuscript, thus producing the phrase: "the mind controlled by the Spirit". In Php 3:14 the NIV reads: "I press on towards the goal to win the prize for

which God has called me heaven wards in Christ Jesus". This is not what the text says, still less what it means. It is what the translator believes. Such translations will not help us to understand the depths of the Scriptures, nor will they help those who are seeking the Truth to find it (and I would include Sunday School children in this category).

Thus the NIV has many serious shortcomings as a translation, and it is not a version which I would recommend for regular use. The New King James The New King James, or Revised Authorised Version, is almost unique amongst the modern translations in that it uses the same Greek text as the AV. Because of this it renders Revelation 5:9,10 as: "You are worthy to take the scroll . . . for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God . . . and have made us kings and priests . . .". By contrast most of the other recent translations have something like: "You are worthy to take the scroll . . . because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God . . . You have made them to be a kingdom and priests . . ." (NIV).

Thus the AV and RAV make these words the song of the redeemed; the NIV and many others make them a song about the redeemed. Now in the context of Revelation 5:1-14 these words are sung by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. If the AV and RAV are correct (as I believe they are) these beings are symbols of the saints. If the majority of the modern versions are right, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures cannot represent the redeemed in the vision, and our understanding of Revelation 4:1-11 and Revelation 5:1-14 must therefore change to accommodate this fact.

Sadly the RAV departs from the AV's faithful translation of Genesis 22:17-18 with the rendering: "in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the sea-shore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies". However, like the AV, it follows the Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 7:16, "your house and your kingdom shall be established for ever before you", rather than that of the Septuagint and Syriac, "... established for ever before Me" (see also NIV, NEB, RSV, etc.). The RAV is more accurate than the AV in its translation of Romans 6:1-2 : "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?". It is also very consistent in translating the Greek word *sarx* as 'flesh'; in all the ten passages listed above in the NIV section the RAV has 'flesh' for *sarx*. It is only fair to state that the RAV does in places present the Holy Spirit as a person rather than a power (for example, Romans 8:11, Romans 8:16, Romans 8:26). It also advances the idea of "the evil one" in such passages as Matthew 5:37; Matthew 6:13 and John 17:15. The RAV therefore fails to some degree in its basic aim, which was to be an up-to-date revision of the Authorised Version. This is a great pity, since all the translators signed their agreement that the original manuscripts were the inspired Word of God; yet they have introduced into this version doctrines which are not taught in those manuscripts.

Conclusions A translation should be the means to the end, the end being that we understand what God has said to us through His revelation. It should be perfectly transparent in the sense that the beliefs and feelings of the translators should not obscure the detail and sense of the original texts. We (for the most part) have to use translations in order to study the Word of God. What are the best means available to us today for studying God's word? The modern paraphrases (GNB and LB) do not give honour and glory to God because their presentation of His Word is, in many

instances, simply not faithful to the original texts from which the translators worked. The translators of the NIV make it clear in their preface that (particularly in the New Testament) they would first decide what the text should say and secondly translate it. In many of those decisions and translations their doctrinal bias is apparent. These features, and others which have been alluded to above, render the GNB, LB and NIV unfitted for our purposes of searching out the meanings of God's revelation to us and communicating these things to those who are in darkness. The NEB, RAV and RSV can all be helpful to us as we read and study the Scriptures. They can be a means of increasing our understanding in cases where the AV is difficult to understand. However, as the above considerations have briefly shown, they should be used alongside the AV and not as substitutes for it.

Inherently, the appearance of so many 'new' translations over the past few decades implies a dissatisfaction with the AV. Let us not be swept away by this critical viewpoint. George Bernard Shaw, one of the foremost of modern literary critics, wrote of the AV: "The translation was extraordinarily well done because to the translators what they were translating was not merely a curious collection of ancient books written by different authors in different stages of culture, but the Word of God divinely revealed through His chosen and expressly inspired scribes. In this conviction they carried out their work with boundless reverence and care and achieved a beautifully artistic result" (cited in the RAV preface).

(Concluded) 'As a son over his own house' (Hebrews 3:6)

David: preaching righteousness in the great congregation

David: preaching righteousness in the great congregation

Bernard Burt TheTestimony 2009 p132

David preached to the congregation, typical of the ecclesia today. When speaking to the men and women in Adullam, he drew on his previous experience, a living example of what he preached. When the ark was brought into Zion he preached to the people in a psalm how they should praise God. THE WORD translated “congregation” in Psalms 40:9 is the Hebrew word qahal (Strong’s 6951). It first occurs in Isaac’s blessing of Jacob in Genesis 28:3: “And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude (qahal) of people”. The word occurs in Psalms 22:22: “I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee”. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 2:12, where the Spirit translates qahal by using the word ekklesia. The qahal “congregation” of the Old Testament is therefore equivalent to the ecclesia in the New. This concept is further confirmed by Stephen in Acts 7:38, speaking of “the church [ecclesia] in the wilderness”. David was therefore a leader and a preacher in the ecclesia in Israel in his days. How did he fulfil the function of preaching?

Gath and Adullam

1 Samuel 21:10-15 records the terrible experiences of David in the court of Achish king of Gath. Once David had escaped from the Philistines, he went to the cave of Adullam and was joined by “every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented” (1 Samuel 22:2)—what a basis on which to start an ecclesia! Psalms 34:1-22 is a commentary on these events and tells us how David responded to this situation and what he said to the congregation who had assembled themselves to him. David says to them in Psalms 34:3, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together”; he is encouraging them to praise God as he did. He explained to them in verse 4 how God had heard him and delivered him, and teaches them in Psalms 34:7 that “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them”.

Having shown the congregation these principles, David teaches them: to taste and see that the LORD is good (Psalms 34:8) that God blesses those who trust Him (Psalms 34:8) that those who fear God will not want (Psalms 34:1-22) that those who seek the LORD will not want any good thing (Psalms 34:10) that they must keep their tongue from evil (Psalms 34:13) that their lips must not speak guile (Psalms 34:13) that they must depart from evil (Psalms 34:14) that they must do good (Psalms 34:14) that they must actively seek peace (Psalms 34:14) that if they do right God’s eyes will be upon them (Psalms 34:15) that God will be against them and cut them off if they do evil (Psalms 34:16) that God will be near to the contrite and brokenhearted (Psalms 34:18) that the LORD will deliver the righteous out of all afflictions (Psalms 34:19) that God will redeem the soul of His servants (Psalms 34:22) that none who trust in Him will be desolate (Psalms 34:22).

What amazing lessons these are for a group of men and women who were in distress, in debt and discontented! David had learned all of these things, and of the dealings of God with man, through hard and bitter experiences. He was a living example of the principles which he preached. The result of this preaching “in the congregation” was that he welded together a band of men who would follow him implicitly—anywhere that he would lead them. Even the foreigners amongst them manifested this loyalty. Ittai the Gittite would later say, “As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be” (2 Samuel 15:21). Those men later formed the backbone of the godly kingdom over which David ruled. The bringing up of the ark When David became king over all Israel, he immediately did three things: he took the city of Jerusalem and made it his capital (2 Samuel 5:6 ff.), he defeated the Philistine threat to his kingdom (2 Samuel 5:17 ff.), and he brought the ark into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:1-23).

David then set the family of Asaph to sing before the ark, and delivered to them the Psalm that is recorded for our learning in 1 Chronicles 16:1-43. The purpose of this psalm was to “shew forth” (1 Chronicles 16:23), “preached” in Psalms 40:9, the salvation of God to all nations. So faithful were the men of the house of Asaph that they continued to sing this psalm for over 600 years!

What did the Spirit through David “preach” in this psalm? Notice first the huge emphasis on God and His works and how little space there is for the doings of man. “Yahweh” occurs fifteen times in the twenty-eight verses of the psalm. The emphasis throughout the psalm is on “His name”, “His deeds”, “His wondrous works”, “His strength”, “His judgments”, “His covenant”, etc. David encouraged Israel to seek their God, to sing His praises (Psalms 40:9), to talk about Him amongst themselves (which the Law commanded; Deuteronomy 6:4-9), to speak about Him to the surrounding nations (1 Chronicles 16:8, 1 Chronicles 16:24) and to encourage the people of those nations to glorify Yahweh (1 Chronicles 16:29-30).

What was the result of this “preaching” through the psalm sung before the ark by the family of Asaph? “And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD” (1 Chronicles 16:36). David had set the example by putting the symbol of God’s Word and His presence at the very centre of the nation, and he then caused one of the most faithful families in Israel to sing before it (initially for forty years until the temple was built!) of the glory and might and purpose of their God. Thus, by his personal example and teaching, as their king, he showed them how they ought to think and to walk before their God—just as he had showed his people in the time of his fugitive years in the wilderness. On both occasions the people responded to his preaching and they became more godly as a result. Could we be a similar influence by our example and preaching in the ecclesia?

GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER

GOD DOES ANSWER PRAYER

BERNARD BURT The Testimony 1982, p.17 THE SCRIPTURES testify to the truth of the above statement. "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee...In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee: for Thou wilt answer me" (Psalms 86:5-7); "Thus saith the Lord the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it, to establish it; the Lord is His name; Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:2-3).

Why then has God, on many occasions, manifestly not answered the prayers of His servants? Even the giants of faith such as Moses, Deuteronomy 3:23-26 Elijah 1 Kings 19:4 and Paul 2 Corinthians 12:8 found themselves in this position. The man who had been blind said, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." John 9:31 How can this be reconciled with the case of Paul, cited above, a man who clearly was a worshipper of God and did His will? There is a need to look carefully at the subject and to bring to bear "the whole counsel of God" if we are not to jump to inadequate conclusions and experience much frustration in our lives.

What is prayer?

"Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.;" Psalms 141:2 "...therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name;" Hebrews 13:15 "...golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Revelation 5:8 RV Passages such as these indicate the close parallels between prayer and the concepts of the offering of incense and sacrifice which were taught to Israel under the Law. The evening sacrifice was a burnt offering. Exodus 29:38-42 This symbolised a life completely devoted and dedicated to God's service. It would appear that the priest took live coals from the fire of the burnt offering, transferred them to the altar of incense and then burnt the evening incense thereon (cp. Leviticus 16:12-13 and Exodus 30:7-8). So prayer should flow out of a life dedicated to God's service and rise up to Him as an odour of a sweet smell. The incense was composed of several different ingredients, Exodus 30:34-37 and so is prayer. A search of the Scriptures reveals its constituents, for example Praise Psalms 148:1 (whole ch.); The hallowing of God's name Matthew 6:9;

Seeking the accomplishment of God's purpose Daniel 9:1 (whole ch.);

Thanksgiving for God's mercies Psalms 136:1 (whole ch.); The satisfying of our daily needs Proverbs 30:7-9;

Forgiveness of sins 1 Kings 8:33-36;

God's involvement in our lives Romans 15:30-33;

God's blessing on others Colossians 1:9-12.

Prayer is therefore far more than asking God for the things that we need; it is communion with God, it is fellowship with Him, it involves our aligning ourselves mentally and physically (insofar as we are able) with His mind, His character and His purpose.

God's response to prayer

Since "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" Proverbs 15:3 and "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" Hebrews 4:13 it is clear that God is aware of all words spoken or even thought by the sons of men. Matthew 6:8 It is equally clear that there are circumstances in which God does not regard prayers which are addressed to Him. Jeremiah wept and pleaded for his people, yet he was told, "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them. Jeremiah 14:11-12 What is the principle involved here.

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination;" Proverbs 28:9 "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalms 66:18 In order for prayer to be "heard" there must therefore be an attempt to turn away from sin and towards God's law, otherwise the prayer offered will be no more acceptable than Cain's sacrifice.

Four essentials for answered prayer The high priest was not to go "at any time" into the holy of holies. His approach was regulated by the law. Likewise, under the new covenant, although there is "a new and living way...through the veil," there are Scriptures which show that the saints must draw nigh to the mercy seat "after the due order".

1. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:7 This is reasonable. If a branch is severed from the vine it ceases to receive support and nourishment. As in the natural so in the spiritual: if Christ and his words are rejected then such an attitude will be reciprocated. cf. 1 Samuel 15:23 This of course, by no means precludes others praying that the severed branch might be "grafted in again." see James 5:19-20 On the other hand, if there is an abiding in Christ and his words then prayer will be answered.

2. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3 If brethren and sisters in the first century did this then so could we. There is a need to examine our motives and objectives. Why do I want that job? Is it really the better opportunities to do the Lord's work, or is it the status, the prestige, or just simply the money? Why do I want to marry that brother? Am I thinking about the work we could do together in the ecclesia or about the impression it will make on my friends and family, or the higher standard of living his salary will bring? Why do I want to be a presiding/speaking/ arranging/anything-else brother? Is it a "here am I, send me" response, or do I really want to be some great one in the ecclesia? If motives are unworthy then God may withhold things which are otherwise wholly praiseworthy for our own spiritual good.

3. "But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting...let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1:6-7 RV There are two factors involved here. The one who asks must believe that he is rightly motivated in his asking (see No. 2 above), and also that the petition is one such that God will grant (see No. 4 below). Both of these factors need to be present, otherwise there will

be doubt in the asking, which, James teaches, is fatal to the success of the prayer.

4. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us." 1 John 5:14 Again, this is reasonable. A human father will not give a deadly serpent to a child who asks a fish-but neither will he give the serpent if the child asks for a snake to play with. He knows that the gift would do harm, not good. Conversely, when the things asked are according to God's will, "... whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." 1 John 5:15 What is God's will? The need to abide in Christ, to ask aright and to ask in faith, are matters which are reasonably clear and unambiguous. The major question which arises in connection with this area of the subject is, "What is God's will?" If God's will could be known in relation to every subject upon which we petition Him then there would be far more prayers answered and far fewer problems with the subject of prayer. The question then becomes one of trying to find out what God's will is with regard to a particular subject. How can this be done?

It is only because God has revealed Himself to men that His will can be known. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Job 11:7 God's revelation to us is His Word; therefore the more intimately acquainted with the Scriptures a man becomes, the more he will know God and His purpose and the more his prayers will conform to God's will. It has been well said that through his Word God speaks to us, and that through prayer we speak to Him. If we do not bother to listen to God, Whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts, can we reasonably expect to know what to say to Him or what to ask Him?

It does not require a very profound reading of the Scriptures to discover that it is God's will to set up a Kingdom on the earth and that the setting up of that Kingdom will be accompanied by a catastrophe to the kingdom of men. e.g. Daniel 2:44 Consequently to pray that God will guide and direct the rulers of the nations so as to bring about a state of peace and tranquility upon the earth at a time when He is, in effect, saying, "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men," Joel 3:9 is not to pray according to His will-although such prayers are frequently offered in the churches of the apostasy. By contrast, Paul enjoined prayer "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." 1 Timothy 2:2-3 Likewise Jesus teaches that his servants should pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10 Jesus's prayers and God's will

There was something about the way that Jesus prayed and the way in which his prayers were answered which intensely attracted the disciples: "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1 Clearly Jesus was always abiding in his Father; he did not ask amiss, e he asked in faith and according to God's will. Few of his prayers have been recorded in detail in the Gospels, but those that have are profoundly helpful.

Jesus knew in advance that Peter would deny him; he even knew the details: "before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice;" Mark 14:30 yet for all this he loved Peter and prayed for him. For what should he pray? To ask that Peter might be saved/prevented from denying him would not have been to pray according to the will of his Father, Who had revealed to him that these events would take place. Should he therefore not pray for Peter? No! "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke 22:32 Here

is a deep lesson in the principles of prayer. To have prayed for an alteration of the course which he knew Peter must take would not have been according to the will of his Father; but to pray that out of the time of evil good might eventually come was something that he could do, nothing doubting, and a petition which his Father answered.

There are many modern parallels to this situation. A sister is terminally ill. To pray, "Lord heal her," would be to ask for something concerning which we cannot know the will of God; therefore, "Lord, if it is Thy will, heal her" would be better. To pray, "Lord, may her faith not fail in this time of trial, but may she endure to the end, whether short or long," would be to transfer the objective of the petition from the physical to the spiritual plane. To pray, "Lord, may we be Thine instruments in helping to strengthen her faith in this time of trouble, and may her example of enduring this trial encourage us, to the end that we all might enter into life," might be best of all if we go out to try and do our part toward that end.

Jesus's prayer in John 17:1 (whole ch.) A whole article could be written on this prayer alone, but this consideration of it will be limited to some of the specific petitions which Jesus made. For what did he ask? How are these petitions related to God's will? Is there any likeness between his petitions and ours?

"Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one. As we are. John 17:11

"I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world. but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." John 17:15 "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." John 17:17

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father. art in me. and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou has ' t sent me." John 17:20-21

"I in them. and Thou in me. that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me. Father. I will that they also. whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me..." John 17:23-24

Very few of these petitions have to do with material things; their main objective is the manifestation in glory. and in oneness with him and with the Father, of his disciples and their converts. Even "keep them from the evil" must mean evil in the sense of corruption or spiritual shipwreck; it cannot mean persecution or martyrdom, for these things happened to some of the eleven and to many of their converts.

Jesus then, in praying for the disciples, was concerned for their spiritual well-being and their ultimate salvation. His prayers were heard and, as far as we can tell from the Scriptures, answered in full, for there is no record of any of the eleven falling away.

Jesus in Gethsemane

Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are," Hebrews 4:15 and even for him there were times when prayer was hard and difficult. When he entered the garden of Gethsemane there was a conflict in his mind which it is impossible for any other to appreciate. "And (he) began to be sore

amazed, and to be very heavy." Mark 14:33 These, it is said, are words which are supremely difficult to translate. They express the utmost degree of unbounded horror, suffering and distress of mind. "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." Matthew 26:38

It is necessary to draw together the records given through Matthew, Mark and Luke in order to try to appreciate and understand Jesus's prayers in Gethsemane-or any other incident mentioned in more than one Gospel, for that matter. The writer has attempted to do this, taking every word into account and using what is sometimes called "Bullinger's method," that is, adding together all the details given and not assuming that they are slightly different renderings of the same events and words. The first prayer Matthew 26:39Mark 14:35-36Luke 22:41-42

"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast," and, at first kneeling down, then falling on his face to the ground, prayed that, "if it were possible, the hour might pass from him." And he said:

"Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me.

"O my Father, if it be possible, if Thou be willing. let this cup pass from me; remove this cup from me

.

"Nevertheless not as I will, but...as...Thou...wilt".

Notice the conflict, the struggle, which is expressed in these words. The prayer begins with a direct appeal to the Father on the basis of Scripture, to "take away this cup." "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee" of course they were! Had not Jesus taught his own disciples so? "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26 Was not that teaching itself based on God's own revelation through his angel to Sarah?-"Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14 Were not his "strong crying and tears" directed towards the One Who "was able to save him from death" in all senses of that word?

Here, as in the wilderness temptation at the beginning of his ministry, was a usage of Scripture "which seemeth right unto a man," but which was not in harmony with the totality of God's revealed will. He could not be "My servant" if the Father were to take away the cup. So, as he wrestled and agonised in this protracted prayer a new note was heard. "O my Father, if it be possible..." Here is the first recognition and acknowledgement in the prayer of the superiority of the Father's will over the Father's unquestioned ability. Then, "If Thou be willing, remove this cup from me" shows (after how long a struggle we know not) a preparedness to accept and submit to his Father's will. Still the conflict continued until in the last phase of the prayer his own will was negated and the Father's exalted. "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt". The second prayer Matthew 26:42Mark 14:39Luke 22:44

Reconstruction of this prayer is more difficult than the first. The record through Mark states that the same words were spoken again; that through Matthew reveals additional words, thus:

"Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me.

"O my Father, if it be possible, if Thou be willing, let this cup pass from me; remove this cup from me.

"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done". This prayer reveals that even for the Lord, knowing the will of his Father as he did, long wrestling and striving in prayer did not immediately result in a diminution of his own will and a submission to that of the Father. His objective is the spiritual good and ultimate salvation of those for whom he prayed, and where he is concerned with the things of this life it is in the context of the furtherance of the work of the gospel. Romans 1:8-12 Romans 15:30-33 Ephesians 6:18-19 Colossians 4:2-4, etc. The third prayer Matthew 26:44 Mark 14:41 This is the most difficult of the three to reconstruct. It is not mentioned in the record through Luke; that in Mark only alludes to Jesus's actions after it; so if the record in Matthew is taken at its face value, the Lord prayed:

"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done".

How different is this from the opening pleadings of the earlier prayers! Here, in one of the most wonderful paradoxes of the Truth, is utter triumph manifest in total submission. The will of the flesh is completely denied and even eliminated from the prayer, while that of his Father is exalted above all. This all too brief consideration of the prayers in Gethsemane shows that to know the will of the Father is not of itself the end of the problem of prayer. It may well be, in one sense the beginning, as the need to submit one's own will to God's is recognised. "Thy will be done" may be a prayer expressed in words of one syllable, but much effort may have to be expended in order to utter it. The prayers of Paul

Some 50 of Paul's prayers are recorded in his epistles; he was clearly a man of prayer. A thorough analysis of his prayers is beyond the scope of this article, but there are striking similarities between the nature of his prayers and those of Jesus. His main objectives in praying for others were that they might walk uprightly and might increase in wisdom, knowledge, etc.; Ephesians 1:15-19 Php 1:9-11 Colossians 1:9-12 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 that they might be saved; 1 Thessalonians 5:23 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 Timothy 1:18 and that he might have opportunity to strengthen their faith. Romans 1:8-12; Romans 15:30-33 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 The overwhelming majority of his prayers as recorded in the Scriptures have as their The objectives of prayer In the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" comes before "Give us this day our daily bread," and, "Forgive us our debts." This perhaps illustrates one of the great lessons of the prayers of Jesus and Paul, that the objectives of prayer are primarily spiritual. There is no doubt that God is concerned with and involved in the details of our daily lives passages about the number of our hairs and the falling of sparrows make this clear nor is there doubt that such things should be included in our petitions; but the greatest gift that we look for from Him is not wealth, health or even happiness now, it is eternal life. The great things of God's purpose were of prime concern to the giants of faith whose prayers are recorded in the Scriptures. We do well if we share their longings.

Waiting for answers

It has been well said that God answers prayer in one of three ways: "Yes, No' or "Wait." The human desire is always for an immediate response, but often this is not God's way. Long indeed

must have seemed the years that barren couples such as Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Zacharias and Elisabeth, prayed and waited, prayed and waited ' but in the end the answers came in each case. Patience is a virtue which God often teaches his servants by putting them into situations calculated to develop it, and the fact that a prayer is not answered immediately does not mean that God has not heard, nor that he is indifferent to our needs. It may simply be that His answer is, "Not yet".

Praying for the Holy Spirit With a foundation of Scriptural principles established in relation to the subject, some attention must now be given to such matters as praying for the Spirit, for wisdom and for guidance. There are a number of passages which link the subjects of prayer and the Holy Spirit. Many of these passages have to do with the Spirit gifts which were manifest in the first-century ecclesias. The brother who had the gift of tongues was exhorted to pray for the gift of interpretation of tongues so that he might better edify the ecclesia. 1 Corinthians 14:13 The apostle instructed the Corinthians to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31); presumably they were to pray for them. Gifts were bestowed through prayer and the laying on of hands. Acts 8:15-17 This situation does not obtain today since this is the dry period between the early and latter rains of the Spirit (Joel 2:23), so such specific passages have no application in the prayers of the saints in this dispensation.

There are, however, passages of a more general nature which are used by some to indicate that petitions for the Holy Spirit should form a part of our prayers, for example: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.". Luke 11:13 Is this a general statement of the continuous willingness of the Father to give the Holy Spirit? What is meant by "the Holy Spirit" in this passage? that is, what benefit would result from it being given as described? These are questions which must be answered before general conclusions can be drawn from the passage and present-day applications made of it. The only way to answer such questions is to study the context of the passage. When the twelve were chosen they were not immediately given power to perform miracles: "He ordained twelve...that he might send them forth...and to have power to heal..." Mark 3:14-15 Later, when he sent them out by two and two he gave them the foreshadowed power which specifically included power "over unclean spirits." Mark 6:7 Some six months later, however, nine of those same twelve disciples could not between them perform one such miracle of casting out a spirit. Mark 9:17-18 Jesus, in answer to their question as to why they could not do this, gave the enigmatic reply, "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting".' Mark 9:29 Obviously prayer and fasting were not the means by which the miracles were performed; what the Lord was saying was that this was the way to obtain the power to do such miracles. If the disciples had in their daily lives applied themselves to such spiritual exercises, their ability to perform miracles would have been continuously replenished by fresh supplies of power.

Transferring the study now from Mark to Luke (the incident of the boy with the unclean spirit is in Luke 9:1-62), certain of the 12 were subsequently annoyed that someone who was not of themselves was doing miracles; Luke 9:49 James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven; Luke 9:54 70 others (that is, not including the twelve) were sent out and given power, and when they returned rejoiced that "even the devils are subject unto us." Luke 10:1-17 As a result of this Jesus seems to have had to calm some indignation amongst the twelve. Luke 10:17-24 Later Jesus is seen by his disciples as he is praying, Luke 11:1 and after a short conversation with the

disciples which includes the verse under consideration Luke 11:1-13 he casts out a dumb spirit. Luke 11:14 The teaching of Luke 11:13 is therefore seen to be that if the disciples wanted to be able to continue to perform miracles they must give themselves to prayer. The problem was not a lack of willingness on the part of the Father to give, but a reluctance on their part to ask. To give the verse a wider application than this is to wrest it from its context. God does answer prayer, He was willing to give the power of the Spirit to the twelve if only they would ask. We live in a different dispensation, but God is just as willing to answer our prayers when we ask according to His Will.

Praying for wisdom

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." James 1:5 All sorts of conclusions are drawn from passages of this kind, but what do the Scriptures teach about God giving wisdom? Bezaleel was "filled...with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding..." Exodus 35:31 In order that he might build the tabernacle. In New Testament terminology this would be called the Spirit gift of wisdom, yet Bezaleel never reached the promised land'. The building of the tabernacle evidently did not sufficiently impress upon his mind the need to exhibit that faith which was seen in Joshua and in Caleb.

Solomon asked for wisdom and was given it so liberally that he was "wiser than all men;" through the Spirit he was caused to write many chapters of the book of Proverbs concerning the dangers of the strange woman; yet "even him did outlandish women cause to sin." Nehemiah 13:26 This God-given wisdom was bestowed for the achieving of specific objectives, and in the circumstances of the New Testament ecclesias it is clear that there was great need for active Divine involvement as new ecclesias were established with little to guide them in a wicked and corrupt world except that which was revealed from above. By contrast the apostle writes of "the holy Scriptures (in context the Old Testament), which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;" 2 Timothy 3:15 that is to say, the Word of God can do that which the miraculous gift of wisdom was never given to do provide us with that sagacity to order our lives aright in the sight of God.

Praying for guidance In apostolic times there was very direct and specific guidance given to certain individuals: where they should go, to whom they should preach, and so on. Acts 16:6-10 Today such revelations are not given to God's servants, but we do have the benefit of "the whole counsel of God" in His Word. To pray for guidance in respect of a particular matter and to neglect to search the Scriptures for information relating to it would not be to act wisely. To pray for God's guidance concerning a matter upon which the teaching of the Word is clear (for example, whether or not to marry someone who shows no interest in the Truth) would seem to be trying to evade the issue, or to hope that God would make an exception to His principles. The "ways of providence" are, however, to be seen (and looked for) in the lives of his servants. There is no record of Joseph receiving any vision or revelation between the ages of 17 and 28, yet the record constantly states that "the Lord was with Joseph;" and "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Since the angels are all ministering spirits "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" Hebrews 1:14 there can be no doubt that constant Divine activity is being undertaken on our behalf, and that providing we seek to hold fast to the principles of His Truth He will direct our steps.

Men ought always to pray The Scriptures contain many exhortations to "continue instant in prayer," "pray without ceasing," etc. It is as if God recognises that "pray(ing) always," "night and day praying exceedingly" is not always easy, especially if no answer seems to be visible for a long

time. There is always a need to remember the life of the one "who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Hebrews 5:7-8 In consequence of which, "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:15-16

HOW SHOULD WE SEEK TO OVERCOME SIN ?

HOW SHOULD WE SEEK TO OVERCOME SIN ?

BERNARD BURT The Testimony 1981 p. 112

THERE ARE TWO concepts extant in Christendom today on the subject of how "the sin which doth so easily beset us" should be faced and dealt with. The most widely held view is epitomised by a popular evangelical author as follows: "It is by the power of the indwelling Spirit that the evil desires of our fallen nature are restrained and the good fruit of Christian character is produced". (John R. W. Stott, I.V.P., p. 20.) This view has been imbibed by some brethren and in consequence has appeared in Christadelphian literature, e.g.: "The Spirit at work within the believer lifts him out of the works of the flesh and causes the production of the fruit of the Spirit". (Bro. Edgar Wille, The Holy Spirit, p. 59.) The other view of the matter has been expressed thus : "Having believed the gospel and been baptised . . . a person is required to 'walk worthy of the vocation', or calling, 'wherewith he has been called', that by so doing he may be 'accounted worthy' of being 'born of spirit', that he may become 'spirit', or a spiritual body; and so enter the kingdom of God... " (emphasis ours).

These concepts can be summarised as follows :

1. The problem of sin can only be dealt with by the believer "surrendering his life to Christ" and allowing the Holy Spirit mystically to enter him with the result that he is transformed morally by its influence.

2. It is the responsibility of the believer to face up to, and tackle, the problem of sin in his life. Practical guidance and instruction on how to do this is contained in the Scriptures which must be read and meditated upon in order to obtain the help they can give. This article will seek to show that view (2) is the correct one and to indicate some of the guidance which is given in the Scriptures on the subject of overcoming sin. To him that overcometh In the case of each of the 7 ecclesias in Asia the wonderful promises at the conclusions of the letters (Revelation 2:1-29 and 3) are conditional. The things promised will be granted "to him that overcometh" (Revelation 2:7, etc.). The meaning of this word is clearly illustrated by some of its occurrences elsewhere in the Apocalypse :

"The Lion . . . hath prevailed to open the book" (Revelation 5:5); "He went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Revelation 6:2);

"The beast.. . shall overcome them, and kill them" (Revelation 11:7);

"I saw... them that had gotten the victory over the beast" (Revelation 15:2);

"These shall make war... and the Lamb shall overcome them" (Revelation 17:14). The Apostle Paul saw his responsibility in this matter very clearly: "But (like a boxer) I buffet my body—handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships—and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the

Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit—not stand the test and be unapproved—and rejected (as a counterfeit)" (1 Corinthians 9:27, Amplified Bible). Furthermore, he was directed in his epistles by the Spirit to constantly exhort others to the same end, e.g.:

"Cast off the works of darkness" (Romans 13:12);

"Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18);

"Touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:17);

"Mortify . . . your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:5); "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The clear teaching of the contexts of these and many other passages is that it is necessary for each individual believer to "put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt. . . and . . . put on the new man" (Ephesians 4:22-24). The question which must be answered is, How is this accomplished? Does the Holy Spirit mystically effect a transformation or do the Scriptures indicate that other methods are to be used?

Renewed by the Spirit ? The lives of many of God's servants, as recorded in the Scriptures, testify to the fact that in all its several manifestations the power of the Spirit bestowed upon them did not guarantee their moral renewal. Consider the following :

Bezaleel was "filled . . . with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge" (Exodus 31:3), and built and saw all the glory of the tabernacle. Yet Bezaleel was among those who lifted up their voices and appointed a captain to return into Egypt. He did not enter the land, but died in the wilderness as a rebel.

David, a prophet of the Lord, was given the Holy Spirit (Psalms 51:11-12), yet he fell into lust and committed adultery and murder.

Solomon, who was given wisdom by God so that he was "wiser than all men" (1 Kings 4:31), wrote proverb after proverb warning of the dangers of the "strange woman", yet "even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Nehemiah 13:26).

Jesus was given an abundance of the Spirit, yet still he had to "sanctify himself" and subject his will to the will of his Father through the agonies of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.

Peter was given the gifts of the Spirit (probably all of them) at Pentecost, yet he put a difference between Jews and Gentiles (despite being taught in a vision that he should not) and had to be "withstood . . . to the face" by Paul.

There is no doubt that the idea of direct Divine influence upon the mind of man was part of Platonic teaching, (Sis. Ray Walker, "Plato or Christ?", The Bible Student, Vol. 2 (6 articles).) but it forms no part of the teachings of the Scriptures and is in fact incompatible with the principles which the Scriptures do teach. (Dr. John Thomas, Clerical Theology UnScriptural, pp. 23, 24.) That teaching will now be examined in some detail.

How did Jesus "overcome"? At the conclusion of his message to Laodicea the Lord said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21). How did Jesus "overcome"? The reader is referred elsewhere for a full treatment of this subject (Bro. Bernard Burt, "Now is my soul troubled", The

Bible Student, Vol. 10 (6 articles)), but the matter can be briefly summarised as follows:

1. He used the Word of his Father to directly refute temptation (e.g. Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10).
2. He used the same Word to constantly remind himself (as well as his disciples) of the will of his Father and of the way he should go. This can be seen at least 12 times in 7 chapters in Matthew. (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22; Matthew 20:18-19, Matthew 20:22, Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:12, Matthew 26:18, Matthew 26:24, Matthew 26:31, Matthew 26:54, Matthew 26:56.)
3. Jesus used the technique of "putting distance between himself and temptation" on several occasions when the wilderness temptation to "take the Kingdom now" reasserted itself (e.g. John 6:15).
4. A related method was to put the source of temptation away out of his sight if that were more appropriate (e.g. Matthew 16:23; John 8:6-8).
5. Jesus was well aware that being in certain places reduced the power of temptation. Hence his repeated visits to Gethsemane (John 18:2), the place where David had heard of Ahithophel's treachery and possibly the site of Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek.
6. He also knew and made use of the benefits of fellowship, seeking the company of the disciples in times of temptation (e.g. Luke 22:28; Matthew 26:38).
7. Throughout his life he wrestled in prayer for hours at a time, culminating in the great agony in Gethsemane in which he subjected his own will to the will of his Father.

These are practical methods which can be used in everyday life and which do reduce the effects of temptation on both mind and body. It is perhaps significant to note that the only occurrence of "spirit" in connection with Jesus's temptation is, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit.. . to be tempted" (Matthew 4:1)— the very reverse of the activity postulated by modern evangelicals. The counsel of Paul On more than one occasion Paul was directed to exhort believers to "mortify the flesh". It is logical to expect that in the epistles which bear his name ways of doing this should be indicated. It must be recognised that the phrase, "mortify the flesh", implies a battle fought to the death. In one place it is written, "ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:4); in another, "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). No army which wanders unprepared and ill-equipped onto the battlefield is likely to leave it victorious. So, in spiritual things, there is as much need to know the tactics of the enemy as there is to know the methods to be employed in the contest.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do (RV, practise) such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). The value of this list is not its usefulness for pinpointing the weaknesses of others, but for identifying one's own. Until the problem has been recognised no plan of campaign can be drawn up to combat it. Only when the enemy is recognised can he be attacked.

"Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14), counsels the apostle. How often do we pander to our weaknesses? Rather we are exhorted not to "consider in advance" or "take forethought" (Strong) concerning our lusts. One of the many ways of mortifying the flesh is to starve it to death. The woman who is addicted to Bingo courts temptation if she does her shopping in a supermarket next to the Bingo hall, but denies her passion if she travels to the other side of town to shop. In similar vein Paul wrote to Timothy: "No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Timothy 2:4 RV). The application to army life is obvious; a soldier may not do when on duty things which are perfectly legitimate to ordinary citizens or off-duty soldiers—but can we as soldiers of Jesus Christ (v. 3) ever say that we are off duty? The danger is not always the activity, which may be quite innocent, but getting "entangled" by it and wasting time which could otherwise be employed on "active service". In addition to such warnings as have been considered, the epistles are filled with positive counsel. The "good fight of faith" is not just a campaign of defence against the assaults of the enemy; rather the attack must be carried into his camp. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21), is one of many exhortations to positive and helpful activity which cannot but be beneficial. If we are continually employed in washing the feet of the saints our hands can never become soiled by the filth of the world. A positive mental attitude is required also: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (RV, mind) on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2). This is good counsel, but of course where our heart is will depend on the location of our treasure. Much of the output of modern printing presses consists of things that are untrue, dishonest, unjust, impure, unlovely and of evil report. Such things appeal to the "old man" and bring in the profits to the publishers. By contrast the apostle exhorts: "Whatsoever things are true ... honest ... just ... pure ... lovely ... of good report... think on these things" (Php 4:8). If frequenting certain places causes temptation to arise, let us avoid such places. If books and magazines in our possession are the cause of evil thoughts then let us burn them. The cost does not matter: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It is possible to so fill the mind with Divine things that there is no room for anything else. When he had completed the writing of Eureka, Dr. Thomas commented: "While I was writing Eureka, I was, as it were, 'within the veil', listening to the words of the Holy One of Israel... When a man is deeply and continuously engaged in an atmosphere of divine thoughts, he has neither time nor inclination to plot mischief or to play the fool". (Bro. Robert Roberts, Dr. Thomas: His Life and Work, 1970 edn. 3 p. 210.) God's part The battle must be fought, and the Scriptures leave us in no doubt that it is a hard and long struggle. We are, however, comforted by the assurance that it is not a lone struggle. The One who agonised so fiercely in the garden taught his disciples to pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". The very existence of those words indicates that God is willing and able to answer such a prayer, to guide and direct the circumstances of our lives so that we are not brought face to face with temptations which we could not of ourselves have avoided, but which might destroy us. Is it reasonable however to think that such a petition will be granted to His servants if they either do not ask it, or so order their lives as to walk into temptations that could, by application of the counsels considered above, have been completely avoided?

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not... ' (1 John 2:1), can in a sense be applied to the whole of the Scriptures. The Divine wisdom contained therein is calculated to be

able to help and guide us in our striving against sin, as strive we must. Yet in the same breath the inspired apostle recognised that the fight would not be victorious on every occasion: "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins... " (1 John 2:1-2). He moreover, is one who "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). With such knowledge we can rise again when we fall, and resume the battle against sin until the day dawns when he will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Php 3:21).

Humanism and Scripture: their influences on our thinking

Humanism and Scripture: their influences on our thinking Bernard BurtThe Testimony, May 2002 page 153

EVER SINCE the garden of Eden, God has tested man by subjecting him to two contrary voices: God's own commands, and an opposing voice that sets forth an alternative way. Table 1 sets out some typical examples of this. Thus Adam was expelled from the garden, the children of Israel died in the wilderness and a later generation went into captivity in Babylon because they would not heed the voice of God. This article shows that all through the ages man has sought to follow his own way rather than God's. The Apostle Paul opposed such teachings as put forth by Greek philosophical schools such as the Epicureans and Stoics, philosophies which are still around in the humanistic teachings that pervade society today. In contrast to these, he taught the principles of God's wisdom, as for example in Ephesians 4:21-32. God has always sought intelligent obedience from those whom He is calling, but a survey of the contexts of the passages quoted in Table 1 will show that in the majority of cases man has failed the test.

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Table 1. The voice of God; The opposing voice; Reference Thou shalt surely die; Ye shall not surely die; Genesis 2:17,Genesis 3:4 The LORD will bring us into this land; We be not able to go up against the people; Numbers 13:31Numbers 14:8 The vessels that remain in the house of the LORD ... shall be carried to Babylon; The vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon; Jeremiah 27:16; Jeremiah 27:21-22 The days are at hand and the effect of every vision; The days are prolonged and every vision faileth; Ezekiel 12:22-23

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God; If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread; Matthew 4:3-4 The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; All things are lawful unto me ... Meats for the belly and the belly for meats; Galatians 5:2Acts 15:11 Corinthians 6:12-13

.....
He has listened to the seductive voice of the flesh rather than to the commands of the Spirit and has had to suffer the consequences. These events sound a very serious warning to us, as we live in the latter days of the times of the Gentiles. The two voices are still speaking, and mankind does not have a very good history of obeying the Word of God. "Are we better than they?" Romans 3:9 Probably not. We need, therefore, first of all, to be able to distinguish between the two voices and to know which one is from God. That might sound simple, but in Jeremiah 28:1 (wholechapter) there is recorded the situation of Hananiah the prophet and Jeremiah the prophet both standing in the temple and saying, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel." Jeremiah 28:2; Jeremiah 28:14 Each claimed to be a prophet, each bore the Yahweh Name (as indicated above by italics), each pronounced a message which claimed to be from Yahweh; but the messages were opposed to one another. The people had to decide. Who was the true prophet and who was

speaking lies in the name of Yahweh? Son_today, each of the two voices may quote Scripture, both arguments may sound very convincing; but one is wrong.

We are commanded in Ephesians 4:22-24 to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The voice of the flesh must be rejected and the voice of the Spirit must be heeded. What is the issue for us? It is not whether or not to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; it is not whether or not to go into the land of promise; it is not whether or not circumcision still applies. All these things are profitable illustrations of the problem, but they do not directly concern us. Our problem is perhaps more subtle, and the Scripture history of it begins in Acts 17:1-34. The Epicureans and the Stoics When Paul, on his second journey, reached Athens, the record states that "certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him." Acts 17:18 Why should Scripture bother to notice who these individuals were? They are obviously named for a reason, which investigation of their origins will reveal.

Epicurus was a Greek philosopher who lived from 341 to 270 B.C. Of him it has been written: "Epicurus helped lay the intellectual foundations for modern science and for secular individualism, with many aspects of his system still highly relevant some twenty-three centuries after they were first taught to Epicurus's students at his school in Athens." His name has passed into our language; today an epicure is one with refined tastes in food, wine, literature, etc. (For further information see his web site(!) at www.epicurus.net.) The Stoics were disciples of a Greek philosopher named Zeno of Cittium, who lived about 300 to 260 B.C. He is said to be "One of antiquity's boldest yet least known thinkers. Stoic philosophy is in many ways similar to the Taoist philosophy of China. Both teach one to attune with his/her inner nature. Both encourage simple living and contentment with one's present state of being." (Quoted from an article to be found on www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Heights/4617/stoic.html.)

Zeno's followers were called Stoics because he taught in a painted colonnade off the Athenian agora (the "market" of Acts 17:17) called the Stoa Poikile. The word 'stoic' has also come into our language to describe a person who has great self-control, fortitude or austerity.

"In a real sense, what is distinctive to humanism is its commitment to a set of ethical values. For the humanist the central value is the achievement of the good life here, now and for each and every person. This means self-realisation, creative fulfilment, and joyful exuberance. In a just society every person is equal in dignity and value. This means each individual (whether the ruler or the ordinary citizen) is equal before the law and should not be deprived of the opportunity to participate in society and achieve the good life. It also means that no person should be denied equal access because of...gender or sexual orientation. The right to selfdetermination is thus basic. Individuals ought to be given the freedom to select their own values, careers, partners, or lifestyles so long as they do not deny the same right to others.

What is especially surprising today, given the rapidity of scientific, technological, economic, political and moral change on a global scale, is the persistence of ancient religious systems: Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam etc. These systems provide belief in the supernatural deity or deities, and also in the idea of human salvation and obedience to divine commandments. Humanism is non-theistic and it rejects these supernatural doctrines and provides a naturalistic

humanist alternative. The central issue concerns the meaning of life and the role of the human person on this planet. The humanist outlook is based upon the sciences; that is, upon the best theories that have been developed and have been experimentally verified. Humanism draws upon the physical, biological, social and behavioural sciences in order to explain how nature operates and why human beings behave the way they do. And we wish to use reason to resolve our problems, not placate a non-existent God for succour. What we are confronted with are ancient metaphysical and supernatural systems, which seek to explain the universe and attempt to derive moral and in many cases even political injunctions from their religious faith." Paul Kurtz: Agenda for Humanism in the Twenty-First Century (www.iheu.org/IHN/v3-1/paul_kurtz.htm) The teachings of these two philosophers are summarised in Table 2.

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Table 2.

Epicureans: The gods are remote and evil;

Stoics: God does not have personality Epicureans: the universe is material and governed by chance;

Stoics: Human life is governed by fate Epicureans: Sensation is infallible and anything can be asserted as true;

Stoics: Man cannot change the determined course of events Epicureans: The senses are to be gratified and the desires of the stomach are the root of all good;

Stoics: Moral values can be changed by circumstances Epicureans: Pleasure is the sole good and pain is the sole evil;

Stoics: Hardship and pleasure should be encountered

.....

It is very interesting to compare these teachings with those of modern humanism, as given in the quotation from a modern humanist in the Kurtz quotation above.

Thus several aspects of modern humanism can be seen in the creeds of the Epicureans and the Stoics, and these philosophers were in fact the great-great-grandfathers of modern secular humanism. Acts 17:1-34 therefore, provides us with a Scriptural model for dealing with the humanist view, for Paul recognised that these philosophies were completely subversive of the Truth. I believe that Paul's argument on Mars' Hill is based on Isaiah 45:1-25 (Isaiah 45:1), which contains all his major points. Obviously he does not quote Isaiah because he is speaking to Gentiles, to whom Scripture would have no authority. His address can be summarised as follows:

Acts 17:22-23. Paul used their attitude, and the altar he had seen, as a starting point; then he accused these 'wise' men of ignorance!

Acts 17:24-25. He preached God as the Creator (this was his normal approach to a Gentile audience, see Acts 14:15-17) and the sustainer of life, thus refuting points 1 and 2 of the Epicurean creed and point 1 of the Stoics', as shown in Table 2.

Acts 17:26. He contended that God is in control all of His creation in time and space, thus opposing point 2 of the Epicurean creed and point 2 of the Stoics'.

Acts 17:27-28. He argued that man's task is to seek God, for He is very near to us, countering point 5 of the Epicureans and points 3 and 6 of the Stoics' beliefs.

Acts 17:29-30. Paul then demonstrated that their ideas of God were wrong, they were ignorant, countering Epicurean teachings 1-3 and Stoic teachings 1-4.

Acts 17:31. Finally he showed that God, not fate, is in control, He is not indifferent to evil, His standards are absolute and constant. The world will be judged, not by God, but by a man raised from the dead, refuting point 6 of the Epicurean creed.

Thus Paul did not hide the truth; to both Jew and Gentile he preached fearlessly, whether they would hear or forbear. He is our pattern; our task is to preach repentance from sin and the coming Kingdom. We are not a public education service; we should be a community of preachers of the gospel. The issues which arise from the conflict between humanism and the Word of God can be seen in a number of Paul's epistles. We will now briefly consider situations that are dealt with in 1 Corinthians 6:1-20 and Ephesians 4:1-32. The effects of philosophy-moral standards at Corinth

Twenty times in the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians Paul uses the words 'wisdom' and 'wise' as he argues against the philosophical values of this world and seeks to demonstrate the superiority of the wisdom of God. Then in 1 Corinthians 5:1 he turns to the first of the major problems that the philosophy and deceit of the world had caused in Corinth. One of the members of the ecclesia was committing fornication with his father's wife. The first thing to notice about this situation is that Paul is very careful not to call this individual 'brother'; the man was walking in darkness and was not in fellowship with God. We should take the same attitude in the ecclesia today towards those who manifestly do not believe the Truth or do not walk according to it. So why did the ecclesia not deal with this situation? The answers to this question may cast some light on the related question, Why do ecclesias not deal with moral issues today? Paul shows that the ecclesia had been spoiled by "philosophy and vain deceit." Colossians 2:8

1 In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 he shows that they had misinterpreted his previous letter and by their 'wisdom' had made nonsense of its teaching. The principle of the Truth is that if a member of the ecclesia is living like someone in the world they are not in a fit state to break bread.

2 Paul next shows in verses 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 that, for whatever reason, they had failed to appreciate their role as judges in the household. We need to be aware that it is our role to "judge them that are within" (1 Corinthians 5:12). We dare not take the view advocated by one Christadelphian writer that the day of the Lord's coming is so near that we can safely leave all of these issues to him.

3 The next argument that the Corinthian brethren put forward is certainly seen in the ecclesias today. In 1 Corinthians 6:5-7 Paul responds to their claim that there was no one in the ecclesia who could judge the case. Similarly one has heard it said in the modern context, We all sin, how can we judge another brother in view of Matthew 7:1-5? Paul continues in verses 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 to show that there are certain classes of sins that exclude those who commit them from the Kingdom; such things cannot have a place in the ecclesia. The Corinthian brethren had been

"deceived" by the philosophers into thinking that these things were not matters of salvation.

4 In verses 1 Corinthians 6:12-13 Paul exposes the depth of the false teaching and gives his response to it. Epicurean teaching (and modern humanism) argues that all the appetites of the body must be satisfied. Thus they said, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." Paul shows, firstly, that the end of all flesh-centred thought and action is death; secondly, that the Epicurean principle is invalid in the face of God's absolute laws—a concept rejected by the philosophers and, thirdly, that God has commanded repentance from these things and will judge men for them.

5 Finally, in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, Paul demonstrates that the saints cannot be one with the moral evil of the world but must be one with the character of God. The apostle's comment in 1 Corinthians 6:18 reminds us of Joseph, who, when Potiphar's wife tempted him, saw an open door and fled. 1 Corinthians 6:20 refutes the concept of humanism that man is on his own with no responsibility to higher authority. The saints have been redeemed by God and therefore ought to live solely unto Him.

These are concepts which neither the Epicureans and Stoics, nor the modern humanist, can comprehend. Humanism is a very expressive word—it puts man at the centre of all things. By contrast, the Scriptures exhort us to be Godly and Godlike, that is, to put God and His ways first in our lives. How we should do this is illustrated in the final section of this study. The effects of the Truth-sound teaching in Ephesians In Ephesians 4:21-24 Paul taught the Ephesian brethren and sisters to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." How are we to do this? I am convinced that the Word of God never gives us instruction in what we should do without showing us how to do it, either by precept or by example. Ephesians 4:25-32 is but one example in Scripture of how this process can be worked out in our lives. Other helpful examples can be found in Romans 13:12 Colossians 3:8 Hebrews 12:1 James 1:21, and 1 Peter 2:1) Let us look at some key points in this passage.

Ephesians 4:25 No lying. The word translated "putting away" in Ephesians 4:25 is the same as that translated "put off" in Ephesians 4:22. The hateful activity of lying must be put aside like a garment and replaced by the positive virtue of always speaking the truth. The reason for this is that "we are members one of another," therefore truth should be the only language current amongst us. There should be no 'white lies' and no 'being economical with the truth' in our dealings with each other.

Ephesians 4:28 No theft. In a similar way, the brother who once enriched himself at the expense of others must now be a contributor to the needs of his brethren. The contrast is between one who by stealth takes that which belongs to another and one who exhausts and wearies himself to provide for the needs of others. Thus the focus turns away from self (the centre of humanist thought) to the community of the saints, those whom God is seeking for His Kingdom.

Ephesians 4:29 Sound speech. The word translated "corrupt" here is used in passages such as Matthew 7:17-18 Matthew 12:33 and Luke 6:43 to describe a tree producing rotten fruit, or the rot itself. No one would eat such fruit, and no one should hear rotten words coming from our mouth ("communication" here is the Greek *logos*). Rather, our words should strengthen and build up the ecclesia. When the audience in the synagogue in Nazareth heard Jesus speak they "wondered at

the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

Luke 4:22 There is our pattern and example.

Ephesians 4:31-32 The transformation. In putting off the old man (Ephesians 4:22) we must put off:

"bitterness" (Strong's number 4088). This attitude was found in Simon the sorcerer, who tried to buy the gift of giving the Holy Spirit;

Acts 8:23

"wrath" (2372). We are not to behave like the Jews of Nazareth, who were "filled with wrath" against Jesus;

Luke 4:28

"anger" (3709). James wrote: "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;"

James 1:19-20

"clamour" (2906). The word is used of the "great cry" in the Sanhedrin in Acts 23:9, and also in Revelation 21:4, where we are told that there will be no "crying" in the final consummation;

"evil speaking" (988). This word is that from which we get our word 'blasphemy', and should clearly form no part of the speech of those who have "put off...the old man";

"malice" (2549). Another word used of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:22 "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness."

Yet this is only half the task. We must also "put on the new man," and be:

"kind" (5543). God is "kind unto the unthankful and to the evil," Luke 6:35 and so should we be;

"tenderhearted" (2155). This is a word used in only one other passage: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous;" 1 Peter 3:8

"forgiving" (5483). When confronted with Jesus's parable of the two debtors, and the question, "which of them will love him most?," Simon the Pharisee replied: "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most." Luke 7:42-43 It was a right judgement, and our love for God will be in proportion to our appreciation of the mercies we have received from Him.

Luke's record of the trials and crucifixion Bernard Burt

Luke's record of the trials and crucifixion Bernard Burt The Testimony2007 p.314

Much of Luke's account of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus is unique to him. Careful consideration of this material yields many insights into Jesus' last hours before his death. THE GOSPELS differ far more from one another than would be noticed by a casual reading of them. In each of the four records the Spirit presents us with a large amount of unique information about our Lord Jesus Christ during the days of his flesh. This article will focus mainly on Luke 23:1-56. A careful comparison of this chapter and the corresponding records in Matthew, Mark and John shows that just over seventy per cent of the factual information presented in this chapter is unique to Luke. This article will highlight just some of that unique information and seek to explore the significance of it.

Peter at the trial of Jesus

All the four Gospel writers record that Peter was present during the early stages of Jesus' trials. However, it is only Luke who tells us that Peter's denials of his Lord were addressed each time to a specific individual: "Woman, I know him not" (Luke 22:57); "Man, I am not" (Luke 22:58); "Man, I know not what thou sayest" (Luke 22:60). It is Luke alone who records that "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61). Here we have a much more personal glimpse of those traumatic events in Annas' house than in any other Gospel. The first accusation

Piecing together the Gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus before Pilate is a fascinating exercise. Luke is the only Gospel from which it can be clearly seen that, after the (illegal) night-time interrogations before Annas and Caiaphas, there was an attempt at legality in a trial at first light before the whole of the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71). Following this, Luke alone records that "the whole multitude of them [the Sanhedrin] arose, and led him unto Pilate" (Luke 23:1). It is clear from the Gospel records that they expected a formality of a trial and an immediate death sentence.

It is very probable that a deputation of Jewish leaders had been to Pilate the night before to advise him that they would be bringing a notable prisoner first thing the next morning and that they wanted him executed before the Passover Feast. It would seem that Pilate had agreed to this request, but changed his mind overnight, or perhaps when he saw the prisoner in the morning. John records that, when the Jews brought Jesus to him, he took them completely off guard by asking, "What accusation bring ye against this man?". The record continues, "They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:29-31). The Jews clearly had no prepared charge to lay before Roman justice, so they had to think on their feet; what would cause Pilate to convict him? At this point Luke picks up the account, and tells us, "And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King" (Luke 23:2). After a short interrogation of Jesus,

Pilate decided that there was no case to answer: “I find no fault in this man” (Luke 23:4). Again we are dependent on Luke for the next stage of the proceedings: “And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place” (Luke 23:5). Luke then narrates that Pilate saw an opportunity to get rid of the case, and, uniquely, relates Jesus’ trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).

“I find no fault in this man”

Luke reveals more to us about the attempts of Pilate to find Jesus not guilty and release him than any other Gospel. Seven times in total Pilate declared Jesus to be innocent; four of them are recorded by Luke:

1 “I find no fault in this man” (Luke 23:4; John 18:38) 2 “I . . . have found no fault in this man” (Luke 23:14) 3 “Lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him” (Luke 23:15) 4 “I have found no cause of death in him” (Luke 23:22) 5 “I am innocent of the blood of this just person” (Matthew 27:24) 6 “Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him” (John 19:4) 7 “Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him” (John 19:6). The journey to Golgotha

Each of the four Gospel writers records the journey from Pilate’s judgement hall to the place of crucifixion. Each has at least one unique detail, but Luke has more than all the others. Luke appears to have a different name for the place of crucifixion, but in fact the Greek word translated “Calvary” in Luke 23:33 is the same as that translated “skull” in Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22 and John 19:17, these being the only places where the word occurs.

It is only by putting together the four records that we can see the full pathos of that journey. John records that “he bearing his cross went forth . . .” (John 19:17). Luke tells us that the Romans laid the cross on Simon the Cyrenian “that he might bear it after Jesus” (Luke 23:26), the sense being that Simon was carrying the back end and walking directly behind Jesus, who was still carrying the front of the cross. As the journey progressed, Jesus became too exhausted even to do this, and Matthew tells us that Simon was now “compelled to bear his cross” (Matthew 27:32). When they got to the place of crucifixion, Jesus had become too weak even to walk up the hill, and it is Mark who reveals that “they bring him unto the place Golgotha” (Mark 15:22), the word translated “bring” being the same word as used in Mark 2:3, “bringing one sick of the palsy”, indicating that Jesus had to be carried up to the place of execution: “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14).

Clearly, Jesus was in the last stages of exhaustion on that journey, but Luke (again only Luke) tells us that he turned and spoke to the crowd who followed him, and particularly to the women in that crowd (Luke 23:27-31). When he spoke, he addressed them with a very rare title, “Daughters of Jerusalem”. In the plural form it occurs only in the Song of Solomon, speaking of those who attend upon the bride and desire to behold the bridegroom. The singular form “daughter of Jerusalem” occurs in several more places, particularly Lamentations 2:13, Lamentations 2:15, where the prophet Jeremiah (himself a wonderful type of Jesus in his sufferings) cries, “what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee . . . ? All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?”

Jesus himself has no comfort for them, recalling his own words in the Olivet Prophecy (Matthew 24:19; Mark 13:17; Luke 21:23), and quoting Hosea 10:8—the context of which is the destruction of Samaria for its wickedness!—and finally Ezekiel 17:24 : “I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish”. Space forbids a lengthy exposition of this verse, but the fundamentals are:

- The high tree: the kingdom under David and his sons, brought down by Nebuchadnezzar
- The low tree: Judah in captivity, exalted by the decree of Cyrus
- The green tree: Israel in the time of Jesus, dried up by the Romans
- The dry tree: Israel scattered among the nations, to be revived at the second coming. “Father, forgive them”

Luke is supremely the Gospel of Jesus at prayer (see “Jesus: man of prayer”, p. 271). As a priest he is continually making intercession with the Father throughout the Gospel, so it is Luke alone who records that, as “they [that is, the Romans] crucified him”, he prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”. This prayer is immediately followed by the statement, “And they [that is, the Romans] parted his raiment, and cast lots” (Luke 23:33-34). It is clear, therefore, that he was praying for the Roman soldiers, whose duty it was to put him to death by crucifixion. Doubtless they had never had a prisoner do that for them before! And equally doubtless, they would never have seen a prisoner behave on the cross as Jesus did. At first they were unmoved; Luke alone records that the soldiers mocked him and offered him vinegar, saying, “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself” (Luke 23:36-37). The continuing example of Jesus bearing his afflictions unto death eventually had its effect upon them, as will be seen. The thief on the cross

Another individual who is only introduced to us in Luke’s Gospel is the repentant thief. Matthew and Mark state that both of the malefactors crucified with him “reviled him” (Mark 15:32; cf. Matthew 27:44). Luke 23:39-43 has more detail, and reveals to us the remarkable mind and amazing understanding of one of the men who was “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20):

- “Dost not thou fear God . . . ?”; with the clear implication that, although his fellow did not, he did!
- “thou art in the same condemnation”, or, you are subject to the “judgment” (Young’s Literal Translation) of God
- “we indeed justly”; God’s judgement in our case is right
- “we receive the due reward of our deeds”; we are condemned to death because of “wicked works” (Colossians 1:21)
- “this man hath done nothing amiss”; Jesus was sinless, a conclusion that the Jewish rulers refused to accept
- “Lord”; he recognised that the one dying beside him was the Messiah
- “remember me”; he believed that Jesus would rise from the dead
- “when thou comest”; he understood that Jesus would ascend to heaven and then return to the earth to do a further work, which would involve raising those dead ones who were in ‘remembered places’, the meaning of the word “graves” in John 5:28
- “into thy kingdom”; that further work would also include the establishment of the longpromised Kingdom, of which Jesus would be the King.

What an amazing confession of faith this was! And what a response it drew from the Lord: 'Remember you then? You have my word today; you will be with me in the garden' (see Song of Solomon 5:1)!

"Into Thy hands I commend my spirit" It is perhaps not appreciated how diverse the four Gospel writers are in their recording of the sayings from the cross. Luke's record is vital to help us to understand the sequence of the seven 'words' that Jesus spoke during his crucifixion, for three of the seven are found only in Luke's Gospel:

1 "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) 2 "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27) 3 "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43) 4 "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) 5 "I thirst" (John 19:28) 6 "It is finished" (John 19:30)

7 "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that, almost at the end of his life, Jesus "cried with a loud voice" (Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37), but none of these three record what he said. It is John who records, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst . . . When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the [spirit]" (John 19:28, John 19:30). This gives the impression that "It is finished" (the last words of Psalms 22:1-31?) were the last words of Jesus. Luke, however, says: "when Jesus had cried [It is finished] with a loud voice, he said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the [spirit]" (Luke 23:4). So Jesus' last words were not the last words of Psalms 22:1-31 but the opening words of Psalms 31:5. A righteous man

Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the reaction of the centurion who was in charge of the crucifixion of the three. Matthew and Mark record him acknowledging that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Luke goes further and tells us that watching the crucifixion of Jesus causes the centurion to glorify God and acknowledge, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). May our consideration of his last hours cause us to do the same, not only with our lips but in our lives.

MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST BERNARD BURT The Testimony 1987 p. 226 The 'worship' of Christendom THE INVITATIONS currently put out to the public by the sects of Christendom appear to be principally appeals to "come and worship" rather than to hear preaching about some aspect of the gospel. A large poster outside a local Methodist hall reads, "Come and join us in the worship of God," while other denominations advertise 'Family Services' of various kinds, with emphasis on the participation of those assembled. Such publicity material clearly implies the doctrinal position that the 'man in the street', whatever his spiritual condition, may join with the congregation and offer worship which is acceptable and pleasing to God. This article will seek to demonstrate from Scripture that such a doctrine is false; that only those who have been "made nigh" can "worship the Father...in spirit and in truth;" and that therefore ecclesias should not issue invitations to the public which imply that anyone can offer such worship.

It is true that there is much in Christendom which would be regarded by the average man as 'worship' yet by Scriptural standards is false worship. "Ye worship ye know not what," was Jesus's assessment of the Samaritans' approach to God. John 4:22 His judgement on the religious leaders of his own people was equally scathing: "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9 It follows that, if doctrinal error is present, worship is "in vain;" and since Christendom is still astray from the truth it cannot offer acceptable worship to the Father.

Worship, like sacrifice under the Mosaic Law, must be offered on God's terms and by men whom He is pleased to accept; it is not for men to presume to offer to the Deity words and actions of their own invention. The Word of God describes two kinds of man, "the old man" and "the new man," and makes it abundantly clear that the latter is in a position to offer acceptable worship to God whereas the former is not. The main expositional section of this article will examine Scripture teaching on these two states of man.

Man at his best state The terms applied in the Scriptures to "the old man" leave no possible room for doubt as to his true position in relation to God. There is no need to consider passages which are "hard to be understood" to establish this point; simply setting out a series of phrases from three typical sections of Paul's epistles will suffice. The following list is by no means exhaustive, but those who are in the state of "the old man" are described as:

1. "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;" Ephesians 2:12
2. "without Christ;" Ephesians 2:12
3. "strangers from the covenants of promise;" Ephesians 2:12
4. "having no hope;" Ephesians 2:12
5. "without God in the world;" Ephesians 2:12
6. "far off;" Ephesians 2:13
7. "under sin;" Romans 3:9
8. "not righteous;" Romans 3:10
9. "without strength;" Romans 5:6
10. "ungodly;" Romans 5:6
11. "enemies;" Romans 5:10

It is important to recognise that these passages are not descriptions of what polite society would call evil or wicked people. Ephesians 2:1-22 and Romans 3:1-31 are simply descriptions of

unregenerate man as seen from the Divine point of view. Passages such as Romans 1:21-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 describe some of the worst excesses of human nature, but the sections of Scripture cited above are not drawing attention to specific sins, but to the state of alienation which exists between God and "the old man". Our neighbours, colleagues at work, unbaptised relatives, members of the congregation at the local "church," all are in this position. It follows that there is no basis for them to "approach God" or "draw near" to Him, since they are alienated by sin and outside the bonds of His covenant. The men and women to whom Jesus and the apostles preached were in this category, and it is significant that in all the accounts of their various methods of preaching e.g. Acts 2:14 Acts 8:5; Acts 8:35 Acts 9:20 Acts 14:15 Acts 16:10 Acts 19:9, etc. it is never recorded that they invited their audiences to 'worship', join in prayers, sing choruses or even attend 'services'. Jesus and his apostles preached an uncompromising message, requiring their hearers to forsake their old ways, repent and be baptised, in order that their sins might be forgiven and reconciliation to God accomplished. The way of reconciliation

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "The old man" cannot approach God, or even get himself into a position to do so on his own. There must certainly be a desire on the part of man, but the essential element in the process of reconciliation is a response by God to meet the need of those who are "far off" and "under sin." Two aspects of this will now be considered.

1. God's call and our reaction to it

Jesus was just as emphatic about this as he was about the worship of the Samaritans and Pharisees: "No man can come to me, except the Father Which hath sent me draw him..." John 6:44 Before considering it in the context of the present study, it is important to notice the sharp contrast between its true meaning and the doctrines of Christendom. The latter, with such concepts as 'Prevenient Grace', alleges that the Holy Spirit must act directly upon the heart of a man before he can hear and accept the gospel. Jesus, in the context of the words quoted above, leaves us in no doubt as to the nature of the drawing process: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45). The process of God's drawing men to Himself is therefore a rational one; it involves God teaching men, and their hearing and learning of Him. It is more fully defined by Paul in Romans 10:9-15 :

(a) There must first be preaching for "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Corinthians 1:21

(b) Men must hear that preaching in order to manifest faith-"how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

(c) There must be belief in the heart in Scripture the heart is the seat of the intellect, not simply of the emotions, for "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7); this implies an intellectual appreciation and understanding of the things preached.

(d) Having heard and believed, there must next be confession of faith with the mouth this implies both that a man must declare his faith publicly and that he is able to express in his own words the things that he has come to believe.

(e) All these things having been done, the man must then call on the name of the Lord both aspects of this are vital: first the recognition that even after manifesting faith a man is not saved without the mercy of God and His grace in forgiving sin; second, the importance of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "for there is none other name...given...whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12 for "God...gave unto him the name which is above every name." Php 2:9, RV A similar sequence can be seen by putting together the three records of the parable of the sower. Those who bring forth fruit are they that (i) hear the word; Matthew 13:23 (ii) understand it; Matthew 13:23 (iii) accept it; Mark 4:20, RV (iv) keep it. Luke 8:15

These passages leave no room for doubt that God's way is to call men and women through the proclamation of His Word and to accept those who respond to that call in the way that He requires. The notion that men who are ignorant of the true God, His ways and His doctrine can offer such worship as they think fit and be accepted by the Deity is clearly at variance with these Scriptures.

2. Christ's sacrifice and our belief This section is an expansion of (e) above: what is involved in calling upon the name of the Lord? Again, the Word of God teaches us that both God and man are involved: God opening up the way of reconciliation and man availing himself of it. The following stages can be seen:

(a) "But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8 God made the first move in sending His Son into the world to be "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"

(b) Writing to those who, like him, were "in Christ," Paul continued: "(we are) now justified by his blood." Romans 5:9 Justification (being accounted righteous by God) comes only as a result of association with the blood of Jesus; there is no other way.

(c) Again, writing to believers, Paul said: "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:13 The sacrifice of Jesus is the means and the only means whereby men can come near to God in an acceptable relationship.

(d) The sacrificial work of Jesus was to the end that "he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross." Ephesians 2:16 Man cannot achieve this reconciliation independently of Jesus's sacrifice.

Thus this section of the study establishes that unless a man has availed himself of God's gracious provision in the sacrifice of His Son, he is still unjustified and far off from God (and therefore not in a position to offer acceptable worship) even though he knows the doctrines of the Truth academically. The example of Saul of Tarsus is quite outstanding in this respect:

(i) he saw the risen Lord Jesus on the Damascus road; Acts 26:13; Acts 26:19 (ii) he was chosen by God; Acts 22:14 (iii) he was to be a chosen vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles; Acts 9:15 (iv) he was to be a witness to the things he had seen, and of other things which would be revealed to him. Acts 26:16

Yet all these things would have come to nought if he had not obeyed the command of Ananias: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16 There can be no forgiveness, no reconciliation, no bringing nigh to God, without baptism. Jesus and his apostles emphasised this point time and again:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" Mark 16:15-16 "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;" Acts 2:38

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ...And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:27; Galatians 3:29

Salvation, taking on the name, and the hope of the promises made to the fathers, are all inextricably bound up with baptism in these passages. No man can ignore the latter and claim that he stands in some kind of relationship to the other things, and that upon this basis he can offer acceptable worship. A right relationship with God must come first The effect of reconciliation The position of "the old man" (whether he profess to be an atheist, or a 'born-again Christian') has been examined. What a contrast there is when we now turn to look at the teaching of the Scriptures concerning "the new man!" Those in this position are:

1. made nigh by the blood of Christ; Ephesians 2:13
2. reconciled to God; Ephesians 2:16
3. able to "have access...unto the Father;" Ephesians 2:18
4. "fellowcitizens with the saints;" Ephesians 2:19
5. members of "the household of God;" Ephesians 2:19
6. "called saints;" 1 Corinthians 1:2, Gk.

7. 'Justified by faith;" Romans 5:1
8. able to "have peace with God;" Romans 5:1
9. able to "rejoice in hope;" Romans 5:2
- 10 "sanctified." Hebrews 10:14

It is instructive to compare and contrast the details in the above list with those in the parallel list above. It is important also to remember that this division of mankind into two classes (very unequal in numbers) is not ours but God's. It is not we who say that outwardly religious, good-living and well-meaning people in the world are "dead in trespasses and sins;" it is the Word of God. We are not judging them when we say this, but the Word does. Likewise, we are not justifying ourselves, or claiming "works of righteousness" better than theirs when we claim that we are saints and they are sinners; we are stating the facts as the Scriptures set them forth. We have no cause for pride, but should be humbly grateful that God has called us out of darkness into light, whereas He has not (yet?) called them. Because of this situation we should increase our efforts in His service to preach the gospel in the hope that it will be the means of drawing others to Him. What we must not do is blur God's boundary lines and say that those whom His Word defines as sinners do in fact have "access unto the Father" and can therefore offer acceptable worship to Him. The privilege of worship

Having written of those who are "sanctified" as a result of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ Hebrews 10:14, quoted above the apostle continued: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession (RV) of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:19-25 The whole of this section of the Letter to the Hebrews is based on the Mosaic

ordinances of the Day of Atonement and of the sacrifice of the red heifer; Hebrews 9:13 the latter being a type of the offering of Jesus, in that the sacrifice of the one heifer was effective in the cleansing of many over a long period of time; and the former, in that both the work of the high priest and the sacrifices he offered pointed forward to the greater sacrifice of the Son of God. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having washed in the water of the laver, was allowed the privilege of entering the most holy, taking with him blood to sprinkle before the mercy seat, and incense which represented the prayers of the nation. In this way he was permitted to "draw near" to God-something which was not allowed to any other Israelite under the Law. The argument in the section of Hebrews 10:1-39 cited above is that, spiritually, this privilege of "drawing near" to God has now been granted on a far wider scale than anything which was allowed under the Law. We must however, be careful to notice that this privilege is still a privilege; permission to "draw near" has not been granted universally, it is only given to those who 1. are "brethren" in the accepted New Testament sense of the word;

2. have availed themselves of "the blood of Jesus";
3. have accepted and recognise Jesus as their high priest;
4. are members of the "house of God";
5. have a "true heart";
6. know what they believe, to the point of having a "full assurance of faith";
7. have been baptized, their "bodies washed with pure water";
8. have made a "confession of (their) faith";
9. are of those who regularly assemble themselves together;
10. are looking for "the day approaching."

It is these people who reckon themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and of whom the apostle further wrote: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips which make confession (RV) to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Hebrews 13:14-16 Our worship-be it prayer, singing, reading or whatever "the fruit of our lips" is here paralleled with the sacrifices offered under the Law. It must be offered in the appointed way, that is, "by him." To offer worship "by him" we must be "in him"; therefore worship is the privilege only of those who are in Christ.

Christendom, en masse, is not "in Christ," for it is ignorant of the truth as it is in him. It is therefore collectively in the state of "the old man" as Scripturally defined in the list above, and its constituents are not in a position to offer "the sacrifice of praise" to God. It is manifest that they do not "fear this glorious and fearful name, YAHWEH THY ELOHIM" Deuteronomy 28:58 when they offer prayers 'in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost' or sing hymns to the 'blessed Trinity' etc.

It may be objected that the understanding of the matter expressed in this article shuts the vast majority of humanity off from the privilege of worship. It is true that it does. However this is not a

thing of sentiment or feeling; the touchstone must be: "What saith the Scripture?" Jesus said: "...wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13-14 We should always be deeply suspicious of anything which makes the narrow way seem to be broad.

Practical consequences The foregoing study has sought to establish the Scriptural principles concerning the saints and worship. None of the passages quoted are felt to be 'difficult' or obscure in their meaning, The relative positions of "the old man" and "the new man" in the sight of God are so clearly set forth in the New Testament that some readers might feel that points have been unnecessarily laboured in this article. It is the writer's experience, however, that the difficulty in this subject lies not in understanding the principles but in applying them day by day in ecclesial life. There are two particular areas in which problems arise from time to time.

1. Our association with the world

It is a sad fact of ecclesial life today in certain areas that some brethren and sisters join with one or more of the denominations of Christendom to, worship ' while retaining association with the ecclesia.' Yet the Scriptures teach that there can be no communion (fellowship) between light and darkness, and that the saints cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and the table of devils. 2 Corinthians 6:14 1 Corinthians 10:21 It ought to be self-evident that what passes for worship in the modern temples of the apostasy is just as much idolatry as the worship offered in the temples of Corinth, since the Triune Deity is just as much a figment of man's imagination as Aphrodite or Apollo. Members of the ecclesia who associate with the apostasy in this way should be lovingly yet firmly taught again "which be the first principles of the oracles of God," Hebrews 5:12 and encouraged to make the right choice between light and darkness. If they will not do this then the ecclesia must separate itself from them: "now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be an idolater...with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11, where the context in verses 7,8 is the Breaking of Bread). This is unquestionably an issue of fellowship, and it has been so regarded by faithful brethren and ecclesias from the time of Brother Thomas.

2. The world's association with the ecclesia

It has already been noted that there is no evidence in the New Testament that the apostles, or those who were taught the truth by them, held 'services' at which the public were invited to join with them in worship yet we do! If we wish to follow the Scriptural pattern our public preaching (whether in our own halls or hired premises) ought to consist simply of reading from Scripture and a proclamation therefrom of the truths of the gospel, with opportunities for public discussion as well if circumstances permit (e. g. Acts 17:1-3 Acts 19:8-10, etc.).

Such arrangements are suitable for occasions when the majority of the audience are still in the position of "the old man." If the ecclesia's circumstances are such that visitors to public meetings are few and far between, and the brethren and sisters (being in the vast majority) wish to engage in the privilege of worship which is theirs, there is no Scriptural reason why they should not do so. However, to be consistent with the principles which have been considered in this article, the presiding brother should:

1. Begin the meeting by saying that it has been arranged by the ecclesia for the purpose of preaching the truth to such as will come in and listen.
2. Abstain from inviting those not in the covenant to "join us in our opening hymn" etc.
3. Choose hymns which declare relevant aspects of the Truth, rather than those which contain petitions or promises of faithfulness.
4. Offer prayer on behalf of the saints, seeking God's blessing on their preaching of His Word. Alternatively, pray on behalf of those who are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," that God's Word may have its effect upon them and that through belief, baptism and obedient walk they may be found approved of the Lord at his coming. There is good Scriptural ground for the latter method. see Genesis 20:7 Job 42:7-9
5. Say nothing that would lead the unenlightened "stranger from the covenants of promise" to think that he has the same privilege of approach to God as the saints.

It ought by now to be evident that there is no Scriptural basis for ecclesias holding 'Family Services' or public meetings for worship. The apostles and the first-century ecclesias did no such things, and for us to do them would be to deny the principles of separation and holiness which are taught time and again in the Word.

Another aspect of the matter which is perhaps even more important is that of youth gatherings, where many baptised and unbaptised young people come together to be taught from Scripture. There is a need for the organisers of such events to think very carefully about the devotional aspects of the programme in order to avoid creating the impression that all can join in worship on an equal basis. Such gatherings should be wonderful opportunities to emphasise the privileges of worship and fellowship which are given to those who are prepared to accept God's offer of salvation and take upon themselves the responsibilities of becoming "members of the household of God".

Further reading The basis of the exposition set forth in this article is neither new nor original. The doctrinal position advanced has been that held by faithful brethren throughout the history of the Christadelphian community. Some of the source and background material which I have found helpful is listed below for those who would like to study the subject further.

"Inviting sinners to sing and pray," Brother J. Thomas, *The Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come*, 1859, pp. 131-3.

"What about the children?," Brother R. Roberts, *The Ambassador of the Coming Age*, 1866, pp. 184-5.

"Inviting strangers to take part in the worship of the ecclesia," *The Christadelphian*, September 1866, Intelligence columns.

"Worship in relation to the alien," Brother A. T. Jannaway, *The Christadelphian*, July & August 1886.

Noah: a preacher of righteousness

Noah: a preacher of righteousness Bernard Burt The Testimony 2009 p. 314

Noah not only preached to the people in words. He also witnessed to God in the things which he did, not least in the building of the Ark. As the “eighth person” he represented a new beginning in the purpose of God.

WHAT WAS LIFE LIKE in the ecclesia in the days of Noah? There is not very much information (the first five chapters of Genesis cover the first 1,500 years of history!), but it is surprising what can be gleaned from these chapters and some other references later in the Scriptures. The first thing to notice is that there were some very old brothers in the ecclesia! Noah, as he grew up, could have conversed with six men who had known Adam, some of them for hundreds of years. One of the effects of these long lives was that the truth was preserved and passed on from generation to generation through the line of the seed. The next detail is that there is evidence of early written records: “This is the book (Heb. *cepher*) of the generations of Adam (Genesis 5:1). The word *cepher* is the normal Hebrew word for book, and Adam could have recorded every word of the section of Scripture before this verse. There were also prophets in the ecclesia. Jude verses 14,15 records the prophecy of Enoch against the ungodly and their speeches (notice the “hard speech” of Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24!). Enoch and the other Lamech (Genesis 5:21, Genesis 5:29) named their sons prophetically in the light of their understanding of the purpose of God. The man Noah The testimony of Scripture concerning Noah is that he was “perfect” or upright (Genesis 6:9), and that by his righteousness he saved others (Ezekiel 14:14). In 2 Peter 2:5 he is called “a preacher of righteousness”. This preaching was far more than just words. Noah “walked with God” (Genesis 6:9). Like Daniel many years later, men could see that there was no error or fault in his life. Hence he had a basis to preach righteousness to others. The world is very good at identifying hypocrisy, a characteristic that would not have been discernible in Noah. Can it be seen in us? The world to which Noah preached

Concerning the generation who lived immediately before the Flood, Scripture says: “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and . . . every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). Jesus spoke of them “eating and drinking” and “marrying and giving in marriage” (Matthew 24:38). Peter describes those times as “the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5) and the people as being “disobedient” (1 Peter 3:18-21). It could not have been easy preaching to such people on such an unpopular subject as righteousness. Compare the preaching of the same topic by Paul to Felix (Acts 24:24-25). Noah was probably told, “go thy way”, in no uncertain terms by the wicked antediluvians, but he persevered with his preaching.

Words and deeds

Noah’s preaching was not just by word of mouth. Hebrews 11:7 records: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by

faith". The building of the Ark—150 metres long, twenty-five metres wide, fifteen metres high and a volume of over 55,000 cubic metres—was an immense task, even if spread over 120 years. In constructing this vessel, Noah witnessed to his faith in God and God's purpose. The Ark would soon become visible to those to whom Noah preached. It was a witness to the sincerity of the man and his message which could not be gainsaid. But even this did not move to repentance the evil generation in which he lived. However, Noah's building of the Ark was not just to witness to and thereby condemn the people of his day; he also laboured in this work to save his family (and anyone else who would enter the Ark) from the coming judgement. So in our day, ecclesial preaching is both a witness to the world and a witness and a warning to the ecclesia itself: "save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). That generation, says Peter "were disobedient" (1 Peter 3:20), although the longsuffering of God was "holding forth a welcome" (Rotherham) via the open door of the ark. The language of Peter's reference to preaching to the spirits in prison links back to Isaiah 61:1-2. Noah, as a type of Christ, was preaching to those disobedient spirits the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of God's vengeance. So should we, for "as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37). A new beginning The Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 2:5 describes Noah as "the eighth person". What did he mean by this?

Some modern translations attempt to get round the difficulty by rendering the sentence as "preserved Noah with seven others" (ASV), but this is clearly not the meaning of the Greek word, as a glance at Luke 1:59; Acts 7:8; Revelation 17:11 and 21:20 (all the other occurrences) will show. Jude correctly records that Enoch was "the seventh from Adam" and in that mode of reckoning Noah is the tenth and not the eighth!

What is the spiritual significance of the number eight? It was on the eighth day that the flesh was cut off in the rite of circumcision, on the eighth day that the leper was pronounced clean and on the eighth day of their consecration that the Levitical priests began their work. On the first day of the week (which is also the eighth) Jesus was raised to newness of life. It is therefore reasonable to say that eight represents a new beginning. Seth was also a new beginning in the purpose of God, "For God, said [Eve], hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew" (Genesis 4:25). Of those who descended from Seth, Noah was the eighth. With him God made another new beginning: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" (Genesis 7:1).

Thus this preacher of righteousness passed through the destroying Flood, and when he emerged from the Ark he immediately witnessed to his faith by being the first to offer burnt offerings unto his God. Having been saved by the baptism which the flood prefigured, are we witnessing to our faith by presenting our bodies as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1-2)?

THE ECCLESIA OF CHRIST

THE ECCLESIA OF CHRIST

Bernard Burt The Testimony 1998 p.150 THE WORD 'ecclesia' tends to be used within the Christadelphian community to describe either an individual group of believers in a particular place or the whole of the community worldwide. Both of these usages are firmly based upon New Testament patterns, the first on the repeated phrase, "the church [eccle-sia] in . . ." (for example, Revelation 2:12), the second on the Lord's statement, "upon this rock I will build my church [ecclesia]" (Matthew 16:18).

However, there is an equally clear passage which points us much further back in our consideration of the ecclesia: "This is that Moses . . . that was in the church [ecclesia] in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina . . ." (Acts 7:37-38). God has been taking out of the nations a people for His Name from the beginning; and, since the basic meaning of the Greek word ekklesia is that of an assembly called together for a particular purpose, it should not surprise us that Stephen, under inspiration, should project our understanding of the concept of the ecclesia way back into Old Testament times. This article will therefore consider the development of the ecclesia from earliest days, and seek to draw from the records those lessons which will help the twentieth-century ecclesia as it waits for the return of the Master. The ecclesia in Eden

It is my belief that the garden of Eden was a type of the temple of the age to come. It was high and lifted up, for the river which flowed out of it watered, that is, gave life to, the whole earth (Genesis 2:10-14). The garden, almost certainly, had a wall around it, with the entrance on the east (Genesis 3:24). It was of large extent, for it contained "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Genesis 2:9). Within it there was fellowship between man and the Elohim (Genesis 3:8). When Adam was expelled from the garden, it was both geographically and spiritually logical that the place where our earliest parents worshipped God should be before the cherubim at the east of the garden. Since both animal sacrifices and meal offerings were made, there must have been an altar. In later years, when the Aaronic priests first offered upon their altar, "there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat" (Leviticus 9:24); so, again, I think that it is a reasonable assumption that the acceptance of sacrifice outside the garden was by fire coming forth from the cherubim. What a privilege that must have been, to assemble as an ecclesia before the manifestation of the glory of the God of creation and receive the sign of acceptance at His hand! Sadly, all in the ecclesia did not see it in this light.

"And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering [Heb. minchah] unto the LORD" (Genesis 4:3). Abel too brought his minchah (v. 4), but he understood by faith (Hebrews 11:4) that the first thing that a man needs to bring before God is atoning blood. He, therefore, brought a lamb for himself and (if "sin" in Genesis 4:7 is translated, as it can be, "sin offering") for his brother also. Cain's wrath could not be placated, however, so Abel became the first prophet martyr (Luke 11:50-51), and Cain went out and founded the first apostate city community. Against this community the true ecclesia witnessed through the mouths

of Enoch (Genesis 4:23-24; Jude 1:14-15) and Noah, until the Divine judgement fell upon the wicked.

(I believe that the faithful Enoch of Genesis 5:21-24 was the "young man" threatened by the wicked Lamech in Genesis 4:23-24, and that this Lamech was one of the "ungodly sinners" who uttered the "hard speeches" referred to by Enoch in his prophecy as recorded in Jude 1:15.)

Thus, for a time after the events of Genesis 3:1-24, there was a faithful ecclesia around the altar at the gate of the garden. Then human nature asserted itself, Cain chose his own mode of worship, and the first apostasy (translated "a falling away" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3) occurred. What began as a division within the ecclesia developed into a situation where the true ecclesia was only a tiny remnant of eight persons, and the thoughts of every other man's heart was only evil continually. It should not therefore surprise us in these latter days if those who are "not of us" (1 John 2:19) go out from us, and if the ecclesia is a tiny community in a wicked world. The examples of Enoch and Noah are exhortations to us to both witness against and preach the gospel to that world.

Abraham's ecclesia The man Abraham was not a solitary worshipper of the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Genesis 14:14 states that he had 318 "trained [mg. instructed] servants". The root Hebrew word occurs in Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go ..."; and the sense is given by Strong as 'to narrow' Abraham had therefore taught these men the narrow way which leads to life. Reference is made in Genesis 14:13 to Mamre, Eshcol and Aner, who were "confederate" with Abraham. The Hebrew is literally "men [or masters] of a covenant with Abraham". (See Strong's Concordance nos. 1167, 1285.) There was, therefore, a sizeable ecclesia in his time, consisting of those born in his house and those whom he had brought into the bonds of the covenant through his preaching of "the gospel" (Galatians 3:8). The ecclesia in Abraham's day was not left without Divine instruction: "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Genesis 26:5). This verse indicates that a considerable body of teaching had been given to the patriarchs; and there are a number of practical instances of this teaching being applied throughout the book of Genesis. In Genesis 38:1 it is recorded that "Judah went down from his brethren . . ."; that is to say, he left Jacob's altar and established his own ecclesia. The patriarchal law was observed in Judah's ecclesia, for Onan was commanded to "raise up seed" to his brother, and Tamar (the daughter-in-law of the priest of the ecclesia) was commanded to be burnt when she was believed to be with child by whoredom (Genesis 38:24; Leviticus 21:9). Sadly, the doctrine of fellowship was not so well understood, for, after the death of Onan, Judah put away the innocent Tamar from amongst them (1 Corinthians 5:13). Yet Tamar remained faithful whilst in the world in the house of her father, and eventually Judah had to recognise her righteousness and receive her back into fellowship. All these things are "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). The ecclesia in the wilderness As was noted at the beginning of this article, the Spirit's use of the word ekklesia in Acts 7:38 form the basis of our understanding that the "congregation" of Israel in the wilderness is a type of the ecclesia of Christ. The Apostle Paul puts it in even clearer terms in 1 Corinthians 10:1-33 : "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). In later verses in this passage the inspired apostle uses the Greek

word for 'types' (1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:11), thus showing us the way in which we should regard Israel in the wilderness—and what lessons that people has to teach us! There are warnings of the dangers of faithlessness, such as when they esteemed themselves to be as grasshoppers in the sight of the Canaanites and took up the cry of 'back to Egypt'. There is warning of the peril of secret idolatry, for, although the golden calf had been destroyed and the Kohathites carried the tabernacle of witness through the wilderness, in their hearts they carried "the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves" (Amos 5:26). There was apostasy in the ecclesia in the wilderness, for Korah set up his tabernacle in the midst of them (Numbers 16:24) and sought to lead the people into 'another fellowship' ministered to by his 250 priests who burned incense. There was immorality too, when another tent, literally 'the place of curse' (25:8), was set up in the camp and many committed fornication there (1 Corinthians 10:8). Yet, in the midst of all this, men like Joshua, Caleb and Phinehas walked faithfully, did not murmur or rebel, and were ultimately given inheritance in the land which flowed with milk and honey (Numbers 13:30; Numbers 14:6-9, Numbers 14:36-38; Joshua 14:6-14). There too, in the midst of the ecclesia, was the man Moses, the meekest of all men when subject to personal attack (Numbers 12:1-16), but valiant for the truth in the earth when Korah and all his company rose up against the ordinances of God (Numbers 16:1-50).

"Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after" (Hebrews 3:5). How sad it was, therefore, that on the day when "Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation [the ecclesia] together before the rock" (Numbers 20:10), when they should have spoken to the rock, which was now representative of the resurrected Christ, and out of which would have flowed rivers of living water (John 7:38), Moses himself became the rebel and forfeited his immediate place in the land.

"Upon this rock"

"And upon this rock I will build my church [ecclesia]" (Matthew 16:18). With the Old Testament background considered above, it is easy to see the true meaning of the Lord's words. He is the foundation of the ecclesia: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). It is his life and his teaching that should be the basis of the life and teaching of the ecclesia. There is no spiritual profit in building upon any other foundation; some in the wilderness sought to be founded on Korah, and some in Corinth claimed to be baptized into the name of one other than Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12-15).

What do we build upon this foundation: "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble" (1 Corinthians 3:12)? Whatever we build, the quality of our work will eventually become apparent, for "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13). The Apostles Paul and Peter clearly regarded each of us as individual stones, being built into a spiritual temple: "Now therefore ye are . . . fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-21). In 1 Peter 2:4-9 the believers are described as "lively stones", being built up as "a spiritual house" whose "chief corner stone" is the Lord Jesus Christ. The lesson of this figure is that, just as the children of Israel had to keep the camp in the wilderness physically

clean so that God might continue to walk among them (Deuteronomy 23:12-14), so we must ensure that there is no spiritual uncleanness within the ecclesia by dealing with such matters in the way in which Paul taught the Corinthians to do in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. The head of the body

There are nine passages in the New Testament where the ecclesia is described as a body or as the body of Christ. (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Corinthians 10:12-27; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 4:12-16; Ephesians 5:23-30; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19; Colossians 3:15.) These passages make it clear that Jesus is the head of the body, being its saviour (Ephesians 5:23) and "the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18). The ecclesia is to be subject to Christ (that is, obedient to his teaching and conforming to his example), for he loved the ecclesia and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:24-25). The ecclesia is cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26), but for this to happen the ecclesia must read the Word, understand it and put its precepts into practice. This washing process is able to remove all spots and wrinkles, and to make the ecclesia holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27).

How vital it is, then, that, as a community, we continue to read the Word of God together, not just formally in meetings, but whenever we have opportunity! If we know that we are going to meet brethren and sisters we should have a Bible with us, and make it our practice to open it and talk about it. We cannot all teach, but we can all ask one another, "What have you found in the readings today?". Shame on us if we cannot answer that question because we have not read, or have read without thinking about the meaning of God's Word. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). We demonstrate the depth and warmth of our friendships in the Truth by the amount of sharpening which we do.

While Christ is several times described as the head of the body, or the ecclesia, it is important to notice that Scripture never calls him the King of the ecclesia. The study of the kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ is too large a subject to cover in depth in this article, but the basic facts are these:

1 There are references in the Gospels to Jesus as King of the Jews (for example, Matthew 2:2; Matthew 27:11, Matthew 27:29, Matthew 27:37, Matthew 27:42). These are often accusations by Jesus's enemies.

2 To Jesus in the days of his flesh God was "the great King" (Matthew 5:35).

3 Enemies of the Truth accused the disciples of preaching Jesus as a rival king to Caesar (Acts 17:7), but there is no evidence in the Acts or epistles that they ever did this.

4 The only references in the epistles of Paul and Peter to any other than earthly kings are to God (1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 6:15).

5 Only when the Lamb appears at the head of his armies is he described as "Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16).

Thus the concept of Jesus ruling now in the hearts and minds of his servants is entirely absent from the New Testament Scriptures. The bridegroom and the bride For the Lord Jesus Christ and for the ecclesia this is a time of waiting and watching for the consummation of the Father's purpose. Jesus is now, as he said, "set down with my Father in His throne" in the heavens (Revelation 3:21), waiting for the time when he will sit on his own throne in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32).

During this waiting period Jesus both described himself and is described by the inspired New Testament writers as "the bridegroom", while the ecclesia is described as "the bride". The present work of the bride (the ecclesia) is to "[make] herself ready" (Revelation 19:7) for the coming of the bridegroom. Only when she has done this will it be "granted" to her to be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white", which is defined as "the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8).

How this process should work is illustrated in Psalms 45:1-17. There, the bride is commanded to "forget . . . thine own people, and thy father's house" (Psalms 45:10). There has to be separation from the world. Before the bride is brought unto the king "in raiment of needlework" (Psalms 45:14) she is said in verse 13 to be "all glorious within". The word translated "within" occurs in 2 Chronicles 29:16 ("inner part"), where it describes the holy of holies which was in process of being cleansed by Hezekiah's priests. Putting these two passages together, it becomes clear that it is our responsibility, as constituents of the bride, to cleanse our hearts in preparation for the coming of the bridegroom.

Taking another aspect of the figure, Jesus described his disciples as ten virgins who, as they watched for the coming bridegroom, all slumbered and slept (Matthew 25:1-13). The Apostle Paul warned the ecclesia in his day of the dangers of spiritually going to sleep in the face of the imminent coming of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9). The true bride is presented in Scripture as a chaste virgin; and, as such, there is always a danger of corruption taking place before the coming of the bridegroom. In 2 Corinthians 11:2-4 the danger is doctrinal: "another Jesus", or "another gospel". In Ephesians 5:1-21 (in the context of the great passage about Christ and the ecclesia in the latter part of the chapter) Paul warned of the dangers of moral corruption in the ecclesia, and exhorted that there be no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

How much do we love the bridegroom? The basis of the relationship between bride and bridegroom is (or ought to be) love. In the case of the Lord there is no doubt. John wrote of "him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). But what of our love for him? Consider the following words:

"If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John 8:42);

"If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23);

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15);

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema" (1 Corinthians 16:22);

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:24);

". . . hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus" (Philemon 1:5).

Love of the Lord Jesus Christ should be one of the greatest motivating forces in our lives, both as individuals and as an ecclesia: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

The Kingdom of God on Earth

The Kingdom of God on Earth

Bernard Burt The Testimony, May 1999 p.187 THE HEAVEN, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Psalms 115:16); "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). These passages highlight a principle which can be seen in God's dealings with men through out the ages. His stated purpose for mankind, and His promises to faithful men and women, all relate to the earth on which we live. This article will examine a number of the statements of that purpose and some of the promises that God has made, in order to demonstrate that it is the intention of the Creator to set up His Kingdom upon this planet. From Creation to the promises to Abraham The way in which the book of Revelation picks up and re-focuses the language of the Edenic record in Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-25; Genesis 3:1-24 is interesting, for it points to a restoration on a higher plane of the original "very good" (Genesis 1:31) creation. The words of God to Noah (Genesis 8:21-22; Genesis 9:1-17) indicate the permanence of the earth in the Divine plan. However, it is when the record reaches Genesis 12:1-20 and the promises to Abraham that the detailed revelation of God's purpose really begins. In the first section of promises (Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 12:7) Abraham was directed to the land of Canaan, which was then promised to his seed. God promised that He would make Abraham's name great, and that "in" him "shall all families of the earth be blessed". The significance of the "in thee" of verse 3 will be considered later, but it is evident that these words introduce a worldwide dimension to the Abrahamic promises.

(One indication of the greatness of Abraham's name can be seen in the following comparison. The name of Mary (alleged by Catholics to be the Mediatrix and Queen of Heaven) is mentioned nineteen times in the New Testament, Peter (supposed by Rome to be the first pope) is referred to by name 163 times, yet the name Abraham is found 327 times.) The next major promise is found in Genesis 13:14-17. Here Abraham was commanded: "look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward". It is significant that there is no hint of a "look upward". The land which his eyes could see was promised to him and to his seed for ever, and that seed, said God, would be "as the dust of the earth".

(In Genesis 13:15 the Hebrew should be rendered "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed during a hidden period [Heb. ohm]" Likewise the covenant of Genesis 17:1-27 is the covenant of the olam or hidden period (Genesis 17:7). Abraham did not know when it would be manifested, but he did know that in a future age he would rise from the dead to possess the land, and that there would then be a world of faithful nations who would recognise him as their father. For further exposition of this matter see "Aions" in "A Bible Dictionary" by Brother Thomas, The Christadelphian, 1872, pp. 346-349, 464-4.)

After Abraham had defeated the hosts of Chedorlaomer came a further promise (Genesis 15:1-21). In the course of this Abraham is specifically told that, after attaining "a good old age", he will die (Genesis 15:15). He had previously been personally promised the land of Canaan "for

ever" (Genesis 13:15), and it is therefore being very clearly implied that he must rise from the dead to inherit the things promised. Abraham's belief in resurrection is clearly confirmed in Hebrews 11:19, where the record states that he accounted "that God is able to raise up, even from the dead" (RV). The extent of the land specifically promised to the seed of Abraham is further defined in Genesis 15:18 as that lying between the River Euphrates and the River of Egypt. The next promise contains the first mention of kings of the line of this man and the change of his name from Abram to Abraham, with the Divine explanation: "for a father of many nations have I made thee" (Genesis 17:5-6). In this chapter God declares the terms of His everlasting covenant with both Abraham and his (as yet unborn) son Isaac. The final promise (Genesis 22:1-24) contains explicit reference to one particular descendant of Abraham who will "possess the gate of his enemies" (Genesis 22:17). In this man all nations of the earth will be blessed.

It is clear from an examination of the promises to the patriarchs that the fulfillment of these things was considered by them to be a matter for the future. For example, when Isaac blessed Jacob, he said: "God Almighty bless thee . . . that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger" (Genesis 28:3-4).

God's promises to Israel in the wilderness When the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai God said to them that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant then they would be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people, "for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6). Here is the first use of the word 'kingdom' in relation to the purpose of God (There are two previous occurrences of 'kingdom'

(Genesis 10:10; Genesis 20:9), but both refer to human kingdoms.), and it picks up concepts contained in the Abrahamic promises of a central core of holy citizens bringing blessing on a wider populace. The prophecies of Balaam speak of the coming of a King out of Israel. The Kingdom of this King will be exalted above the surrounding nations and all others who will oppose him. Even Balaam himself will, at a future time, behold from afar the establishment of these things (Numbers 23:21; Numbers 24:7-9, Numbers 24:17-19). In the unfolding prophecy of the future of the nation of Israel contained in Deuteronomy 28:1-68 and Deuteronomy 30:1-20 the scattering of the nation from the land which they were about to inherit is foretold, followed by a wonderful restoration to abundant Divine blessing. The promises to David

God's revelation of His purpose was further expounded in the promises to David. The record in 2 Samuel 7:1-29 states that the seed was to come through the line of David. He would build a temple and rule as King for ever in David's presence (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The parallel record in 1 Chronicles 17:1-27 adds that God will "settle him in Mine house and in My kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore" (1 Chronicles 17:1-27). These passages show that the seed will be both Priest and King for God in God's temple and God's Kingdom, and that David will be raised from the dead to see these things. The Kingdom in the Psalms The details given in God's revelation to David are few by comparison with the revelations which God gave through him. Psalms 2:1-12 shows that, despite the rage of the nations, God's Messiah will be established as King on the hill of Zion, and will be given authority and power over all kings and nations. Psalms 22:1-31 prophetically records Messiah praising God in the great congregation, the meek being satisfied, and all the ends of the world turning to Yahweh and worshipping before Him. The

worldwide nature of the Kingdom is also spoken of in Psalms 72:1-20, where David prophesies that Messiah will judge with righteous judgement, and his reign will be as lasting as the sun and moon, extending all over the world. Gentile kings will bring presents, there will be plenty of food, all nations will call him blessed and will make prayer for him. Through Ethan in Psalms 89:1-52 God reveals that the promised seed of David will be His first-born, and higher than the kings of the earth. The Kingdom in the prophets The subject of the Kingdom in the writings of the prophets is worth a study on its own, and it will only be possible in this article to highlight a few of the revelations which are made in the sixteen prophetic books.

Isaiah foretells the establishment of the Kingdom above all nations, with God's house at Jerusalem being the centre of teaching and worship for the world at a time of world peace (Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 56:6-7). He prophesies the birth to a virgin of the child Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), who will reign upon the throne of David for ever (Isaiah 9:6-7). In the reign of Messiah all the animal creation will become vegetarian, as they were at the beginning (Isaiah 11:6-9; Isaiah 65:25; cf. Genesis 1:30). Physical ailments will be removed (Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 35:5-6); life will be greatly prolonged (Isaiah 65:19-23); even death will be swallowed up in victory (Isaiah 25:8). The deserts will blossom (Isaiah 35:1-2; Isaiah 41:17-20), and God's servants will not know weariness (Isaiah 40:31).

Jeremiah also speaks of the throne of the Lord being at Jerusalem and all nations going thither (Jeremiah 3:17). Messiah is described as a righteous branch (Jeremiah 23:5) who will reign for ever at a time when the Levitical priesthood and its sacrificial ministry are re-established (Jeremiah 33:14-22). Ezekiel's Kingdom prophecies are particularly centred upon the restoration of Israel and the building of the temple, topics that are the subject of another article in this issue. Daniel foretells many of the details of the destruction of the kingdom of men and its re placement with the Kingdom of God—a Kingdom which will break all human rule and authority and stand for ever (Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:14, Daniel 7:21-22, Daniel 7:26-27; Daniel 11:40-45; Daniel 12:1-3).

Joel also speaks of the destruction of the armed might of the Gentiles by the power of God, and of Jerusalem becoming the holy city and the dwelling place of God (Joel 3:9-17). Micah has similar words to those already referred to in Isaiah 2:1-22, but adds: "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4), showing the practical and agricultural basis of the Kingdom. Micah 5:2 makes it abundantly clear that the one who would come out of Bethlehem will be ruler in Israel—a fact that could not be denied by Herod or the Jewish rulers at the time of Jesus's birth.

Zechariah also speaks of God dwelling in Zion, the happiness and peace within the city and many nations being joined unto Him and be coming His people (Zechariah 2:10-13; Zechariah 8:3-6, Zechariah 8:22-23). The dominion of Messiah is described as being "from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth" (Zechariah 9:10). The final chapter of the prophecy speaks of all nations being gathered against Jerusalem, an earth quake splitting the Mount of Olives, the saints coming with Messiah to the city, living waters going out of Jerusalem, the Lord being King over all the earth, and the nations coming up to worship at Jerusalem. The Kingdom in the gospel of Jesus

There can be no doubt what sort of Kingdom is taught and foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is a Divine political Kingdom on the earth, centred in Jerusalem but having dominion

over the whole world. It has a temple at its centre with priests and sacrifice. Israel is the head of the nations, but all nations are part of the Kingdom. Messiah is its King, and all peoples submit to his authority.

What is the teaching of the New Testament? Did Jesus preach, and command his apostles to preach, the same Kingdom as was proclaimed in the writings of Moses and the prophets? Or did Jesus move away from the literal nationalistic kingdom idea and preach a spiritual kingdom, to be found within the ecclesia?

First of all, it is clear that Jesus could not have openly proclaimed himself as the Messiah of Israel, come to re-establish the throne of David in Jerusalem. This was not the purpose for which the Father had sent him at that time: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus had to be careful not to stir up Jewish nationalism to the point where they would take him by force to make him king. Nor must he attract the wrong kind of attention from the Romans. He had a three-and-a-half year ministry to fulfil, and there are several references in the Gospels to the fact that the end of it was some way off. (See John 2:4; John 7:6, John 7:8, John 7:30; John 8:20; Luke 9:51; John 12:23, John 12:27; Matthew 26:18; John 13:1; Mark 14:35; Matthew 26:45; Luke 22:53.) So he spoke to the multitude in parables, "because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:13).

Yet in those parables there are many references to the Kingdom proclaimed in the Old Testament. The Parables of the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, Matthew 13:36, Matthew 13:43) and the Dragnet (Matthew 13:47-50) speak eloquently of judgement to come upon the earth and the dividing of its inhabitants by the angels. The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14) tells of the casting off of the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem, the call of the Gentiles and the return of the King. The Parables of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) and the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) both speak of those who wait and work and watch before the Bridegroom/King comes to find some ready and others not.

Though Jesus could not openly proclaim to the people all the aspects of the Kingdom for the reasons stated above, it was a different matter when he spoke to his disciples in private. He showed them that "the meek . . . shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5); that Jerusalem is "the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35). He taught them to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). He promised his apostles that "in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). After his resurrection he taught the disciples for forty days concerning the Kingdom of God. This teaching provoked from them the question: "wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:3, Acts 1:6). Jesus's reply was not to rebuke them for a wrong concept of the Kingdom but to point out that the times were in God's hands and that they had a work to do first.

Before Jesus was born, the angel Gabriel announced that "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). After his birth all parties accepted that one had been born "King of the Jews", and the murderous actions of Herod clearly demonstrated what sort of a king he expected this child to become (Matthew 2:1-23).

Jesus indeed taught that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17, etc.), but if the Greek word for "at hand" (eggizô) is examined in its forty-two other occurrences in the New Testament it will be seen that its primary meaning is 'to draw near' (Matthew 15:8; Matthew 21:1, Matthew 21:34, etc.). The Kingdom had come nigh to the Jewish nation in the sense that the anointed one (the Messiah, the Christ) was among them. However, after his ascension the apostles never used this form of language, for the Kingdom had been taken from the people of Israel and was being offered to a nation who would bring forth the fruits thereof (Matthew 21:43). (See the footnote to the 1937 edition of The Declaration, p. 5. 8. Quoting Zechariah 12:10.9. Quoting Daniel 7:13.) In his teaching Jesus used language very reminiscent of Genesis 13:1-18: "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). As in Genesis, the geographical references are horizontal, not vertical. A study of the prophetic utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ is a fascinating one but outside the scope of this article. Three examples will have to suffice to illustrate that the Kingdom prophecies of Jesus accord exactly with those of the Old Testament prophets:

1 "O 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! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:37-39).

2 "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (Quoting Zechariah 12:10), and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven (Quoting Daniel 7:13) with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

3 "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31). The apostles and the Kingdom The apostles had heard Jesus "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" for forty days after his resurrection (Acts 1:3). They had asked if Jesus was about to restore the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). It is hardly surprising therefore to find them preaching the same Kingdom which Moses, the Psalms, the prophets and Jesus had proclaimed. So Peter, on the day of Pentecost, said that David had not ascended into the heavens (Acts 2:34), and said: "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne . . ." (Acts 2:30). Now it is no use arguing that the literal throne of David had disappeared; for Solomon himself prophesied that "the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever" (1 Kings 2:45), yet he did not sit on the literal throne of David, but built himself a new throne of ivory (1 Kings 10:18).

Peter and John spoke of "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began . . . Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days . . . the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:21-25). The Kingdom in the Epistles There are many brief quotations in the New Testament Epistles from the Old Testament Kingdom passages. These show that the hope which the apostles preached was "the hope of Israel" (compare Jeremiah 17:13 with Acts 28:20 and note the contexts). It was to these Old Testament promises that Jesus's apostles

directed their readers. The following examples will have to suffice from the apostolic writings. In Romans 11:1-36 Paul shows that the resurrection will occur at the time of the reconciling of Israel to God: "what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15); and at that time all Israel will be saved, "the Deliverer" will "come out of Sion" and will "turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

1 Corinthians 15:1-58 contains some of the most detailed exposition in the whole of Scripture on the resurrection state, the millennial rule of Jesus and the final stage when God will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:23-28, 1 Corinthians 15:49-58). In this section of the epistle the critical word 'in', which has already been seen in Genesis 12:3 and Genesis 22:18, is expounded. Paul shows (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). that we are all "in Adam" and in consequence die.

However, those who are "in Christ" will be made alive "at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). "In" therefore means 'related to', and the way in which Gentiles can become related to Abraham and the promises is demonstrated in Galatians 3:27-29, where Paul teaches that those who are baptized into Christ become heirs of the Abrahamic promises.

Ephesians 2:6-7 demonstrates that the saints are now in the heavenlies in Christ, and the exceeding riches of God's grace will be shown to them in the ages to come. Further, in Ephesians 5:1-5 the Kingdom is to be inherited by those who walk in love, but not by the covetous, the whoremongers, etc. (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21).

Paul teaches in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 that the Kingdom will be established by the revelation (apokalupsis) of Jesus "from heaven". He will come "in flaming fire" to take vengeance on those who "know not God" and "obey not the gospel", as well as "to be glorified in his saints".

Similarly, in 1 Peter 1:4-5, 1 Peter 1:13 the inheritance is spoken of as being "reserved in heaven" for the saints, "ready to be revealed in the last time" when it will be brought unto the faithful "at the revelation of Jesus Christ".

Finally, in Hebrews 4:1-11 the hope set before us is spoken of as the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Men must both believe and labour to enter into it—the apostles never speak of the Kingdom being already established. The final vision of the Kingdom The primary purpose of the Book of Revelation is to show unto the servants of God the things which would come to pass in the earth prior to the establishment of the Kingdom (Revelation 1:1). However, these visions are interspersed with others which do speak of the Kingdom age, and there are a number of doctrinal passages in Revelation which confirm the things written in the earlier books of Scripture. In the letter to the Thyatiran ecclesia Jesus applies his own Davidic promise (Psalms 2:1-12) of power over the nations to him "that overcometh" (2:26,27). This shows that the saints will be associated with Jesus in the rulership of the world in the millennial age. This teaching is confirmed in 3:21, where Jesus shows that he is now sitting in his Father's throne (in heaven), but when the time comes for him to sit in his throne (the Davidic throne in Jerusalem) then "he that overcometh" will sit in that throne with him.

It is important to notice in this context that, although Jesus is called "King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37), "King of Israel" (John 12:13), "prince of the kings of the earth" (Revelation 1:5), "King of saints" (Revelation 15:3) and "King of kings" (Revelation 19:16), he is never called 'king of the ecclesia'. He is now the Messiah, the Christ, the anointed one, and has yet to take the throne and

the Kingdom promised to him. It is only at the sounding of the seventh trumpet that "The kingdoms of this world [kosmos] . . . become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Revelation 11:15). Then the saints will stand on the sea of glass, representing the conquered and now peaceful nations, and will become "kings and priests" to reign "on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). The final picture is of "a new heaven and a new earth" with no more sea (nations) and no more death, a state of affairs which is described as "coming down from God out of heaven", and in which "the tabernacle of God" will be "with men, and He will dwell with them, (Joel 3:17;Zechariah 2:10) and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:1-4). Certainly the language of the book of Revelation is figurative, and I am not seeking to press the literality of the terms "heaven" and "earth" in this passage. However, as this article has sought to demonstrate from its opening quotations, there is a literal basis in the rest of Scripture for these figures—for the whole of the Bible teaches that the Kingdom of God will be established on the earth, in the future age.

One last detail from Revelation underlines much of what has been written in this article. In Revelation 21:12 the wall of the bride-city is described. It "had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel". The Israelitish basis of the Kingdom of God is there—right to the very end of His Book

The basis of prayer

The basis of prayer

Bernard Burt *The Testimony* 2003 p. 145 THE HUMAN EAR has great difficulty following more than one conversation at a time. Yet Scripture reveals that the God of heaven is far above us in His capabilities. The wise man taught: "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). David wrote: "O LORD, Thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou under standest my thought afar of f . . . For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether . . . Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (Psalms 139:1-7).

God is able to hear prayers which are offered from all parts of the earth at the same time. He is able to respond to all these prayers in ways which, in His infinite wisdom, He knows are best. Well might we exclaim with David: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalms 139:6). The Word of God goes further than to say that God can hear all prayers which are offered. The character of God is such that there is a willingness to hear prayer, but not every prayer: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12). Peter is quoting from Psalms 34:1-22, which was written by David when he was in terrible trouble in the land of the Philistines (see the title of the psalm). The teachings contained in this psalm will be considered in more detail later in this article.

Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, shows clearly that there are prayers which God will not hear:

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh . . . Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me" (Proverbs 1:24-28);

"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). The prayers which God will hear God, having laid down the basis upon which man can approach to Him in prayer, will not change His purpose. David cried: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Thy faithfulness answer me, and in Thy righteousness" (Psalms 143:1). God, in all His dealings with men, is true to the character which He has revealed in His Word. He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

There is no doubt that God will hear prayer; the area of doubt which exist is with us: will we offer acceptable prayer unto Him? Consider now the teaching of Psalms 34:1-22 in more detail: "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamp eth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that

trusteth in Him. O fear the LORD, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry. The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such a one of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalms 34:4-19). The emphasised words in the extended quotation above show what the Lord requires. Man has to make an effort on two fronts; firstly, to fear God, to trust Him, to seek Him and to cry unto Him. Secondly, and of equal importance, there must be effort in the life of that man to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7). There must be a broken heart and a contrite spirit, there must be a conscious effort to keep the tongue, to depart from evil to do good and seek peace. If we do these things God will be "nigh unto" us and deliver us.

Praying to God as 'the Father' In Old Testament times men and women prayed to God. Perhaps surprisingly, apart from Genesis 4:26, there are no clear references to prayers being offered during the first 2,000 years of man's sojourn on the earth. The earliest records of prayer concern the time of Abraham, when he "called upon the name of the LORD" (Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:4) and asked God questions concerning the promises (Genesis 15:2-3). From that time on there are frequent references to the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David and many others, offering praise to God, giving thanks to Him and entreating Him in various circumstances.

These individuals addressed God by various names and titles—Yahweh (Genesis 4:26), Yahweh Elohim (Genesis 24:12), Yahweh Sabaoth (1 Samuel 1:11), Adonai Yahweh (Genesis 15:2), Eloah (Job 33:26)— but only very rarely (five occasions) as 'Father'. In fact the term 'Father' is very rarely used in the Old Testament of God. It is used six times of God being the Father of Israel in an allegorical sense (for example, Psalms 68:5; Psalms 103:13), four times in prophecy of God being the future Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (for example, 2 Samuel 7:14) and once of Jesus being the father of the millennial age (Isaiah 9:6).

However, once the Son is born, the God of Israel is revealed in the New Testament Scriptures as 'the Father'. When Jesus prayed, he addressed God in this way; for example: "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:28); "Father, the hour is come" (John 17:1); "Holy Father" (John 17:11); "O righteous Father" (John 17:25); "O my Father" (Matthew 26:39). The relationship between Jesus and the Deity was literally that of Son and Father, hence it was entirely reasonable that Jesus should use the term 'Father' when he prayed. It is, however, remarkable (on the basis of the infrequent use of the term in the Old Testament) that, when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he said: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father Which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9). It is even more remarkable that the first person (other than the twelve) who was taught by Jesus that God is to be worshipped as 'the Father' was the woman of Samaria (John 4:21-23). After Jesus had ascended to heaven, the apostles taught the same truth: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy [Spirit], he hath shed forth this,

which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:32-33). They presented to Jew and Gentile the fact that the Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth could be spoken to as 'Father'. Thus those allegorical references in the Old Testament could now become a reality for faithful individuals: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him" (Psalms 103:13).

Prayer offered through Christ The next stage of Jesus's teaching to his disciples was that prayer to the Father must be offered in a particular way. Just as the incense—which represented prayer (Psalms 141:2)—had to be made from specific ingredients and compounded "after the art of the apothecary" (Exodus 30:34-38), so it should be with our prayers. This principle applies to all the words which we utter in prayer (as will be seen later), but for the moment we concentrate on the way in which we approach the One to Whom we pray.

It was in the upper room that Jesus taught his disciples that he was to be taken away from them and that they would no longer be able to make requests of him as they had done over the previous three years. Now he taught them to make their requests to the Father: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23-24). This teaching sets a pattern of prayer for believers in Jesus that is followed throughout the New Testament Scriptures. The following examples are taken from the prayers and teaching of the Apostle Paul:

- "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of through out the whole world" (Romans 1:8);
- "Now unto Him That is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church [ecclesia] by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world with out end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21);
- "... giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20);
- "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17);
- "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered with out the gate . . . By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:12-15).

It ought perhaps to be pointed out in connection with the above that there is no corresponding pattern in the New Testament of prayers addressed directly to Jesus. The apostles taught that prayer was to be directed to God:

- "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, Which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 4:24);
- "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine hear may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22);

- "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). The churches of Christendom, having invented a Triune God, offer prayers to and write hymns which address each person of their Deity as they see fit. Those whose understanding of God and His Son is based on the revelations contained in the Scriptures ought not so to do. Our prayers ought to follow this Scriptural pattern and be addressed to God (as "Our Father"), being presented through our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since many of our hymns are prayers, it follows that the same Scriptural guidelines should apply, and that those who are responsible for the choice of hymns should be guided by the prayer-patterns in the Word of God, rather than preference for a particular tune or a form of words which is not based on the principles of Scripture.

Praying in accordance with God's Word

Mention has already been made of the parallel between prayer and the offering of incense. Both have (or should have) several constituents. Both are (or should be) associated with sacrificed lives. Both ascend up to God and should be pleasing and acceptable to Him. The way in which our prayers should be offered to God (that is, through the Lord Jesus Christ) having been considered, we now move on to look at what might be called the ingredients of prayer. The incense was made from specific ingredients (Exodus 30:34-38); what are (or should be) the ingredients of our prayers? Some of these matters will be developed elsewhere within this issue, but praise, a recognition of the holiness of God, thanksgiving and petitions can all be found within the prayers of the faithful as recorded in the Scriptures.

How, then, did these spiritual apothecaries compound their prayers? It is not difficult to find out. Take an example of Scriptural prayer, and, through the use of marginal references, search out where the one who was offering the prayer found his or her ingredients. Nehemiah's prayer in chapter 1 of his book is presented in the table below as a typical example.

Sources for the prayer in Nehemiah 1:1-11 v.5: O LORD God of heaven: Cyrus—Ezra 1:2 v.5: the great and terrible God: Daniel—Daniel 9:4 v.5: That keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and keep His commandments: Moses—Deuteronomy 7:9 v.6: Let Thine ear now be attentive: Solomon—2 Chronicles 6:40 v.6: and Thine eyes open: Solomon—2 Chronicles 6:40 v.6: and confess the sins of the children of Israel: Daniel—Daniel 9:20 v.6: both I and my father's house have sinned: Psalms 106:6 v.7: We have dealt very corruptly against Thee: Daniel—Daniel 9:5 v.7: which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses: Moses—Deuteronomy 28:15 v.8 If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations v.9: but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments: Moses—Leviticus 26:39-42 v.9: though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven v.9: unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there: Moses—Deuteronomy 12:5 v.10: Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand: Moses—Deuteronomy 9:29 v.11: let now Thine ear be attentive: Solomon—2 Chronicles 6:40 v.11: who desire to fear Thy name: Isaiah—Isaiah 26:8 The passages which Nehemiah quotes show, in their contexts, what he was seeking in his prayer. He was aware of the Seventy Weeks Prophecy in the Book of Daniel, and the decree of Cyrus which had initiated the rebuilding of the temple. Yet the terms of Daniel 9:24-27 required the king of Persia to issue a decree "to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25). This was what Nehemiah sought, so before he went

in to the king he compounded a prayer which was based on God's revelation of His character, His purpose and His promises. This wonderful prayer climaxes in Isaiah 26:8, where the context from Isaiah 26:1-2 is as follows: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in". Thus we see that what Nehemiah really wanted was the spiritual salvation of the nation. This is also made evident in the words of his enemies when he arrived at Jerusalem: "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10).

Yet for all of this Nehemiah had actually to go before the king (with a sad countenance!) and ask for the decree to be issued. In what strength did he do this? The answer is in Isaiah 26:3 : "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace [literally 'peace, peace'], whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee".

Oh that we could so frame our petitions "in accordance with His will" and go forward in our lives in such confidence! The privilege of prayer

Children are always making requests of their fathers: "what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father Which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:9-11). Human fathers think that they know what is best for their children (sometimes they are right and sometimes they are wrong!), but our heavenly Father knows absolutely what is best for us. How foolish are we, then, if we neglect the privilege of speaking to Him and saying, "Our Father Which art in heaven . . ."! We should heed the counsel and example of the Apostle Paul:

"[continue] instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12); "give yourselves to fasting and prayer" (1 Corinthians 7:5);

"ye also helping together by prayer for us . . ." (2 Corinthians 1:11);

"I. . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers" (Ephesians 1:15-16);

"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18);

". . . in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Php 4:6);

"... we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you" (Colossians 1:9);

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2);

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17);

". . . we pray always for you" (2 Thessalonians 1:11);

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1);

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8);

".. . without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (2 Timothy 1:3);

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers" (Philemon 1:4).

It is evident that Paul understood and constantly resorted to the privilege of prayer. Let us go and do likewise.

“HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US”

“HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US”

BERNARD BURT The Testimony 1984 p.17

Introduction THE SCOPE of this article is to consider some of the effects of the Edenic curse, "sin in the flesh"; the nature of Christ and his relationship to Adam; to examine what the Scriptures teach about the kind of sacrifice which Jesus offered; and to seek to answer the question, "How was Christ made sin?". The writer has made a deliberate attempt in this article to avoid the use of such phrases as 'sin in the flesh', 'human nature', 'sin's flesh' and 'Adamic nature'. These phrases and their counterparts from the opponents of the Christadelphian position have been the subject of a verbal battleground for over 100 years, some of it verging on strife "about words to no profit". Let there be no doubt, however, that the position which the writer holds and which this article sets forth is that which is outlined in clauses 3-10 of the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.

Eastward in Eden

It is necessary first of all to examine the teaching of Scripture upon the original state or nature of Adam in order that a contrast may later be drawn with his condition after his sin. The Scriptures show that, when first in Eden, Adam was: not "afraid" of Deity (Genesis 3:10); "very good" (Genesis 1:31); "upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29); without "sorrow" (Genesis 3:17)* not a sinner (Romans 5:12); not subject to death (Romans 5:12); and without sense of shame (Genesis 2:25). After the events recorded in Genesis 3:1-6 it is undeniable that there was a dramatic difference in relation to some of these particulars; and in fact, if the straightforward testimony of the Scriptures is to be faced up to, it will be seen that in all these matters there was a deterioration after Adam had eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. While some of these details are not of great importance with regard to the subject under consideration, others are pivotal to a correct understanding of the atonement.

Death by sin The Genesis record demonstrates beyond argument that a physiological change did take place in Adam and Eve. Before the transgression they were naked and not ashamed (Genesis 2:25); as a result of it their sense of shame was such that they felt obliged to cover the nakedness which before had been of no consequence (Genesis 3:7-10). Here then was a new characteristic which they had acquired. Now in the normal processes of procreation acquired characteristics are not transmitted to the next generation. A man who has a highly developed conscience will not necessarily beget a son endowed with the same attitude. Yet this sense of shame which had been awakened in Adam was transmitted to subsequent generations. Now if the Scriptures are taken at their face value, death in the human race came about in the same way: "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men..." (Romans 5:12).

Death for Adam was not the inevitable consequence of a corruptible nature with which he had been created; it was the "wages of sin" (Romans 6:23), and this death-stricken nature "passed

upon all" his descendants, for "Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image..." (Genesis 5:3). So "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Romans 5:14). The newborn babies who were overthrown at the flood died because they were "in Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:22), that is, because being descended from him they had inherited the "death" which came upon him in consequence of his sin.

"In my flesh dwelleth no good thing"

Some opponents of the Christadelphian position have argued that "Children are not born sinful, but they need to be taught to behave properly. Human nature is morally neutral...". (E. Brady, The gospel that is never preached (Nazarene Fellowship Publication, p. 2.) If this theory is true then at least some children of godly parents, having been taught to behave properly, ought to have lived sinless lives; but the Scripture says that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". By contrast with the above, untrue statement, another writer has observed: "The sane mind perceives something radically wrong with human nature, something which is manifested early in its growth. The two-year-old child raises its fist in frustrated anger when a restraining hand gripping his trousers withholds him from the coveted object". The truth of the matter is set forth in Romans 7:1-25, where Paul says: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). Here is no 'moral neutrality', but a condition where, despite the apostle's desire to "do good", he found that "evil is present with me" (Romans 7:21). It has been argued that in this chapter Paul was writing of his position before baptism, when he was "in the flesh" and a persecutor of the saints. But this will not do, for not only do the Scriptures indicate that Paul was zealous and single-minded in carrying out what at that time he believed to be right (Acts 26:9-10), but this explanation simply does not fit the facts of the chapter. Firstly, from verse 15 onwards the chapter is in the present and not the imperfect tense; secondly, a careful examination ,of the verses concerned will reveal that the term "flesh" as used in Acts 26:18-25 is synonymous with "my members" in Acts 26:23; and thirdly, analysis of this section of Romans shows that the following terms are set in opposition to each other:

[Romans 7:14-25 to Romans 8:1-6]

"I am carnal" (Romans 7:14) "the law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14) "evil is present with me" (Romans 7:21) "I would do good" (Romans 7:21) "the law of sin...in my members" (Romans 7:23).. . "the law of my mind" (Romans 7:23) "body of...death" (Romans 7:24) "inward man" (Romans 7:22) "the law of sin" (Romans 7:25) "the law of God" (Romans 7:25) "flesh" (Romans 7:5, Romans 7:18, Romans 7:25; Romans 8:1, etc.) "Spirit" (Romans 8:1, etc.) "carnally minded" (Romans 8:6) "spiritually minded" (Romans 8:6) An examination of these phrases in the context in which they occur in this section in Romans shows that even after his conversion Paul suffered from an internal conflict, and that the desires and impulses of his "flesh" or "members" were interfering with the accomplishment of "the good that I would". This is entirely consistent with the tenor of the rest of Scripture which, far from teaching that "human nature is morally neutral", testifies that "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts..." (Mark 7:21); "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24); "...the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22); "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away oihis own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14); "whence come wars and fightings among

you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (James 4:1). It is important to notice the way in which the term "sin" is used in Romans 7:1-25. "Sin" is depicted as a powerful enemy who was "dead" (Romans 7:8) until a commandment was given by God, whereupon "sin revived", "deceived me, and by it slew me" (Romans 7:9-11). This implies that as soon as the commandment was known, impulses which were contrary to it arose within Paul "working death" in him. This was not the situation of Adam and Eve in the garden (where the temptation came from without), and is a further indication of the change brought about in man by the first sin.

Adam and Jesus The statement in Genesis 3:20 that Eve was the "mother of all living", together with the unambiguous declarations in Genesis 7:1-24 that all flesh died except those in the ark, effectively disposes of all grounds for speculation that there might have been creatures other than Adam and Eve involved in the origins of the present human population of this planet. The genealogy of Luke 3:1-38 traces the ancestry of the Lord Jesus back to the first man, Adam, thus establishing his physical relationship through his mother with the human race. Because he was "born of a woman" there can be no doubt that Jesus was a son of Adam, as we all are. Yet because he was miraculously begotten of God by the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary there is a contrast to be drawn as well as a comparison to be made, and the two key passages in which Adam and Jesus are set in juxtaposition (Romans 5:1-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58) do both of these things. It is in determining where there is likeness and where there is difference that one of the most difficult and controversial areas of this subject lies. The nature of Christ This will first be considered by setting out two sets of passages, the one demonstrating the likeness between Jesus and ourselves, and the other the differences:

Like ourselves:

"made in the likeness of men" (Php 2:7) "in all things...made like unto his brethren"

(Hebrews 2:17-18) "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself... took part of the same"

(Hebrews 2:14) "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"

(Hebrews 4:15) "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2) "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) Different from ourselves:

"being in the form of God" (Php 2:6) "the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3) "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26) "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19) "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46) "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) The above passages, which are a representative selection, show that there are two strands of teaching concerning Jesus in the Scriptures. The one emphasises his affinity with "his brethren" (to what degree this "likeness" extends has yet to be examined), while the other demonstrates his separateness from them and his affinity with his Father. These things are neither mutually exclusive nor contradictory, but any attempt to comprehend the teaching of Scripture about the nature of Jesus which fails to give due weight to both will be unbalanced.

Taking the human aspect first, it is necessary to establish whether the nature of Jesus was like Adam when he was created or like Adam after his expulsion from Eden. When Adam was created

he was pronounced "very good" (Genesis 1:31). When Jesus was called "Good Master" he replied, "Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God" (Luke 18:18-19). Moreover his experiences were utterly unlike those of Adam in the Edenic state, for the Lord was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3); he experienced weariness (John 4:6) and hunger (Matthew 4:2; Matthew 21:18); he wept at the hardness of the people's hearts (Luke 19:41) and at the grief of his friends (John 11:35); and in the garden he lamented, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). What then of his temptations? The key verse in this connection is Hebrews 4:15, where the record makes two important statements: 1. he "was in all points tempted like as we are"; and 2. he was "without sin". Those who teach a Trinity or a pre-existent Christ cannot really believe (1), whilst the Unitarian or the modernist who denies the virgin birth cannot adequately account for (2). Only by accepting all the implications of passages such as Luke 1:35 can the reality of Jesus's temptations and his unique sinlessness be comprehended and believed. This is not just an interesting point of doctrine; it is vitally important to the subject, because Hebrews 4:15 teaches that Jesus's temptations were like the temptations we experience from day to day, and not simply like that which Adam underwent in the garden.

Adam's temptation in Eden was from an external source:" The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). Temptation for us can arise in the same way, as it did with Joseph (Genesis 39:7), or we can conceive it in our heart as did Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:4). It is crucial to a right understanding of this subject to establish whether or not this latter source of temptation existed within the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh. Since the wilderness temptation of Jesus is considered elsewhere in this special issue, attention will be given in this article to other occasions in his ministry where the Gospels make it clear that he underwent times of temptation and trial. The inspired apostle applies to the Lord the words of Psalms 40:1-17: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared me...Then said I, Lo I come...to do Thy will ? God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). In the Gospels Jesus shows that this was indeed his purpose: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father Which hath sent me" (John 5:30); "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (John 6:38). There can be no doubt that Jesus did do the will of his Father—the Scriptural testimonies to this demonstrate the fact beyond argument—but equally conveyed by the above citations from

John 5:1-47 and John 6:1-71 is the point that he had a will of his own which was contrary to the will of his Father He did not "seek" (in the sense of perform) his "own will", he did not come to "do" his own will but it was there nevertheless and was the cause of a conflict within him which, just occasionally, the Gospel writers permit us to see. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:27-28, RV mg.). Here was real conflict The context is not some external temptation (although he met with such and overcame time and time again); it is a declaration to his disciples of his impending death. Yet the very declaration of God's will triggered in his mind the thought that he must suffer as no man had ever suffered if that purpose was to be accomplished. He shrank from the contemplation of it; his will was to seek deliverance from it So strong was the "trouble" in his mind that he actually gave voice to the desire; but it was expressed as a question: "Father, save me from this hour?", and was met with an immediate rejoinder, based, as were all his responses to temptation, upon the Scriptures and the purpose of God. The greatest struggle of all

was in Gethsemane, and here again the conflict of wills is evident in the pages of the Gospel records. In his prayers in the garden his own will was manifested more fully than anywhere else in the New Testament, and received its most total and crushing defeat. For an analysis of his prayers the reader must be directed elsewhere. (Elwyn Humphries, *The problem of sin's origin* (out of print), p. 8.) Suffice it to say at this point that careful consideration of them will show that the first prayer began with an appeal to the Father, on the basis of Scripture, that "the cup" might be taken away from him; and that, following the most agonising battle that has ever taken place in the mind of a man, by the time the third prayer was uttered his own will had been completely subjected to the Father's. When records such as these are taken into account, with such passages as are quoted under the heading 'Like ourselves', above, there seems to be no room for doubt that the same desires to satisfy self and to reject the will of God as are present with us were present in the Lord in the days of his ministry. There was a conflict, a tension in his mind between the will of his Father, which he had learned, and his own will. It is not possible to explain on the basis of his Divine begetting the existence in him of a will which was at times clearly contrary to the will of his Father. The only possible explanation for it is that it was in him as a result of his being born of a human mother. The Son of God

Turning now to the fact that Jesus was the "only begotten of the Father", what effect did this have upon him? and in what respects was he therefore different from the rest of Adam's descendants? This again has been an area of controversy, both inside and outside the Christadelphian community, with tendencies to go beyond the factual teaching of the Word of God.

Psalms 22:1-31 is undoubtedly Messianic, and many prophetic details can be clearly seen in it; but what about the following: "Thou art He that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mothers breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psalms 22:9-10)? Or Isaiah 50:1-11: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (v. 4)? These passages at least strongly suggest that the Father instructed His Son from the earliest days. Certainly by the age of twelve Jesus had attained a remarkable degree of "understanding", and knew not only Who his Father was, but that he must be about his Father's business (Luke 2:49). All this is no more than reasonable; if God has commanded earthly fathers to teach His ways diligently to their children, how much more would He do this for His Son? There could be no possibility of Jesus committing a sin through ignorance. In the light of passages such as Hebrews 5:8-9 and Luke 22:44 there can be no doubt that the Lord had to "learn obedience", be "made perfect" and resist "unto blood, striving against sin". We take nothing away from his victory in subjecting his own will to the will of his Father when we note that in the garden there appeared "an angel...from heaven, strengthening him", for this was the greatest battle of all, and every source of human help had failed him (Luke 22:43-45). The sacrifice of Christ

Analysis of a recent preaching leaflet which examines the beliefs of 36 sects of the apostasy reveals that of 21 defined doctrines which are rejected by Christadelphians as being unScriptural only five are believed by all 36 groups. (Arthur Armstrong, *There is a worldwide family*. Available from the author, or from Sis. R. Turner, Wolds Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham NG12 5GA.)

One of these is that Jesus's death was a substitutionary death. This information is not given as an argument for or against this view of the sacrifice of Jesus, but it is interesting to note that those who have rejected the Christadelphian position on this subject are not moving to a unique doctrinal position but are adopting a view which appears to be almost universally held by the apostasy.

It has been argued that the animal sacrifices under the Law were offered upon a substitutionary basis. One author wrote of the "law of sacrifice under which a sinner was delivered from death by the offering of an innocent, spotless creature in his stead".(E. Brady, *The Norris Confession* (Nazarene Fellowship Publication, p. 19.) However, there are several flaws in this concept.

Firstly, since death came into the world as a result of sin (Romans 5:12) those Israelites who offered sacrifice for every sin they committed ought never to have died, whereas it is manifest they were as subject to death as any people. Indeed, the apostle testifies that the Law could not bring life (Galatians 3:21).

Secondly, the purpose of the sin offering is never defined as the payment of a debt (an essential part of the substitutionary view), but it was to "make an atonement" (Leviticus 4:31), which was done by the shedding of the blood (Leviticus 17:11). Now the Hebrew word kaphar (atonement) means 'to cover'. The sin offering did not therefore discharge a debt, it merely provided a covering for the sin until a better sacrifice could be offered. Under the Law those better sacrifices were the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, but the apostle shows in Hebrews 9:1-28 and Hebrews 10:1-39 that even these sacrifices could not "take away sin"—a fact demonstrated to Israel by the law of the scapegoat.(Bernard Burt, "Forgiveness", current series in *The Bible Student*, Vol. 14.) The concept that the animal sacrifices were substitutionary breaks down completely, however, as soon as the burnt offering is considered. In this sacrifice, with its associated meat and drink offerings, the Israelite declared that he joyfully desired to love the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and his neighbour as himself. (John Allfree, "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not", series in *The Bible Student*, Vol. 13 and Vol. 14 No. 1.) The offering of the burnt offering did not exempt the Israelite from this obligation; indeed, if a disputed word can be used in its proper context, it represented in all its symbolic details his intention to do so. Similarly, the peace offering typified the restoration to fellowship with God of the Israelite whose sin had been covered by the blood of the sin offering and who had expressed his desire to rededicate himself to God's service by offering a burnt offering.

It can be clearly demonstrated that the Lord Jesus was the antitypical sin offering, burnt offering and peace offering, and our understanding of his sacrifice ought to be based on the Old Testament teaching on the subject unless there is clear evidence in the New that the basis was different. This aspect of the subject is examined more fully in another article in this special issue.

Made sin for us The effects of sin in Eden, the nature of Adam and that of Christ, and the particular significance of that nature in respect of the sacrifice of Jesus having been considered, it now remains to examine the apostolic statement that Jesus was "made...sin for us". This occurs in 2 Corinthians 5:21, where it is rendered in Rotherham's translation: "Him who knew not sin in our behalf He made to be sin, that we might become God's righteousness in him". The statement that "he knew not sin" accords perfectly with that of Hebrews 4:15 that he was "without sin"; but there is a force and significance in this passage which cannot be missed if it is set out in two columns:

God made him who knew not sin to be sin on our behalf in order that we (who do commit sin)..... may become the righteousness of God in him.

Here is encompassed the purpose of God: that in Christ many might "be made righteous"; and the means of its accomplishment: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). In seeking to understand the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5:21 it is important to distinguish between things that differ. In saying that Jesus was "made...to be sin for us" Paul is not referring to the fact that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6), or that "his soul" would be "an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10), although both these prophetic statements found fulfilment in Jesus's sacrifice. Furthermore, this verse does not teach that Jesus committed sin; if it did it would contradict the emphatic testimonies of other Scriptures.

What it does confirm is that which this study has shown, that the Scriptures consistently teach that Jesus experienced in his flesh all the temptations and trials which we experience, being "in the flesh". As a result of his steadfast devotion to the will of God all these temptations were overcome and the victory was wrought by God in Christ, "reconciling the world unto Himself. His life "in the flesh" was the pattern for us, who, having been "planted together in the likeness of his death", and having reckoned ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord", should "have (our) fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:5, Romans 6:11, Romans 6:22)

“It came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled”

“It came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled”

Bernard Burt *The Testimony* 2005 p. 272 The Book of Ruth is set in the early days of the Judges period, at the time when Israel first went astray from God. It concerns a series of events which occurred in the lives of the members of one family in Israel during that period, some faithful to God, others moving away from Him. Their actions and their experiences provide lessons for believers trying to serve God in the godless society of today.

BOOK OF RUTH is one of the books of the Bible which gives us a time frame into which we can position it. It opens: “Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled . . . “. The book is therefore an appendix to the book of Judges. It will be helpful first to ask, When in the period of the Judges did the events recorded in Ruth occur? Once this question is answered it leads on to other questions about the chronology of Judges, as will be seen. The key to the dating of the book of Ruth is the man Boaz. His genealogy is given in Ruth 4:18-22, but a vital additional piece of information is found in Matthew 1:5. There we are told that the wife of Salmon and mother of Boaz was Rahab the harlot of Jericho. Boaz therefore belonged to the first generation born in the land after Israel had taken possession of it. He was an old man when Naomi came back to Bethlehem (Ruth 3:10), which would place the events of the book of Ruth in the time of the second generation born in the land after the conquest under Joshua. This understanding ties in the events of the book of Ruth with the chronological statements made in Judges 2:7, Judges 2:10 : “And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that He did for Israel . . . and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel”. Mahlon and Chilion, the sons of Elimelech and Naomi, were part of that generation.

Relationship of the book of Ruth to events in Judges The events recorded at the end of the book of Judges are all linked by the use of the phrase, “In those days there was no king in Israel” (Judges 17:6; Judges 18:1; Judges 19:1; Judges 21:25). When we consider them it soon becomes evident that these events did not occur at the end of the period of the Judges. The book concludes with the business of the Levite and his concubine (Judges 19:1-30; Judges 20:1-48; Judges 21:1-25). These things must have happened early in the Judges period, because Phinehas the son of Eleazar (the first man to become high priest in the land) enquired of the Lord for the people at that time (Judges 20:28). The previous incident—the idolatry of Micah and the migration of the tribe of Dan—must have happened before the events of Judges 19:1-30; Judges 20:1-48; Judges 21:1-25, because the phrase “from Dan even to Beer-Sheba” is used (for the first time) to describe the gathering of the tribes in Judges 20:1. The tribe of Dan must therefore have been in the north by this time.’ The order of events could therefore be:

- 1 The tribe of Dan moves north;
- 2 The tribe of Benjamin is almost wiped out;

3 Elimelech and his family leave Bethlehem and go to Moab.

Linking the places

There are a number of links between places referred to at the end of the book of Judges and in the books of Ruth and 1 Samuel. These are shown in Table I over the page. What is the significance of these links?

Bethlehem-judah means. 'the house of bread and praise', Ephraim 'doubly fruitful', and Ephrath 'place of fruitfulness'. When Israel were in the wilderness God had said to them: "If ye walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely . . . For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish My covenant with you" (Leviticus 26:3-5, Leviticus 26:9).

Yet the opening verses of the book of Ruth present us with a situation where no praise was being given to God, there was a famine in the 'house of bread' (Bethlehem), and there was no fruitfulness in the house of Elimelech.

Having established that the time period of the book of Ruth coincides with the events of Judges 2:1-23, we can now see the reason for these afflictions: "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed" (Judges 2:14-15). Later records in the book of Judges show that the various enemies systematically stole Israel's crops, thus causing famines.

Life in the days of the judges

If we now look at the situation from another angle, the book of Ruth is giving us a picture of life in one family and one city in Israel in the time period covered by Judges 2:1-23 and Judges 3:1-12. We can see how they responded to the circumstances that are narrated in the book of Judges and take lessons for our own lives.

There are two verbal links between the last verse of Judges and the opening verses of Ruth. Judges states that "there was no king [Heb. melek] in Israel" and that "every man [Heb. ish] did that which was right in his own eyes". The book of Ruth immediately, introduces us to a "certain man [ish]" whose name was Elimelech¹ meaning 'my God is King'. The lesson of this man's name is one that Israel consistently failed to appreciate until the times of David and Solomon (see, for example, 1 Samuel 8:6-7). Elimelech himself did not appreciate it, nor did his sons.

So, when the famine came there is no indication that they understood that it was of God because of the wickedness of Israel. There is nothing to show that they intreated the Lord, as did Manoah (Judges 13:8). They looked at the situation with the eyes of flesh, They saw that there was no food in the house of bread (because there was no praise to God) but over the River Jordan in the land of Moab there was plenty (because God was not punishing the Moabites). So the record states

that they “went to sojourn in the country of Moab” (Ruth 1:1).

1. The life of Samson clearly comes at the end of the period of the Judges, for the Philistines are the last foe that God brings against Israel in the book. Yet Samson was a Danite from Zorah, the area from which the Danites had migrated. Samson’s father Manoah, the only man in Israel who is recorded as praying when Israel were at the bottom of the sixth cycle of oppression and deliverance, must have been part of a group of Danites who either did not go forth with their brethren or were so sickened by the idolatry in Dan that they came back. The Hebrew word translated “country” here, *sadeh* (Strong’s No. 7704), occurs fourteen times in the book of Ruth. It appears six times (the number of flesh) in chapter 1 in the phrase “the country of Moab” and then eight times (the number of a new beginning) in the rest of the book, where it is translated “field”. Thus Elimelech followed the desires of the flesh, left the field of Israel, journeyed to the field of Moab and went the way of all flesh. Ruth, on the other hand, left the field of Moab, put her trust in the God of Israel and found a new life in the field of Boaz. Our view of the world

“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”, runs the proverb. It is a worldly proverb, and that is how Elimelech saw things—in a worldly way. His concern was to “Labour . . . for the meat which perisheth”, rather than for “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life” (John 6:27). God had, in effect, commanded Israel, “Go not to . . . another field” (Ruth 2:8). But Elimelech did not act as if God was King and the supreme authority. He saw that there was food in Moab, and to Moab he went, taking his family with him.

How do we view the world and the people who live in it? Leaving aside the obvious appeal of “this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4) to “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), do we see the world as a place which can feed and sustain us? It has been my sad experience from time to time to encounter brethren and sisters who say, “My friends in the world understand me better than anyone in the ecclesia does”. What they really mean is, “My friends in the world give me the sort of advice that I want to hear, unlike my brothers and sisters”.

There are two ways: the broad way that leads to destruction and the narrow way that leads to life. The book of Ruth presents us with the picture of Elimelech and his family going down, literally, like the man in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30), from Bethlehem to the plains of Moab, a not dissimilar journey to that of Lot. There is food in Moab, but there is also barrenness and death. Then, by contrast, Ruth is going the other way, up from the plains of Moab to the field of Boaz, where she finds not only an abundance of corn but also rest in the house of a husband (Ruth 1:9; Ruth 3:1) and a part in the eternal purpose of God. The same two ways are illustrated in the lives of two further characters who are introduced to us in the book of Ruth. The man Boaz

Ruth 2:1-23 of Ruth introduces us to Boaz, “a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech” (Ruth 2:1). Here was a man of the same town, of the same family, who had lived through the same famine—staying in the “field” of Israel—and yet who had prospered. He clearly recognised that ‘God is King’ (the meaning of Elimelech) and had not turned aside to the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth (Judges 2:11-13). So, in the midst of an apostate ecclesia (Acts 7:38) there was a man of faith who had been blessed by God. God, His works and His purpose were clearly at the forefront of the mind of Boaz. Consider his sayings in Ruth 2:1-23 and 3:

“The LORD be with you” (Ruth 2:4);

“The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel. under Whose wings thou art come to trust.” (Ruth 2:12) “Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter” (Ruth 3:10).

Boaz was not discouraged by the attitude of many in Israel, he held fast to the ways of God and taught his servants the same attitude (Ruth 2:4). He was willing also to extend mercy and graciousness (Exodus 34:6) beyond the boundary of Israel to a Moabite, whom he had every racial and national reason not to love (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). Furthermore, he had taught his servants the same attitude, as the record in Ruth 2:1-23 makes clear.

How was it that this man had such great faith and such a large heart? The answer to this question cannot really be found in the Old Testament, but as soon as we turn to the New all is made plain: “And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth” (Matthew 1:5). Boaz would have learned from the example and the faith of his mother that the purpose of God extended beyond the people of Israel, and that “in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:35).

Boaz recognised that Ruth had come to trust under the “wings” of the Lord God of Israel (Ruth 2:12) and therefore he was willing to spread his “skirt” (the same word as “wings” —Strong’s No. 3671) over her to redeem her (Ruth 3:9-13). Whatever the cost to himself, he was willing to play the part of a kinsman (Heb. gee!, redeemer) to Ruth and bring her into the bonds of the covenant. The nearer kinsman

There was, however, a nearer kinsman who had to have the first opportunity to be the god. The first thing to notice about this nearer kinsman is that he is not named in the book or anywhere else in the Scriptures. Because of his actions his name is not considered to be worthy to ascend into the Divine record. The sale of land would be a very unusual event in Israel because of the law in Leviticus 25:23-34. It was the responsibility of near of kin to purchase any land that had to be sold because of poverty, in order that the land might remain within the family and the tribe to which it had originally been given. To this arrangement the unnamed kinsman was a willing and eager participant. To increase his portion of land held out prospects of greater wealth and status; it was appealing to the flesh. But there was a condition: “What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon

his inheritance” (Ruth 4:5). This he refused to do. Why? The house of Pharez The name of Pharez occurs twelve times in the Old Testament, three of them in Ruth 4:1-22. This fact draws attention to a remarkable parallel between the book of Ruth and the first place in which the name Pharez occurs, Genesis 38:1-30, as shown in Table 2. The fact that some in Israel clearly saw this pattern (else why the references to Pharez?) indicates that there were faithful people in Bethlehem in the early days of the Judges, people who knew their Scriptures and could see the hand of God in the events that were taking place amongst them. The fact that the unnamed kinsman repeated the mistake of Onan shows that there were others who had not learned the lessons that the Word of God was designed to teach them.

Flesh and spirit When we set the book of Ruth in the time frame of the book of Judges, it shows very clearly the dichotomy that existed amongst the people of Israel. There were those, like

Elimelech and the kinsman, whose thinking was according to the flesh and who minded earthly things. There were others—Naomi (after her return to Bethlehem), Boaz and, of course, Ruth herself—who were spiritually minded and who sought the things of God. This division of mind amongst the people continued right through the period of the Judges; it is still evident, for example, in the time of the last judge in the book, Samson, when some of the men of Judah were prepared to hand Samson over to the Philistines (Judges 15:9-13). The same contrast is evident in the first-century ecclesia. To take just one example, in Php 3:1-21 Paul contrasts his desire to “count all things but loss” that he might “win Christ” with the attitude of others, “whose God is their belly, and . . . who mind earthly things” (Php 3:8, Php 3:19). Is it any different in the ecclesia today? Whose life is ours similar to? Elimelech’s? Mahlon’s? The kinsman’s? Boaz’s? Ruth’s? Are these records just interesting Bible stories that we read from time to time? Or, on the other hand, are we learning the lessons of the past and applying them in the present in living lives that will glorify God?

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