

A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES,
THE PRACTICE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK

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'And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written',
Luke 4.17.

NOVEMBER 2011
VOLUME 66 / NUMBER 4

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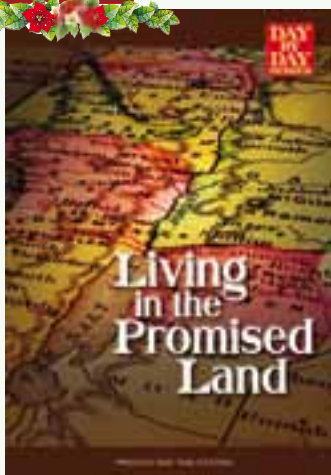
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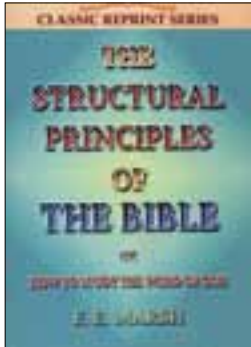
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- It is distributed, without charge, to over 100 countries.
- Numbers printed are over 17,000.
- About 50% of copies go overseas and half of these to 'third world' countries.
- Postage accounts for over 50% of our costs.
- Including postage, each magazine costs around £1.00 sterling.
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Book Reviews

By **JOHN BENNETT** and **JOHN SCARBROOK**

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The Structural Principles of the Bible F. E. Marsh

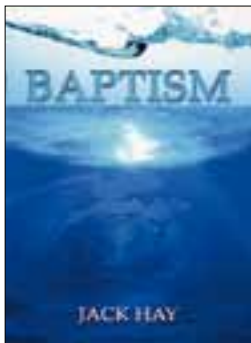
Paperback, 440pp. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RL. Price: £10.99 ISBN 978-1-904064-57-2.

This book is part of Ritchie's 'Classic Reprint Series' and is sub-titled How to study the Word of God. The author demonstrates that there is a unity and divine design to the sixty-six books of the Bible, a discernable 'structure' to its relevant parts and basic 'principles' that govern its interpretation. Viewing the Bible as a living organism, he uses the various members of the human body as a model for identifying the leading themes of God's word.

There are twelve chapters with such headings as: 'The body of a united organism'; 'The heart of a loving purpose'; 'The feet of a progressive movement', and 'The eyes of a prophetic outlook'. But don't be deterred by the unusual chapter titles, this book contains a wealth

of helpful instruction. Attention is given to a wide breadth of subjects such as: 'The unity of the Bible'; 'The Offerings'; 'Divine Names'; 'Sixty laws of interpretation', e.g., the law of first mention, of typology, of recompense; 'Twenty words on prayer'; 'Prophetic days'; 'Prepositions of the Holy Spirit' illustrated with a chart; as well as many suggestive outlines of individual Bible books and themes. There is so much in this book it is impossible to adequately convey in the confines of a review every avenue of study that is explored, but sufficient to say that it is a 'Classic' worthy of its 'Reprint' and one that cannot but profit all who read or refer to it.

[Our thanks to Richard Catchpole, South Norwood, England, for this review]



Baptism Jack Hay

Paperback, 32pp. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RL. Price: £1.35 ISBN 978-1-904064-97-8.

It is good to see a booklet like this one, designed to provide clear biblical counsel on this important subject. In eight short sections JACK HAY covers the topics of the command to baptize, the method to be used, the participants, the timing, the significance, and the practicalities. The audience for this booklet will be those who have made a profession of faith in Christ. The author makes no assumptions but clearly presents the need for the reality of faith, 'It is crucial to be able to look back to that great decision that transforms the life and changes the destiny for eternity'. Equally, the booklet could be helpful to those who, brought up in different denominations, have not been taught the biblical pattern of baptism. The

writer takes considerable space to refute the teaching of those who seek to perpetuate infant or household baptism.

Although the readers of this booklet may primarily be those who are in need of the basic teaching on the subject, the author takes time to deal with the teaching of Romans chapter 6, 1 Peter chapter 3, and Acts chapters 2 and 22. These, and others, occupy the six appendices at the close of the booklet.

Overall, this is a most helpful booklet that could be of great value to those seeking the truth of God in relation to this subject. With a wider audience in view, particularly those for whom English is not their first language, it might have been helpful to simplify some of the language used.



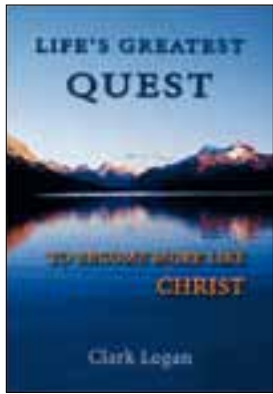
The Heavenly Physician Rommel Ghossain

Paperback, 204pp. Published by Decapolis Press, The Glebe House, Stanton Drew, Bristol, BS39 4EH, UK. Price: £8.95 ISBN 978-0-646-45987-2.

This book, the first of a series, seeks to cover the first eight chapters of Luke's Gospel, dealing with the narrative as well as the application of the teaching it contains. The writer states his purpose in his introduction, 'The purpose of this commentary is to ensure that its readers are acquainted with the person of Jesus'.

The writer builds his comments around the text of the New King James Version in sections that indicate his analysis of the chapters under consideration. Although some of the observations are simple they are often missed. For example, of the angel's words to Zacharias, Ghossain

says, 'The appearance of the angel marked the first words of God after four hundred years of silence'. Equally, the writer is not afraid to bring out the challenge of a passage. Of Anna, a widow for so many years, he writes, 'When God becomes your greatest love then regardless of whatever happens in life, it will not dampen your affection for Him'. While there are many commentaries on Luke's Gospel, this book contains observations and applications that the reader will find worthy of consideration.



Life's Greatest Quest - to become more like Christ Clark Logan

Paperback. Published by John Ritchie Ltd., 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RL. Price: £6.99. ISBN 13: 978-1-904064-95-4.

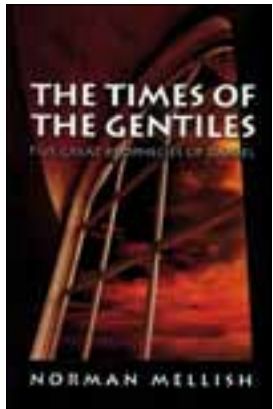
'God is as interested in what we are becoming as in what we are doing. His work in us is as important as His work through us . . . The cultivation of true likeness to Christ should be our chief aim . . . This path is open to every believer'. Such is the author's theme.

Since life's greatest quest is to become more like Christ, CLARK LOGAN sets Christ before us. In five main sections, the book focuses on Christ's moral glory and beauty; His hidden life; His public life; His present ministry; and His future glory. Within this framework the author has provided his readers with a comprehensive survey of the teaching of scripture about the Lord Jesus, providing the reader with a springboard for further study and meditation. However, it should be made clear that this is no arid theological textbook; it is a book for the heart as much

as the head. For example, chapter one, 'God's Pleasure in Christ', begins with the sentence, 'No one has ever pleased God as Christ did'. The reader is then directed to reflect on the three instances of divine approval as recorded in the Gospels. From there we move, via Isaiah chapters 42 and 53 and Philippians chapter 2, to consider the moral glories of the Lord.

While written in plain language without resort to technical terms, the book encourages the reader to consider the profound truths concerning the person and work of the Saviour. It will be read with profit by believers of all ages. The author's purpose will have been achieved if the reader, acting on the checklist of prompts at the end of chapters 3-17, is constrained to follow the exhortation contained in the sub-title, 'to become more like Christ'.

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, England for this review]



The Times of the Gentiles Norman Mellish

Paperback, 216pp. Published by Gospel Folio Press, 304 Killaly St. West, Port Colborne, Ontario, L3K 6A6, Canada. ISBN 978-1-926765-09-9.

It is good to see a further volume in the writings of Norman Mellish. Those who have enjoyed his previous books on Revelation and Philippians will find much to kindle their interest in this commentary on a pivotal book of prophecy. This is not a detailed exposition of the whole book of Daniel but covers the prophetic sections, largely from chapter 7 to the end. However, in setting the background of the prophecy, MELLISH covers chapters 1 and 2 also.

As with previous volumes, there is a wealth of alliterative outline. Similarly, as with the author's book on Revelation, the reader should not expect to find that the writer's interpretation of the book will conform to others they might have upon their bookshelves. For example, there is no reference to the Roman Empire as part of the vision of Daniel 2. In fact, neither does he see Daniel 2 and 7 as being the same kingdoms from different perspectives. Rather, the kingdoms

of chapter 7 are seen as contemporary rather than consecutive. On the little horn of chapter 8, NORMAN MELLISH sees this as a clear indication that the Man of Sin comes out of some aspect of the former Grecian empire.

Prophecy has always been a topic where a divergence of opinion is likely and this book may well be viewed in that light. However, in some areas it would have been helpful to understand a little more of the author's reasoning. What the reader will gain from a perusal of this book is a clear setting forth of the writer's views and much food for thought. The only disappointing feature of the book is the seeming lack of careful proof reading.



Esther: God's invisible hand Helen Clarke

Paperback, 128pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ, UK. Price £5.00 ISBN 978-1-84625-204-4.

The biographical details of the author indicate she became a Christian at the age of sixteen, followed a career in nursing for fifteen years and, in her spare time, has been involved in youth work. She is married and lives in South Africa. *Esther* is the latest in a series of four books, all written by Helen Clarke, and promoted under the general title of 'Pocket Bible people'. The other three are Ruth and two on Simon Peter. The four books are aimed at a younger readership of about secondary school age.

In this volume the author closely follows the narrative of the book of Esther giving background historical details as well as explaining a number of Biblical terms that those not familiar with the scriptures might not readily understand. The thirteen chapters are short and easy to read.

Most chapters are broken up with a 'Message for today' paragraph in which the teaching of

Esther is applied to contemporary issues facing young people today. Matters considered in this way include 'Alcohol', 'Sex', 'Spreading gossip', and 'Boasting', to name but a few. Each chapter concludes with a 'Think tank' which seeks to practically apply the lessons learnt. All Bible quotations are from the New International Version. It is written in a lively style, calculated to appeal to young people. One of my daughters read the book, enjoyed it, and expressed an interest in reading others of the series.

[Our thanks to Richard Catchpole, South Norwood, England, for this review]

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‘We be brethren’, Gen. 13. 8.

If there is one thing that has marred the testimony of the Lord's people down through time it is the problem of personalities. Even a matter that involves the neglect or abandonment of a fundamental principle can and should be resolved without compromise, yet amicably, where there is a willingness to deal with it according to scripture and in the light of the fact that we are brethren and sisters in Christ. Yet, sadly, we persist in doing the adversary's work by dividing brother from brother and assembly from assembly. The individual testimony is harmed or lost and the collective testimony is weakened or marred.

As we read through the Bible record of Genesis, it would be easy to classify Lot as, at best, a carnal Christian. His pursuit of earthly gain and influence must have caused pain to Abraham and, seeing Lot's choice and movement towards Sodom, there must have been deep sadness in the heart of the man of faith. But, remarkably, Abraham never gave up on Lot. He found out that Lot had been taken captive by Chedorlaomer and went out to rescue him, Gen. 14. 13-16. He interceded on behalf of the cities of the plain, conscious that Lot was dwelling in the midst of Sodom, Gen. 18. 23-33. As we see believers around us drifting with the tide of the world, prepared, it seems, to jettison principles and practices we hold dear, what is our response? Are we quick to 'write off' our brethren and sisters? Do we criticize them publicly, or pray for them privately, and with deep conviction of soul?

What would have been our response to the people of the city of Jerusalem? They had rejected and killed the prophets, and stoned the servants of God that had been sent to them, Matt. 23. 37. After such action displayed over so many centuries, surely they deserved the visitation that would leave them desolate? Yet, as the Lord moved inexorably towards Calvary to experience the full hatred of that city and its leaders, we find Him weeping over Jerusalem, Luke 19. 41. 'Love suffers long and is kind', 1 Cor. 13. 4 NKJV. This is unconditional love! Those of us who have suffered the enmity of fellow saints and have been pilloried unjustly, are we prepared to weep, not over our own damaged pride but at the estrangement that has entered into our relations with a fellow believer. Our cause may be the right one. Scripture may be 'on our side'. But let us remember, 'we be brethren'!

As we draw to the close of the 66th year of this magazine, we continue in our endeavours to encourage the study of the scriptures, the practice of New Testament church principles and interest in gospel work. Apart from the core of material that we provide, including our prophetic and church truth topics, there are also articles on pastoral and devotional themes. In this issue there is the continuing series on elders but also a new expositional series for the centre pages. We continue to seek the Lord's blessing upon our labours for Him.

JOHN BENNETT

Ministry Articles Editor



Why I believe there

After Paul the apostle had presented the doctrine of the gospel to the Roman believers, he supposed that those readers and hearers of his Epistle who had a Jewish background would raise certain questions. If Paul's teaching was correct that, in relation to the claims of the gospel, there was no difference between the Jew and Gentile, what about all the promises God had made concerning the future blessing of the nation? Chapters 9, 10 and 11 of the Roman Epistle form a parenthesis in which Paul deals with the question voiced at the beginning of chapter 11, 'Hath God cast away his people?', Rom. 11. 1. A further question is posed in verse 11, 'Have they (*Israel*) stumbled that they should fall (*never to rise again*)?' (Italics are my explanatory additions to the text). The stumblingblock for Israel was Paul's teaching that righteousness could never be obtained only by the deeds of the law. Righteousness could be obtained only by the grace of God through individual and personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had to learn that God had set the nation aside because of their rejection and crucifixion of His beloved Son, their Messiah. He would use their fall as the means of bringing Gentile nations into blessing through the gospel, but that did not imply that God had finished with the nation for ever. Indeed, Paul went on to explain that once God had completed His purpose concerning the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles on equal ground, He would resume His dealings with Israel with a view to their promised blessing as a nation.

'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them,

when I shall take away their sins', Rom. 11. 25-27. As Paul confidently asserts that 'all Israel' – that is, the nation as a whole – will one day be restored, he refers to the Old Testament scriptures for his authority. He probably had in mind the scripture, 'Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad', Ps. 14. 7. Also, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord', Isa. 59. 19-20. Whilst these scriptures are true and full of assurance for the nation, some might raise the objection that they had already been fulfilled. Paul therefore goes back to the bedrock that settles once and for all whether there is yet a glorious future for Israel, 'For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins', Rom. 11. 27.

The covenant Paul is referring to is the New Covenant, a fact that is clear from the words 'when I shall take away their sins'. Of the four unconditional covenants made by God, only the New Covenant promises the forgiveness of the nation's iniquity. This was not promised in the Abrahamic Covenant, Gen. 12. 1-3, nor in the Palestinian Covenant, Deut 30. 3-5, nor in the Davidic Covenant, 2 Sam. 7. 11, 13, 16, even though each of these three is an eternal and unconditional covenant with the nation. It is the New Covenant that combines all the features and blessings of the other three but with this wonderful and all-important addition, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more', Jer. 31. 34. If any scripture gives absolute proof of a future for Israel, it is this, 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put

By
PHIL COULSON
Forres,
Scotland



is a future for Israel

my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts . . . for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more', Jer. 31. 31-34. Manifestly, this clear and unconditional promise of God has not yet been realized in the nation's experience. It is still future, waiting to be fulfilled in the millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel will have been sorely tried and purged in the tribulation period that follows the rapture of the church and, finally, the nation will turn back to their God in repentance. Their repentant cry will result in the glorious manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ as He comes to establish His kingdom.

'Reformed Theology' and 'Replacement Theology' deny a literal millennial reign and, therefore, deny any future for Israel, but let the word of God speak for itself. The Old Covenant, under which the nation languished for so long, was legally put away at Calvary when the Lord Jesus, on behalf of the nation, bore its penalty curse. At the same time, and by the same sacrifice of Himself, the Lord Jesus established

on the merit of His own blood the New Covenant of which Jeremiah speaks. The nation of Israel, however, is not yet ready to enjoy the New Covenant because of collective unbelief and hardness of heart. The tribulation period, the repentance of the nation and their acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus as their Messiah will bring them into the good of the New Covenant that will see them fully and gloriously restored to Jehovah their God. These things can only be future; they are with 'the house of Israel, and the house of Judah', and they demand a glorious future for Israel. Any other scenario would make God a liar!

In view of all the biblical evidence that supports the truth of a glorious future for the nation of Israel, it should be almost unnecessary to write this particular article in the series. However, two modern trends combine to make this article necessary. The first is the sad fact that many Christians are not reading their Bibles thoroughly, and the second is that the form of biblical interpretation known widely as 'dispensationalism' is under sustained assault. This second factor makes the need to address the first one both vital and urgent. The word of God, read with prayer and reliance upon the Holy Spirit to impart its truth to the believing soul, interprets itself. God's plan and purpose for the ages is clearly set forth in the scriptures, but if we replace serious Bible study by a superficial reading of many inaccurate and misleading paraphrases, the result will be a rapid decline in the understanding of the basic framework of scripture.

Into the vacuum left by a widespread neglect of sound biblical exposition has come, mainly through well-marketed and attractive books, a form of teaching that is easy to consume and



concentrates on the wellbeing of the reader. How sad when:

- the Bible is reduced to nothing more than a handbook for happy and successful living.
- praise and worship are the means to make us relaxed and happy in the presence of One who has been effectively stripped of His Lordship and Headship.
- holy things are combined with the profane in the mistaken belief that adding the word 'Christian' to ungodly practices somehow sanctifies them.

Where such a selfish approach to spiritual things exists, there is also a carelessness concerning sound doctrine.

There is a great need for Christians to get back to their Bibles, to study them with a view to understanding, with the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit, the truth of God for His people. The recognition that God has separate but complementary programmes for the Jew, the Gentile and the church is fundamental to a proper understanding of scripture. It is because I believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and believe with complete assurance the principles of so-called 'dispensationalism', that I believe with equal fervency that there is a great future for the nation of Israel.

PHIL COULSON Four years after concluding a 25-year flying career in the Royal Air Force, he, with his wife Rachel, was 'recommended to the grace of God for the work which he fulfilled' by the local assembly in Forres, Scotland. Since then he has been engaged in written and oral ministry amongst the saints in the UK and abroad, particularly in India, Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Phil has two married children and a granddaughter.





Jehoram

By **DAN COULSON** Denmark

Jehoram's reign is recorded in 2 Kings chapter 8 verses 16-24 and, with more detail, in 2 Chronicles chapter 21. The latter is the main passage for this study.

None of us knows how long we have in this life, or how many the opportunities to do the right thing for God. Jehoram had just one-fifth of his life to make his impression on the people of God: of that fifth part, three-quarters was spent destroying his own people and heritage and the last one-quarter spent physically suffering as a result. He 'departed without being desired'. Who would plan to receive such an epitaph? 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith', Gal. 6. 10.

Jehoram ruled alongside his father Jehoshaphat in preparation for when he would reign 'alone' (margin). It is good when a father mentors his son but God intended for His people to be led by those whom the Spirit of God would raise up rather than simply by hereditary leaders. So today, older men should train up another generation to lead the people of God, but eldership is not hereditary. Individuals responsible for overseeing the flock of God must be 'the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry . . . a lover of good men', Titus 1. 7-8. The name 'Israel' means 'He will rule as God' and God held every king to that standard. Today, elders should rule in the local assembly as the Lord expects, solemnly illustrated in the letters to the seven churches.

Jehoshaphat, with a father's equal love for his sons, had made provision for them, giving gifts and responsibilities within the kingdom. He had named them to reflect the greatness and kindness of God, e.g., Azariah – *Jah* has helped, Zechariah – *Jah* has

remembered, Jehoram – *Jehovah*-raised, or the Lord exalted. Jehoram was king over them only by virtue of being the firstborn and was expected, in his greatness, to emulate God's acts of kindness. Instead of drawing on his brothers' fellowship in the work of the kingdom and utilizing their given gifts for the benefit of all, Jehoram 'strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword', 2 Chr. 21. 4. They were identified in verse 13 as being 'better than thyself'. 'Jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance', Prov. 6. 34. 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave', S. of S. 8. 6. The battle of the flesh and the Spirit is detailed in Galatians chapter 5, which shows how believers can 'kill' their brethren, 'if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another', v. 15. Even the subtlety of the tongue can destroy a man, 'All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt', Ps. 41. 7. 'Shall the . . . brother perish, for whom Christ died?' 1 Cor. 8. 11. 'Destroy not him . . . for whom Christ died', Rom. 14. 15.

In recording the life of Jehoram, the focus of the Spirit of God is on what he did. Both scripture references are almost identical, so the facts are undeniable, 'He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord', 2 Kgs. 8. 18. He gave place to the *world* for his direction, the *flesh* for his affection and the *devil* for his inspiration. But 'God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap', Gal. 6. 7. And God dealt with him exactly according to these three overarching influences.

The world evidenced in those who should not be worldly repulses even those who are worldly. The Edomites, descendants of the fleshly man Esau, who, in the days of Jehoshaphat, were content to have 'no king in



Edom: a deputy was king', 1 Kgs. 22. 47, 'revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king', v. 8. Rather than being shamed into repentance, Jehoram went against Zair (meaning 'small, ignoble') at night, with 'all his chariots with him'. Attempting to bolster his own proven sense of inadequacy, he attacked the weakest people at the most vulnerable time with excessive force and destroyed a subservient relationship forever. JAMES D. MILES said, 'You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him'. Some assemblies are located in districts where people will never attend the meetings because of the harsh acts of previous generations. Subsequent, kinder, kings could never reverse Jehoram's damage.

As king, Jehoram occupied a position that we may never have. But he was also the head of his family, a position that many readers have. His worldliness, and feeding the lusts of the flesh, is directly attributable to his wife and the hallmarks of her ancestry, Ahab and Omri. As king of Israel, Omri was 'worse than all that were before him', particularly in the context of idolatry, 1 Kgs. 16. 25. What great care needs to be exercised in the matter of marriage. Paul's teachings to Timothy and Titus concerning elders state the necessary qualities of the wife. Although the man is the head, the woman is the neck and is capable of turning her husband in whatever direction she wants!

Libnah also revolted. It was a city conquered by Joshua, given to Judah by inheritance, and given to the Kohathites as their lot. This was the priestly people who bore the service of the sanctuary upon their shoulders. Their revolt was 'because he had forsaken (loosened, relinquished) the Lord God of his fathers', v. 10. Furthermore, in Jehoram's devilish pursuit of idolatry he, in an emphatic act, 'caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled (lit., 'pushed') Judah thereto'.

In trying to shroud his weakness of character by forcing change from practice in previous generations, he single-handedly destroyed the

worship, service, and outreach of Judah. What care we should take to preserve scriptural doctrine, practice, and language to prevent damage to assembly testimony even today which some, having 'loosened', have forever changed the format and content of worship, service, and outreach of the Lord's people in that locality.

The word from the Lord God of David stated that the people as a congregated unit, the children, the wives and the whole of Jehoram's property would be smitten 'with a great plague' or a great *slaughter*. Jehoram was given specific details of his inward sickness which would be 'day by day' until the final revelation of his inner man. Wrong doctrine has 'slaughtered' whole congregations and lost subsequent generations and the ability to produce them. Paul exhorts us to 'shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker', 2 Tim. 2. 16-17. We might expect physical illness, particularly in the latter part of life, but not self-induced. What a joy to testify in times of physical deterioration 'though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day', 2 Cor. 4. 16.

In addition to the slaughter, 'the Lord stirred (lit., woke) up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians'. Why these three? In order, they speak of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The Philistines came from Mizraim, the old name for Egypt, Gen. 10. 13-14; the Arabians came from Ishmael, the son of the flesh opposed to the promised son; the Ethiopians (Cush) came through Nimrod and Babel, the mighty hunter and a kingdom set up against God, Gen. 10. 8-10. 2 Chronicles chapter 17 verse 11 tells us that the Philistines and Arabians had brought gifts to Jehoshaphat. The world and the flesh are ever present but can be controlled when God is given His rightful place. When man willfully encourages and uses the world, the flesh, and the devil to his own ends God will turn them all against him to his destruction.

So Jehoram experienced the loss of all that was dear to him exactly as the word of God had stated. Isaiah records, in chapter 55 verse 11, 'So

shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it'. The word of God 'is profitable for . . . reproof, for correction', 2 Tim. 3. 16. Jehoram was smitten with 'an incurable disease'. The expression in verse 19, 'process of time', is the same as the words 'day by day' in verse 15. How awful to be alive whilst under the judgement of God, despised by those who are the ruled, in an environment destroyed by one's own behaviour. There is no testimony to how Jehoram felt; remorse, bitterness, self-pity. The testimony of the people is clear, 'his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers'. He 'departed without being desired'.

Amazingly, despite the onslaught of unleashed power against the king, his family, and possessions, one son remained to perpetuate the kingly line of Judah. In the wisdom of God, such a man as Jehoram appears in Matthew chapter 1, thus showing that the wickedness and abject failure of men cannot prevent the purpose of God. Concerning the man Jesus, 'the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David', Luke 1. 32.

*Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

*Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

C. T. STUDD.

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Elders are to lead by example. Look at the qualities that should be seen in our elders. I have avoided the word 'qualifications' as it is suggestive of institutional training and examination success. A worker was asked by elders if these qualities were like an examination – you do not need 100% to pass so long as you reach the pass mark, say 75%. The brother replied that what you have in Timothy and Titus is the pass mark!

Not only should the elders exhibit all these qualities to a greater or lesser degree but the saints in general could well measure themselves by this quality mark, 'apt to teach' apart.

J. R. LITTLEPROUD writes, 'How incongruous it would be if the assembly leaders were poorer examples of Christianity than the Christians whom they sought to guide!'

Remember, character is at least as important as competence, if not more so, where leaders are concerned. Where the world has stressed competence at the expense of character in public life both have suffered irreparably.

The elders should set an example in the following areas of life: personal, moral, social, and spiritual.

THEIR PERSONAL QUALITIES

Blameless – not sinless. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 2 the word is 'irreproachable', that is, no charge is proven against the elder. In Titus chapter 1 verse 6 the word is 'unaccused': that is, no charge is laid against the elder. The personal integrity of an elder must be unquestioned.

Temperate – or vigilant; Titus 1. 8; 1 Tim. 3. 2 RV. This aspect of life indicates a person who is circumspect and has all areas of his life under control.

Sober – Titus 1. 8; 1 Tim. 3. 2. This quality has reference to the mind, that is, sober-minded, rather than to drunkenness. It represents

ELDERS: ROLE-MODELS

a man who is capable of exercising sound discretion when it comes to decision-making.

Patient – 1 Tim. 3. 3; 1 Thess. 5. 14. In this feature, we have not so much the idea of longsuffering as that of sweet reasonableness. The elder must be ready to consider and weigh all that is put before him before reaching a fair and just conclusion: not hasty in reaching a judgement; not jumping to conclusions.

Not soon angry – Titus 1. 7. This is self-explanatory – not short-tempered, or 'on a short fuse'.

Not self-willed – Titus 1. 7. An elder should not be arrogant and able to see only one point of view, his own! He should not be wrapped up in self-interest and seek to dominate when in discussion with others.

THEIR MORAL QUALITIES

The husband of one wife – Titus 1. 6; 1 Tim. 3. 2. 'A one woman kind of man' as WUEST translates it. The elder should be morally pure, giving no grounds to be accused of infidelity or philandering. It would appear that a married man is preferred as an elder to a single person. Certainly it would add to the breadth of his experience in his work for the Lord. This statement excludes bigamy, polygamy, celibacy and infidelity. The value of marriage as a God-given ordinance is lost on the world today but as believers we should recognize the honour due to this institution.

Just – Titus 1. 8 – reacting towards others with a sense of fair play; doing what is right in our relationships with others.

Not greedy of filthy lucre – Titus 1. 7; 1 Tim. 3. 3, 8; 1 Pet. 5. 2. Wealth, finance, reward: these should not drive a Christian's life let alone that of an elder,

the more so if such desire is tainted by dubious methods and motives in the obtaining of them.

In Titus chapter 1 verse 7 the elder is not to be given to filthy lucre. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 3 the elder is not to be greedy for filthy lucre. Peter tells us the elder is not to serve for filthy lucre. From lucre we get our current word 'lucrative'. Elders should not be serving because such service pays well. The principle of 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 10 is thoroughly modern, 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' RV. This is forcibly illustrated in the life of Judas – one of 'the twelve' who kept the bag! A thief, who sold his Master for the price of a diseased slave. In this day of 'market forces', where many politicians give

a totally inappropriate role-model of greed, perhaps we should give closer heed to the above injunction.

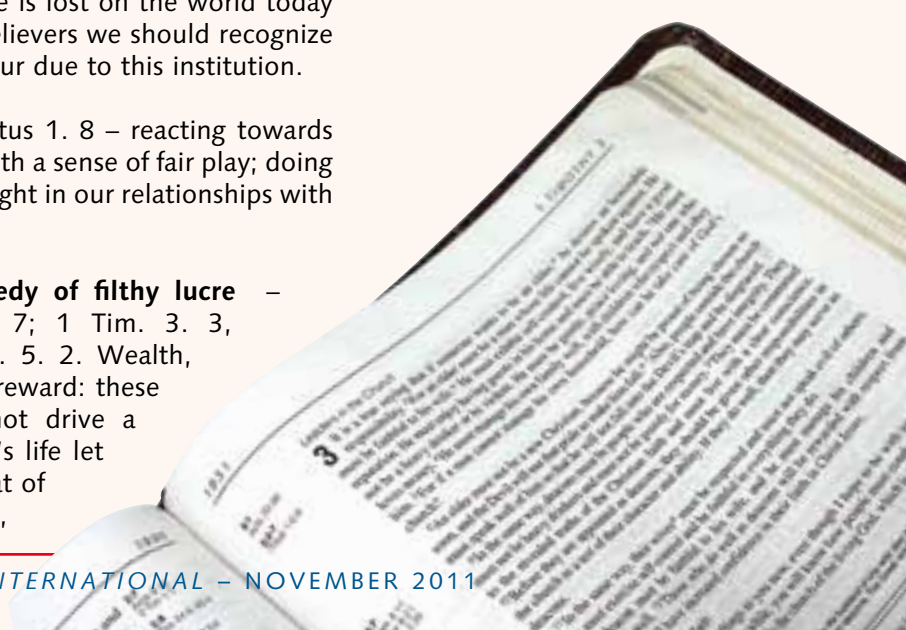
Not covetous – 1 Tim. 3. 3. Lacking avarice; not money-loving. This thought takes the lesson one step further – to the underlying motive.

THEIR SOCIAL QUALITIES

Ruling his own household well – 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5.

Having his children under control – Titus 1. 6; 1 Tim. 3. 4. These two qualities highlight the preference that the elder is a married man. What is the elder like in his own home?

By
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IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

What sort of control does he exercise within the family?

In Genesis chapter 18 verse 19 God is speaking about Abraham when He says, 'For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment'. What a commendation from the Lord himself!

How different when the Lord speaks to Samuel about Eli, 1 Sam. 3. 13, 'For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons are vile, and he restrained them not'. Eli is criticized by God for his lack of parental control over his sons.

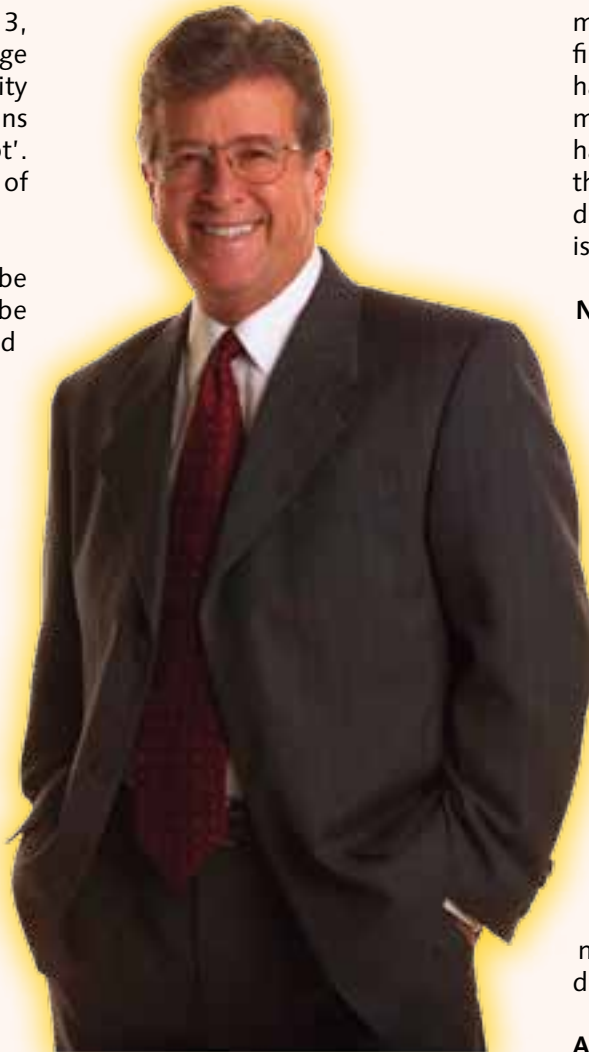
Discipline in the home is to be grounded in love. It should be administered with firmness and fairness but not with undue force. Paul instructs Timothy that the elder's children should be subject to him and respect him, implied in the word 'gravity'. The question is clear, 'If a man know not how to rule his own household how shall he take care of the church of God?' The expression 'take care' is elsewhere used of the good Samaritan, Luke 10. 34, 35. He took care of the wounded man and instructed the innkeeper to do the same, a fitting picture of the attitude of elders to saints in the local assembly. It has been remarked that the assembly should be more like a hospital than a barrack-room or a parade ground!

Paul teaches Titus that the children of an elder should be 'faithful' not dissolute, like the prodigal son or defiant like the son of Deuteronomy chapter 21 verses 18-21. The word 'faithful' could be rendered 'believing'. This would be the ideal, as exemplified in the daughters of Philip the evangelist, Acts 21. 9, but is it a realistic expectation? Think of Isaac's children, Jacob and Esau, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, Moses' offspring, Gershom and Eliezer, Samuel's sons, David's sons.

The parents' responsibility for their children's behaviour lasts until they reach the age of majority or until they leave the family home.

Overall, however, an elder's home life has a direct bearing on his leadership skills in the assembly.

Having a good report from those outside the assembly – 1 Tim. 3. 7. The word 'must' occurs twice in this eldership passage, in verses 2



and 7. He must be blameless and he must have a good testimony among those outside; neighbours, friends, workmates, etc. If his testimony before outsiders is suspect, he will be subject to reproach and entrapment by the devil. This will reflect badly on the reputation of the assembly in its community. Demetrius, 3 John 12, 'hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record'. Oh to be a Demetrius!

Not given to wine – Titus 1. 7; 1 Tim. 3. 3. WILLIAMS translates, 'not present at wine'. Paul comes down heavily on those who imbibe and drink to excess with the embarrassing consequences that often follow. The 'law of first mention' leads us to Noah and the consequences of his drunkenness, Gen. 9. 20-29.

In some countries wine is taken with meals. Paul recommended it for Timothy's gastric problem. Timothy abstained from wine or Paul would not have told him to take a little for his stomach's sake. I would be hard pressed to prove from scripture the case for total abstinence yet that is my personal stance. Why 'play with fire' when we know the effect alcohol has on behaviour and health-related matters. Bear in mind the world has its expectations of believers and they do not expect Christians to be drinkers. My advice as a fellow-elder is to steer clear of alcohol altogether.

No striker – Titus 1. 7; 1 Tim. 3. 3. The elder should not be of a quarrelsome disposition and prone to physicality. Saints should never come to blows. However, we may be aware of instances where elders became physical and so the advice is not as redundant as we might first imagine!

No brawler - 1 Tim. 3. 3. The elder is not to be combative, confrontational or contentious.

Of good behaviour - 1 Tim. 3. 2. The elder should be marked by virtuous conduct. The word translated 'behaviour' also has the secondary meaning of orderliness. The elder's life should not be haphazard, random, and disorganized, but orderly.

A lover of hospitality – Titus 1. 8; 1 Tim. 3. 2. Literally, 'a lover of strangers'. At a time when the Lord's servants were itinerant, homes were to be open to these strangers. Gaius is commended by John in his Third Epistle, 'Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church, whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well'. The brethren and strangers are thought to



be one and the same. The writer to the Hebrews would similarly remind us, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares', 13. 2. Was he thinking of Abraham when he lunched with angels and with the Lord Himself? The elder's home should be open for servants of the Lord, for strangers, and for the saints.

THEIR QUALITIES SPIRITUALLY and SCRIPTURALLY

A lover of good – Titus 1. 8. That is, good people and good things. The sixth fruit of the Spirit is goodness, Gal. 5. 22, 23. 'Whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things', Phil. 4. 8. Elders should cultivate such people and practices.

Not a novice – 1 Tim. 3. 6. The elder is to be spiritually experienced. Age is not the factor, here. The word 'novice' is literally 'newly planted', that is, a new convert. The danger of a novice doing an elder's work is pride! When pride entered Satan's heart it became a pitfall and he was cast out of heaven. The pride in a new convert's heart could become a similar pitfall, hence the prohibition.

Holy – Titus 1. 8. When you consider the Cretan's character, to whom Titus is sent by Paul to point out elders, it is hardly surprising that

holiness is underscored. The elder is to be 'clean' from contamination in his relationship to the world and consecrated in his relationship with God.

Holding fast the faithful word – Titus 1. 9. Elders must trust the word of God implicitly. They must be totally convinced of its inspiration and inerrancy and not deviate one iota from its doctrine and practice. Elders must teach the word of God by living it out in their everyday lives and by orally transmitting it to the saints.

Apt to teach – 1 Tim. 3. 2; Heb. 13. 7. Each elder is expected to be skilled at teaching believers. There will be different levels of ability as suggested elsewhere, 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine', 1 Tim. 5. 17.

Every elder must be able to teach on a one-to-one basis; some will be able to teach publicly in their assembly and even have a wider sphere for their teaching ministry. The duty of the elder is to ensure that the saints are fed sound, wholesome food. There must be no 'death in the pot', as experienced by Elisha and the sons of the prophets, 2 Kgs. 4. 38-41.

Able to convince the gainsayer – Titus 1. 9. The word 'gainsayer' means 'to speak against' and probably has in view false teachers such as the Judaizers who dogged the footsteps of Paul. They constantly sought to undermine the work of the apostles by speaking against them.

Elders should have both the knowledge and skills 'to contend earnestly for the faith' and to expose error for what it is. In the process, there is always the hope that the gainsayers will be convinced of their error and repent.

Watching for your souls – Heb. 13. 17. As mentioned earlier, 'watching' implies 'sleeplessness'. The elders' responsibility for the flock is a full-time commitment. They must be tireless in their oversight of the spiritual well-being of each and every believer in fellowship. To certain aspirants to eldership I would say,



'Forget the imagined halo, and think instead of the hours and heartache involved before you consider the role'.

Concerns for saints with special needs – 1 Thess. 5. 14. 'Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all'. The ministry of elders is not limited to the spiritually fit and healthy but should encompass the disorderly who receive censure, the downhearted who require strengthening, and the defenceless who need support. Such ministry will entail great patience on the part of longsuffering elders. Pray for elders. How easy it would be for them to react to the saints as Moses did when, after years of faithful leadership of an ungrateful, murmuring people, he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, thus losing out on entering the land of promise. Elders are to lead by example and to lead from the front, thus gaining the recognition and respect of the believers.

Assemblies of God's saints, elders in God's assembly, we still have the opportunity to reject the violation and travesty done to the scriptural pattern by the religious world and to heed the words of Christ Himself to the assembly at Sardis, 'Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent', Rev. 3. 3.

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The Glory of the Lord ^[2]

BY **SID NICHOLAS**
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We continue in the book of Numbers, chapter 20, for the next occasion when the glory of the Lord appeared. 'As this chapter opens, it is forty years since the Israelites left Egypt and thirty-eight years since they sent the spies into the land. The people had wandered for thirty-eight years and had now come back to Kadesh – the very place from which they had sent the spies. They were no closer to the promised land than they had been thirty-eight years earlier! Over 600,000 had died during the wasted years between chapters 19 and 20. The bitter fruit of unbelief was harvested in silence for an entire generation'.¹

The people who now complained about the lack of water were a new generation, but they acted like their fathers. It was, as they complained, that the glory of the Lord appeared for the fourth time in this book. The Lord told Moses to speak to the rock, but by now, Moses' patience had worn thin and he smote the rock twice; the waters flowed abundantly. The rock, being a type of Christ, was smitten once as recorded in Exodus chapter 17. The Lord Jesus was smitten at the cross, after which the Holy Spirit was given, 'which he shed on us abundantly', Titus 3. 6.

There are two recorded occasions when the glory of the Lord filled, firstly in connection with the Tabernacle in Exodus chapter 40, then with the Temple in 2 Chronicles chapter 7.

God had told Moses to make the Tabernacle after the pattern 'which was shown thee in the mount'. Every detail was given to Moses, nothing was to be left to imagination. In Exodus chapters 39 and 40, some eighteen times we read, 'as the Lord commanded Moses' and 'so Moses finished the work'. It was at that point that the glory of the Lord filled the house firstly for confirmation, then for consecration. How appropriate for the Tabernacle and its furnishings set forth the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus in a wonderful way!

It was at the dedication of the Temple when Solomon had prayed that the glory of the Lord appeared and filled the house, so much so that the priests could not enter. In Hebrews chapter 9 verse 8, we read, 'The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing'. However, as, on the cross, the Saviour cried, 'Finished', the veil of the temple (Herod's temple) was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, indicating, not only the end of the old system, but access into the very presence of God for all true believers. The exhortation is, 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith', Heb. 10. 22.

We find the last recorded occasion in Luke chapter 2. The first intimation of the birth of the Saviour was not given to the religious leaders at Jerusalem but to humble shepherds who were faithfully engaged in their

regular occupation. It was their eyes which first saw the glory of the coming of the Lord into this world. The angel of the Lord appeared and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. As they recoiled in terror, the angel reassured them and broke the news. 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord'. How would these shepherds recognize Him? 'Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger'. Suddenly, a multitude of the heavenly host appeared, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'.

As we remember the birth of the Saviour, (not just once a year!), may it be with gratitude, for He came to do the will of God in giving Himself for us and for our salvation. It will be our song in heaven – 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . . to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen', Rev. 1. 5-6.

Endnotes

- ¹ WILLIAM MACDONALD, *Believer's Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Nelson 1992.

SID NICHOLAS was in fellowship in Cwmbran, Wales, for over 50 years. Now in his mid-nineties he is resident in mid-Wales and, as health permits, fellowships with the assembly at Aberystwyth.



The world runs on the principle that man is the measure of all things. People habitually think of themselves first, and trample on others in order to exalt their own interests. In these verses Paul moves on to exhort the Philippian saints to behaviour that is like Christ and unlike the wicked generation from which they have been saved. He assures them that God's sanctifying power is already at work within them to live in keeping with their salvation, v. 13, and he presents three real-life examples of the Christ-like selfless mind, demonstrating that such an attitude is attainable in the Christian life.

Verse 12 commences with 'wherefore', pointing the reader back to Christ's work as described in verses 6 to 11. This great salvation demands a certain manner of living from its recipients. They are instructed to develop the new life within them. To 'work out what God has worked in', as the old adage has it, or, as one writer puts it, 'Work out here has the sense of bringing to completion. It is not a matter of working for salvation. We could never do that. The very word *salvation* (which means "rescue") signifies that we cannot save ourselves (cf. Jn. 15. 4-5; 1 Cor. 15. 10; Eph. 2. 5, 8), but we can and must live lives that show God's saving power that we have made our own'.¹ Believers are saved to live differently than the world.

The Proper Attitude produced by the Gospel

This outworking of the Christian life is to be done 'with fear and trembling', v. 12, for the Lord is a holy God. It is a fitting exhortation today considering that irreverence is the hallmark of the modern world. Even within evangelical circles believers often approach God and spiritual things with an overly familiar and casual attitude. From the priesthood's inception, what befell Nadab and Abihu showed that a cavalier approach to the Lord would result in death, Lev. 10; see also Uzzah, 2 Sam. 6. 6-7. In Corinth some of the saints were disciplined with illness and others by death due

Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

Chapter 2 verses 12-30: THE MIND OF CHRIST LIVED

to their impertinent behaviour, 1 Cor. 11. 30. Likewise, Ananias and Sapphira were slain by the Lord for lying to the Holy Spirit, Acts 5. 1-11. MOTYER sums up the proper attitude for Christians drawing near to God, saying, 'There is a fear of God of which we know all too little and which we lose at our peril – a godly fear, growing out of recognition of weakness and of the power of temptation; a filial dread of offending God. This is not the fear of a lost sinner before the Holy One, but the fear of a true child before the most loving of all fathers; not a fear of what he might do to us, but of the hurt we might do to him. This last area of sensitivity is the deepest and would secure the values of the other two, for there is no failure in the lives of those to whom the Lord has given his full salvation which does not pierce directly to the throne of heaven'.²

The *New English Translation* accurately captures the thought of verse 13, 'For the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort – for the sake of his good pleasure – is God'. The Almighty is working within the saints to engender the right desires after righteousness and performing His will. This working is effective and will not fail, as one writer indicates, 'God's working is effectual working: he cannot be deflected from his course nor fail to achieve his purpose. With our daily catalogue of failure and our not infrequent despair of ourselves, what unspeakable comfort lies in this truth!'.³ As part of their status as new creatures in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. 5. 17, believers' minds are irrevocably altered to bring them into line with God's thoughts. As VINE remarks, 'This accordingly is an encouragement to two things, (1) to work out our salvation, (2) to do so with fear and trembling – an encouragement both to dependence on God and to holy awe. God's grace and power and our freewill are both in view'.⁴

An Uncomplaining Testimony to the World

Verses 14 and 15 present a stark contrast between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. First, Christians are to be free of 'murmuring and complaining', v. 14; 1 Cor. 10. 10. The liberated Israelites were barely out of Egypt when they began accusing the Lord of dereliction of duty by starving them, Exod. 16, dehydrating them, Exod. 17, bringing them against enemies that in their view were unbeatable, Num. 13, and so forth.

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Rather than be thankful, throughout the wilderness wanderings they questioned God's goodness at every turn. Second, believers are to 'become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the

midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world', v. 15, NKJV. Ancient Israel never achieved these characteristics, Deut. 32. 5; in Christ, however, this kind of life is normative. Christians are to be a testimony to God's transforming power and unfailing goodness. Furthermore, their manner of living is a way of 'holding forth the word of life', v. 16.

As the word of life's effects are manifested among the Philippians, the future divine assessment of Paul's work among them would not be considered vain at Christ's judgement seat, v. 16. That the apostle feels a deep connection to them is evidenced by his willingness to sacrifice his life for them, v. 17. It is the first of three examples of Christ-likeness that he puts before their minds for sake of emulation. In so doing, he describes their faith as a sacrifice. Paul is willing to pour out his life like a drink offering if it can augment their presentation to the Lord. This sacrifice might take place by instantaneous martyrdom, Phil. 1. 21-26, or by daily self-sacrifice over the period of his life among them. History demonstrates that the latter course was the one appointed



ring of the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Eight

OUT AMONG BELIEVERS

for the apostle; nonetheless, he was prepared to give his life for them if needed. Likewise, believers are to progressively pour their lives out in service for one another.

Christ's Mind lived out in His Saints

Timothy, Paul's able co-worker, is the second Christ-like example presented to the Philippians. MARTIN points out their close relationship: *'I have no-one else like him* (lit. "of

equal soul") is a tribute of high praise from the apostle, and puts Timothy in a very honoured position as a key man on whom Paul depended . . . The LXX of Psalm 55:13 (54:14), "a man mine equal", shows that it is used of close human friendship. The sense of the passage seems to be that of all his Christian friends in the place of his confinement . . . there is no-one who shares so intimately Timothy's deep concern for the Philippians'.⁵

As a son labouring with his father, Timothy served with Paul in the family business, the Lord's work. As MOTYER says, 'Obedience and evangelism are the normative poles of Christian slavery'.⁶ Consequently, he could be trusted to look after the Philippians' spiritual well-being.

A Familiar Example from a 'Hometown' Son

At this juncture, a sceptic might assert, 'Yes, Paul, but after all, you are an apostle and Timothy is your personally-trained lieutenant. You fellows are spiritual supermen! Surely you don't expect ordinary people to exhibit this type of mindset – looking after other's needs, esteeming others as better and all of that'. Anticipating this objection, he brings one of their own to the forefront, Epaphroditus. This man jeopardized his health and life itself in his service for the Lord. Paul refers to Him as 'my brother', v. 25, expressing their connection in God's family. Secondly, he is 'my fellow worker', v. 25 NKJV, showing his association in the Lord's work. Thirdly, he is a 'fellow soldier', v. 25, demonstrating his camaraderie in spiritual combat against the world and the devil. He is also connected to the Philippian assembly as their 'messenger and he that ministered to my wants'.⁷

Having no recourse to e-mail or telephones, they kept in touch with Paul by sending one of their trusted members, who then served with the apostle on behalf of the Philippians. His faithful ministry led the messenger into dire illness. Yet in keeping with his Christ-like mind, during his sickness he was not concerned for himself, focusing instead on the worrying effect that news of his malady would have on his fellow-saints in Philippi, vv. 26, 30. Upon returning to Philippi, he is to be given the respectful appreciation of the Christians, v. 29.

Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus collectively demonstrate the practical outworking of the Christ-like mind; such an attitude is a genuine part of the Christian life. Putting others first is not merely the duty of spiritual heroes like Paul and Timothy; rather, it is part of the outworking of the mind of Christ in all of His people. Believers must think the Lord's thoughts after Him by considering our brothers' and sisters' needs and well-being before our own. It is not only an attainable lifestyle, it is also an essential part of living for God and doing His will.

Endnotes

- 1 D. A. CARSON, *New Bible Commentary : Philippians*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1994; elec. ed.
- 2 J. A. MOTYER, *The Message of Philippians*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1984, p. 128; elec. ed.
- 3 *ibid*, p. 129.
- 4 W. E. VINE, *Collected Writings of W. E. Vine: Philippians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997; elec. ed.
- 5 RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987, p. 132; elec. ed.
- 6 J. A. MOTYER, *The Message of Philippians*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1984, p. 138; elec. ed.
- 7 'Messenger' renders *apostolos* in this verse – i.e., the same word for 'apostle'. Sometimes this word is used in the New Testament for one who is a specially selected witness and emissary of the risen Christ (e.g. 'the twelve' or Paul). In other passages, like this one, it refers merely to a messenger sent out by an assembly.

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The King James Version (AV) originally published in 1611 is, in many places, rarely matched in terms of the beauty of its language. After four centuries it is still the third most popular English translation – a testimony to the diligence and faithfulness of those involved in its production. During these modern days, with so many different English translations to choose from, it is still important to ask, 'What makes a good and a reliable translation of the scriptures?' In answer this article seeks to address two important foundations: (1) the choice of the original language text; and (2) the method or mode of translation into the receptor language, i.e., the language into which the original languages are being translated.

1 The Underlying Text Used

The Old Testament

Unlike the New Testament, where there are several different theories as to the best manuscripts, most scholars accept the traditional Masoretic text for the Old Testament. This name is derived from the 'Masoretes', a name for textual scholars derived from the Hebrew word for tradition. From the seventh to the tenth century A.D. they produced the text that has become the generally accepted text used today.

Another thing to note concerning the text of the Old Testament is that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947 that show a remarkable similarity to the later traditional Masoretic text. These contain parts of all the books of the Old Testament, except Esther. The Isaiah scroll, found in the first Qumran cave, is a complete text of his prophecy. The extraordinary thing is how very closely it resembles the text from which the Old Testament of the KJV was translated.

The New Testament

There are over five thousand manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, some written soon after the writing of the original texts. There are four categories of writing and material available for use by translators:

The King James Version and

The Papyri. These oldest manuscripts, usually quite fragmentary, were written in capital letters on papyrus (a paper like material derived from the Papyrus plant). There are over eighty papyrus manuscripts, most of which are in codex (book) form, but four are fragments from scrolls. The papyri are designated by the letter 'P' with a superscripted number. The earliest New Testament fragment is the Rylands Papyrus 52, generally accepted as being dated around three decades after the death of the apostle John. It contains several verses from John chapter 18.

The Uncials. The word uncial, deriving from the Latin word for 'inch', is used to describe these manuscripts because of the large capital letters that are used. There are about 260 uncial manuscripts, only one of which contains most of the New Testament. Nevertheless, every New Testament book has ample uncial witnesses. The uncials are designated by English and Greek capital letters.

The Minuscules. There are about 2,700 minuscules. These are written in smaller letters in a slanted and flowing 'cursive' script. Most of these are from later centuries and it was from six of these later minuscules that the Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus produced his first edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516.

Lectionaries. Greek lectionaries are similar to the scriptures seen in *Book of Common Prayer*. They are, of course, in the Greek language, and still used by the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Church Fathers

There are thousands of quotations from the Greek New Testament in the so-called 'church fathers'. These 'fathers' lived from the second century until early medieval times, but the manuscripts containing their works trace back only from about the fourth century onwards. If the actual manuscripts of the New Testament were lost, virtually the entire text could be recovered from their writings.

The Traditional Greek Text - Textus Receptus or Received Text (TR)

The manuscripts of the Greek New Testament available to the earlier European scholars were primarily late medieval copies that became available in Europe after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. These were manuscripts used by the Greek speaking church. The AV translators used these along with other resources, including previous translations into English by Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale and others. Until the nineteenth century the Greek texts used by Bible translators were based on ancient manuscripts that were in substantial agreement. As a result, there were few questions raised concerning the conformity of the then current Greek texts, to the original autographed texts of the various New Testament writers.

In the nineteenth century, earlier Greek manuscripts were discovered that caused some Bible scholars to change their approach towards evaluation of the Greek text. These discoveries were thought to be important for Bible translation because the text of these older manuscripts was significantly different from the TR in a number of places. Because of their antiquity, many scholars came to regard these earlier manuscripts as better copies of the original autographs and thus more authoritative. In turn, this caused scholars to consider how to determine which of the differing readings were original and which might have been later changes. How to go about this review of the text caused scholars difficulty. Finally, many accepted a method developed by F. J. A. Hort and B. F. Westcott, who propounded their theory in a two-volume work published in 1881, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*.

The Westcott-Hort Theory

Westcott and Hort advocated that relationships among manuscripts were of primary importance. On the basis of their investigation they identified four principal text types, which they called the Syrian, the Western, the Alexandrian, and the

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Principles of Translation (1)

Neutral. The text they regarded as the latest and least reliable they called 'Syrian', generally called 'Byzantine' today. This latter is the text type which Erasmus used and from which the New Testament of the AV was translated. The very smoothness and completeness of the text led some scholars to believe it had become corrupted through much editing. Hort taught that the text was in such a vast majority of extant manuscripts because the Byzantine Church made it her official text. There is, however, no historical evidence for this.

Westcott and Hort's favoured text they called 'Neutral', a name now rejected by many as too biased. This text was heavily dependent on Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, their first and second most favoured manuscripts. Many of their contemporary scholars, however, were disturbed that a few recently discovered manuscripts, no matter how much older, should be made to counter balance the hundreds of years of reliance on the traditional text and the overwhelming majority of manuscripts supporting it. The most outspoken critic of their theory was John W. Burgon, Dean of Chichester.¹ He favoured the Byzantine text because the vast majority of manuscripts supported it. He regarded Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus as corrupt and unreliable as copies of the original text. He also felt the writings of the early church fathers were more reliable, particularly as passages of scripture contained therein corresponded largely with the Byzantine text underlying the TR.

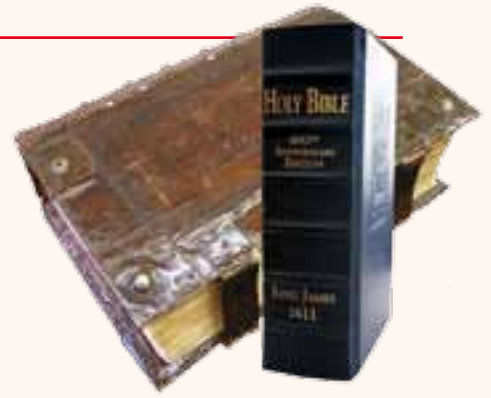
In more recent times textual scholars have classified the manuscripts into different text types from those of Westcott and Hort. They have also departed from such extreme dependence on Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, giving more weight to other early witnesses, including early papyri. Many scholars are more willing to include the Byzantine text in their translation work, rather than ignore it and the result is essentially an 'Eclectic Text', that is, one based on choosing individual readings rather than following a certain textual theory. This Eclectic Text, often called the

'Critical Text', is the Greek text used in all of the modern translations of the New Testament, except the New King James version (NKJV). This Critical Text, though it is not very different from the Westcott - Hort text, does have a wider base although it is still not one based on the majority of manuscripts. It is designated as the 'NU' text - 'NU' standing for 'Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies'.²

The Majority Text Theory

There has been a recent resurgence of the conviction that the divine preservation of the text of the New Testament can best be discovered in the type of text used in the Greek speaking churches as far back as we can trace. This is the text found in approximately ninety-five percent of the manuscripts. It is argued that a variant that first appeared in a fourth-century manuscript, i.e., the Codices from Egypt, when hundreds of manuscripts reflecting the true reading of the original were already in circulation, would have had a poor chance of becoming the dominant reading. For example, the Codex Vaticanus manuscript, has few descendants. TR supporters use this as one argument for choosing the text based on the majority of manuscripts, maintaining that the readings found in the largest number of manuscripts are most likely to trace back to the earliest copies, the autographs actually penned by the evangelists and apostles themselves. It is also worth noting that most of the autographs were originally sent to and carefully preserved by churches in what later became the Byzantine Empire; in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica, and other places. As far as we know, not a single *original* autograph of a Gospel or Epistle was ever sent to Egypt, the country of origin of Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus.

The main argument against the Majority text is that none of the earliest manuscripts is of this type. Those who support the Majority, however, respond to this criticism by maintaining that the manuscripts found in Egypt during the nineteenth century are corrupt copies of much



earlier manuscripts. These originals had been sent to Asia Minor and Europe but were likely rejected as not being the best and therefore not copied. Furthermore, the manuscripts we have from Egypt survived possibly because of disuse and certainly because of the dry climate. Although it used to be said that no Byzantine readings were ancient, early papyri have been found which do contain formerly rejected, so called 'late' readings. In recent years the extreme reliance on a handful of the oldest manuscripts - all from Egypt - has decreased. There is a greater openness to giving the so-called Byzantine manuscripts a fair hearing.³ Having said this the majority of translators of the contemporary versions assume that the still popular Critical Text view is correct, often supporting critical readings with marginal notes referring to 'the *best* manuscripts' which seem to many to be biased. It does appear thoroughly unfair and biased that manuscripts supporting the AV readings are largely ignored, since these latter readings almost always reflect the overwhelming majority of extant manuscripts. Most current New Testament translations use some modification of the Westcott - Hort text, such as an eclectic one not too far removed from that text. The only modern English translation which is an exception to this is the NKJV.

To be continued.

Endnotes

- 1 See *Revision Revised* J. W. BURGON.
- 2 There are, in fact, two critical editions of the Greek New Testament not an amalgam. They are Nestle-Aland 27th edition, and UBS 4th edition. The difference between them is that NA27 lists more variants in its critical apparatus (footnotes). UBS4 text was specially designed for translators.
- 3 H. A. STURZ - *The Byzantine Text Type and New Testament textual criticism*.

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Personalities in the Pastoral Epistles (6)

Those who were a delight to Paul (continued)

Aquila and Priscilla (Prisca)

The Jewish Rabbi Jehuda wrote that 'He who does not teach his son a trade is much the same as if he taught him to be a thief'. This was in addition to any academic training that a son might have been given. So, one of the most famous rabbis of them all, Hillel the Elder, supported himself by manual labour. The apostle Paul's trade was tent-making and it was in his pursuit of this occupation in Corinth that he found Aquila and his wife Priscilla, 1 Cor. 4. 12. Like him, they had recently arrived in Corinth, Acts 18. 2.

Paul found that he already had a lot in common with Aquila: they were both Jews; both tentmakers; both from the same part of the world and both had recently arrived in Corinth. Whether Aquila and Priscilla had faith in Christ when Paul met them, we do not know, (however see Acts 2. 9 and 1 Pet. 1. 1), but if not, they soon did! Paul lodged with them and they were occupied together working with the tough goats' hair fabric to make tents. What wonderful evenings they must have had, drinking in the apostle's teaching after a busy day of work and/or evangelism. For the year and a half that they were with Paul under the same roof, they must have learned a lot. They eventually left Corinth with Paul, arrived with him at Ephesus, where he left them, Acts 18. 19, and went on himself to Jerusalem.

After Paul had left Ephesus, Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, arrived in the city and began teaching in the synagogue. He obviously knew his Old Testament ('mighty in the scriptures'), knew of the introduction of Jesus by John the Baptist and knew how to put his message over effectively. He was eloquent, fervent and bold in his speaking. As soon as Aquila and Priscilla heard him speaking in the synagogue, they were very happy with what he said as far as it went, but they immediately

realized that there was something missing. They took him home and explained the full facts of the gospel, no doubt telling him what Paul had told them, 'the way of God more perfectly', Acts. 18. 24-26. Since Priscilla and Aquila were the hosts for the assembly meetings in Ephesus, Apollos must have had an opportunity to meet the saints as well and he was eventually in fellowship with them.

Aquila and Priscilla were still in Ephesus when Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians from that city, 1 Cor. 16. 19. However, when Paul eventually wrote to the believers at Rome, he sent his greetings to, and makes special mention of his fellow-workers, Aquila and Priscilla, Rom. 16. 3, who by then had obviously returned to Rome, since the ban on Jews had been lifted. He said that they had 'for my life staked their own neck', 16. 4 JND. While giving no details of this incident when they risked their lives for Paul, possibly in Ephesus, he was certainly thankful for this self-sacrificial act, but he said that all the Gentile assemblies were also indebted to them. In Rome, once again they were hosts of an assembly for its gatherings, 16. 5.

They are last mentioned some ten years later, when Paul sends his greetings to them via Timothy, 2 Tim. 4. 19. We do not know for sure where Timothy was, but he must have been somewhere in Asia Minor, where Paul had last left him in Ephesus, 1. Tim. 1. 3. So Priscilla and Aquila had moved again! These peripatetic helpers had now been active in Corinth in Achaia, Ephesus in Asia Minor and Rome in Italy – great Gentile Christian centres.

What kind of people were they? Priscilla is the more informal version of her proper name Prisca (cp. Sue and Susan), 2 Tim. 4. 19; Rom. 16. 3 RV, JND. She was obviously happy to be called by either, so she

was not unfriendly, but someone who could be easily spoken to, who did not stand on ceremony. She was an industrious sister, engaged with her husband in the tent-making business, Acts 18. 3, as well as looking after her lodgers and making the necessary arrangements when the assembly gathered in her home for its meetings. When Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in the New Testament, her name often appears first. This must tell us that in the usual male-dominated society of the day, she stood out. Of course, she acted in private not in public in the spiritual realm. While she was silent in assembly meetings, she had a lot to say otherwise!

Aquila is never mentioned as a public speaker, but in private he was certainly able to teach the likes of Apollos, albeit with his wife's help! They are always mentioned together and so, as a couple, served the Lord, leaving us a wonderful example, 'being heirs together of the grace of life', 1 Pet. 3. 7. They are the kind of people whose presence is indispensable in a local assembly. No mention is made of any children, but they used all their time and effort for the gospel and the assembly. For them the disappointment of unexpectedly losing their home and business in Rome eventually turns to the delight of being useful in the Lord's service.

References

- 1 Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 29a.
- 2 Along with the other Jewish residents of Rome, Aquila and Priscilla had been expelled in AD 49 following civil unrest, probably due to orthodox Jews objecting to the gospel. They would be allowed to return some five years later.
- 3 Tarsus and Pontus in the east of modern-day Turkey.
- 4 This verse has led some to suggest that there was more than one assembly in Rome.

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

By **KEN TOTTON** Cambridge, England

(UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL QUOTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ARE FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION)

1

1. Author

As with the Epistle to Hebrews, but unlike most other New Testament Epistles, the First Epistle of John is anonymous. However, the traditional view, and one that was unanimous in the early church, identifies the author as John the son of Zebedee, 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. Let us look first at the evidence of the Epistle itself, then some external sources.

Internal evidence

There are many notable points of similarity between this Epistle and the Gospel of John. The language of both is simple, yet subtle, and the meaning is frequently profound. Many phrases and expressions are shared, e.g., 'life', 'light', 'love', 'manifest', 'only-begotten'.¹ There is clear evidence of an eyewitness, 1. 1-4, pointing to one who had been with the Lord Jesus from the outset of His earthly ministry.

The following features fit with the apostle John writing at an advanced age:

- Authoritative commands² – the writer is clearly known to his readers as a spiritual guide and his authority is recognized.
- Passionate concern and loving pastoral care: he frequently uses the expressions 'my little children', 'brethren', and 'beloved'.³
- Exposure of error: he is not prepared for 'peace at any price': on the contrary, dangerous error must be clearly pinpointed: 1. 6, 8; 2. 4, 22. His uncompromising approach recalls the Lord's description of John as a 'son of thunder', Mark 3. 17. Yet, the same disciple was transformed in the school of Christ into the 'apostle of love', John 13. 23; 1 John 2. 5-6.

External evidence

The Epistle is referred to by several prominent figures in the early church. Eusebius, the early church historian indicates that there was never any questioning of its genuineness. According to him, 1 John was used by Papias (c. 140),⁴ and is quoted by Polycarp (c. 110-120) and very probably by Justin (c. 150-160). Irenaeus (c. 180) also accepted it as the work of John the apostle. It was also recognized by the Muratorian Canon (c. 200), the earliest attempt to catalogue books of the New Testament recognized by the church. Clement of Alexandria (c. 144-215) makes repeated use of it and in several places mentions it as the apostle John's.⁵

2. Date of writing

Several considerations point to a date late in the first century. The epistle builds on several of the themes of John's Gospel, so if that Gospel is to be dated around 85 AD, the Epistle is likely to have followed shortly after. This would be consistent with references to it by early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus. It would also align with the view of John, the last survivor of

the apostles, writing in his old age, having had no less than five decades to reflect on the great gospel events and their significance.

3. Recipients

Whilst Paul lamented, just before his martyrdom, that 'all that are in Asia turned away from me', 2 Tim. 1. 15, there is impressive historical evidence that John spent the closing decades of his long life in the region of Ephesus in western Asia Minor. Clement of Alexandria indicated that John fulfilled a pastoral ministry in relation to churches throughout the province of Asia.⁶ If this is so, Ephesus was a most favoured church, having benefited from the ministry of Paul, Timothy, and John, not to mention the Lord's direct message to the church, Rev. 2. 1-7. His indictment regarding the abandonment of their 'first love' is all the more serious in view of the high privileges of the church.

4. Occasion and purpose

The Epistles of John have suffered by being classified among the so-called 'catholic' or general epistles.⁷ Since no particular destination is mentioned, the Epistles were thought to have been addressed to the church at large. Yet 1 John arose out of a specific set of circumstances confronting the churches in Asia Minor. So what was it that caused John to write? The following section identifies key aspects of the opponents' teaching and behaviour discernible in John's first two Epistles.

Their view of Christ	'Who is the liar but he who <i>denies that Jesus is the Christ?</i> ' This is the antichrist, 2. 18, 22. 'and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist', 4. 3; 'this is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; <i>not only by water, but by water and blood</i> ', 5. 6; 5. 10; 'For many deceivers have gone out into the world who <i>do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh</i> ', 2 John 7, 9.
Attitude to sin	'If we say that <i>we have not sinned</i> , we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us', 1. 6, 8, 10; 'He who says, "I know Him," and <i>does not keep His commandments</i> , is a liar, and the truth is not in him', 2. 4; 'Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous', 3. 4, 7.
Attitude to fellow-believers	2. 9; 3. 10-12; ' <i>Whoever hates his brother</i> is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him', 3. 15; 'My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth', 3. 17, 18; 4. 8.
Denial of apostolic authority	'He who knows God hears us; <i>he who is not of God does not hear us</i> . By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error', 4. 6.
Withdrawal from fellowship	' <i>They went out from us</i> , but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us', 2. 18-19; 4. 1; 2 John 7.
Deceivers	'These things I have written to you concerning those <i>who try to deceive you</i> . But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and <i>you do not need that anyone teach you</i> ', 2. 26, 27; 2 John 9-11.

In the light of the above, it is clear that John's opponents had emerged from among the churches. They had developed serious errors in relation to the Person of Christ. In particular they denied the reality of His incarnation⁸ – finding it impossible to accept that the eternal 'Christ', the 'Son of God', became permanently⁹ revealed in holy humanity. It also seems that they played down the saving significance of His cross, hence John's insistence on the blood, 5. 6. They rejected John's apostolic authority, and, though they had withdrawn from Christian fellowship, they remained a threat, seeking to draw others away. John does not charge them with immorality, yet it seems clear that these people were at best amoral, that is, they were indifferent to moral issues such as sin, holiness, and purity. Perhaps they felt that under the Spirit's guidance they had progressed to 'higher ground' and these basic matters did not apply to them. Their attitude to fellow Christians seems to have been harsh and unloving, possibly due to their supposed spiritual superiority.

Excursus Heresies, Gnosticism

It is likely that at least some of the errors encountered in the Epistle are the early forms of those that came to be associated with Gnosticism.¹⁰ The term 'Gnosticism' is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning 'knowledge'. Gnostics claimed to possess special knowledge beyond the simple faith of the church. What they claimed to 'know' consisted of a myth about the creation of the world as the result of a pre-cosmic disaster which accounted for the present misery of mankind, and about the way in which the elect few may be redeemed. Gnostics regarded the present material world as utterly alien to the supreme God and His goodness, and must be the creation of inferior powers. They therefore regarded the 'spirit' as good and matter as evil.

Several significant errors stem directly from this false distinction:

- 1 The human body, being made of matter, is evil. This is to be contrasted with God, who is spirit and therefore good. This false view of the body could lead to either asceticism (severity towards the body), Col. 2. 21-23, or to the opposite extreme of licentiousness, 1 Cor. 6. 12-18. If the body is evil and has no future, then behaviour in the body is of no consequence. You could add that part of this heresy included the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul. Hence, the idea of bodily resurrection was anathema to them, because it would mean the incarceration of the soul for all eternity.
- 2 Salvation requires escape from the body, not through the redemptive work of Christ but by special knowledge.
- 3 Christ's humanity came to be denied in several ways. First Docetism (from Greek *dokeo*,

meaning 'to seem') taught that the humanity of Christ was a mere phantom – He only seemed to have a body. Others taught that the divine Christ descended on the Man Jesus at His baptism but left Him before He died on the cross! This is known as Cerinthianism after its major proponent, Cerinthus.

In actual fact, the heyday of Gnosticism came later, from the second to the fifth centuries; however, it is highly likely that late first-century believers encountered early versions of its errors.

The departure of some of the most gifted members of a fellowship is always unsettling. All sorts of fears and doubts can arise in the minds of those remaining, to the point of bewilderment as to where the truth about Christ and morality is to be found. John was an eyewitness right from the beginning of the great gospel events – 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. Now, as the 'Elder', he writes with tenderness and concern to allay the fears of his 'little children':¹¹

- Eternal life is to be found only in the Son of God, 5. 11.
- For that life to be available to men, the Son must become man, 4. 9, 10.
- To deny the incarnation and to play down the significance of His sacrifice is to exclude oneself from sharing in the life of God.

John supplies a series of moral, social and doctrinal tests to highlight the differences between the faithful and those whose claims are false. As PLUMMER puts it, 'The Gospel gives us the theology of the Christ; the Epistle, the ethics of the Christian'.¹²

For John, the safe path lies in keeping to apostolic Christianity, 2. 24. That faith is preserved in the New Testament documents, our only standard by which to judge faith and practice. From that perspective the message of the Epistle is as necessary for us today as it was for its first readers.

Excursus Contemporary relevance

1. Doctrine of Christ

The common element in many modern heresies is a denial of the incarnation. The incarnation is a fundamental crux of Christianity. 'No system of teaching which denies either the eternal divine pre-existence of Jesus or the historical incarnation of the Christ can be accepted as Christian', STOTT.¹³

John emphasizes the following:

- Compelling eyewitness testimony of what actually happened, 1. 1-4, in contrast to mere speculation.
- Christ's bodily presence was no myth or phantom, 21. 12, 13.

- The centrality of His mission to take away sin, and the historical fact and redemptive value of His blood, 1 John 5. 6; 1. 7.
- Only a divine Saviour can truly 'bear away the sin of the world', John 1. 29.
- Only one truly Man can fully take men's place as their representative and substitute, 3. 14.
- Christ's return is a transforming and purifying hope, 1 John 2. 28; 3. 2.

2. Absolutes in an age of relativism

The 'postmodern' age of the 21st century celebrates diversity, and pluralism, and accommodates contradiction. Because of this, it is deeply distrustful and fiercely intolerant of absolute truth claims. In the view of its exponents, 'there are no absolutes'.¹⁴ This thinking, and its devastating consequences, pervade the academic world, the media, and society at large.

The German poet GOETHE once said, 'Tell me of your certainties: I have doubts enough of my own'. To move from the shifting values and thought patterns of the 21st century into the world of 1 John is to arrive in the sphere of absolute truth! John deals in certainties, and speaks of polar opposites, light and darkness, life and death, love and hatred. He knows no shades of grey, no ambiguity or double-speaking. His trumpet gives no uncertain sound!

3. Charismatic claims

As faith in science to solve the world's problems wanes, there has been a marked growth of interest in the supernatural. Within Christendom there has been an upsurge of interest in charismatic gifts, partly as a protest against the barren liberalism of much 20th century theology. However, 1 John will supply a timely reminder to us that many spirits are abroad, not all of them honouring God, 4. 1-6. Controls are therefore needed and discernment is essential. Happily, the ordinary believer is equipped with the resources to discern between the true and the false, and need not be bowled over by the high-sounding claims of false teachers, 2. 18-23.

4. Spiritual balance: righteousness, love, belief

In the various cycles of the Epistle (see Outline below) John repeatedly applies a series of tests to Christian profession. These are:

- the practice of righteousness (moral test)
- love to one's fellow believers (social test)
- correct beliefs about Christ (doctrinal test)

In situations involving pressure and controversy, we often find it difficult to hold these fundamental aspects in balance. Sometimes our doctrinal precision can be accompanied by a harshness towards those who do not share our particular views, and our social concerns may be more theoretical than practical, 3. 18. Or perhaps we champion doctrinal correctness, but prefer to draw a veil over our business dealings and other matters of personal morality? This Epistle supplies vital correction to counteract these errors.

5. Structure

In studying a New Testament Epistle it is very helpful to grasp its overall structure, the topics addressed, their proportions, and relationship one to another.¹⁵ In contrast to the Epistles of Paul, 1 John has a cyclic feature where topics are introduced, and then later revisited with development.¹⁶ A good analogy is that of ascending a spiral staircase where objects below can be revisited and appreciated from fresh angles. ROBERT LAW, author of a celebrated commentary on the Epistle, observed, 'It is like a winding staircase – always revolving around the same centre, always recurring to the same topics, but at a higher level. Or, to borrow a term from music, one might describe the method as contrapuntal. The Epistle works with a comparatively small number of themes, which are introduced many times, and are brought into every possible relation to one another. . . And the clue to the structure of the Epistle will be found by tracing the introduction and reappearances of these leading themes'.¹⁷

Whilst it is fairly clear that the topics of light, love, and eternal life are basic to John's plan,¹⁸ it is maintained in this exposition that eternal life supplies the unifying theme. As far as structure is concerned, all commentators are agreed that the opening four verses form a unit, and most would agree that the final nine verses comprise a section. Thereafter opinions differ! Most, however, would see chapter 2 verses 28 and 29 as transitional. The outline below represents most of the views of leading authorities on the structure of this Epistle.¹⁹

Excursus

Eternal life is not simply a passport to heaven! It is the life of God for us to experience and enjoy here and now – above all, a life to be lived in all its richness!

Characteristic of eternal life . . .	1 John	John's Gospel
Is supremely manifest in Christ	1. 1-4	1. 4; 5. 26; 14. 6
Has its source in God	4. 4	6. 33; 17. 3
Is initiated by new birth	2. 29	1. 13
Consists in knowledge of God	5. 20	17. 3
Consists in union with divine Persons	5. 20	6. 56; 14. 20; 17. 21-23
Is a gift	5. 11	6. 32; 10. 28
Its nature is light	1. 7; 2. 10	3. 21; 8. 12; 12. 46
Involves the Spirit's anointing	2. 20, 27	7. 39
Faith in the Son of God	5. 5, 10, 13	1. 12, 20. 31
Obedience to His commandments	2. 3, 17	14. 15, 23; 15. 10
Its nature is to love	3. 14; 4. 19	13. 34-35; 21. 15-17
Expresses itself in prayer	3. 22; 5. 14-16	15. 7; 16. 24, 26
Evidences growth	2. 12-14	8. 31; 15. 8
Overcomes the world	2. 14; 5. 4, 5	16. 33
Is joyful	1. 4	15. 11; 16. 22
Its experience promotes assurance	5. 13	14. 20; 21. 24

6. Outline

[Key to Tests: m = moral; s = social; d = doctrinal]

Prologue, 1. 1 - 4
The revelation of eternal Life in the incarnation of the Son of God.
Cycle 1 Revelation of the life eternal, 1. 5 – 2. 28
Fellowship in the light with the Father and the Son
Walking in the light: Test – sin confessed m , 1. 5 – 2. 2
Walking in the light: Test – obedience m , 2. 3-6
Walking in the light: Test – love for the children of God s , 2. 7-11
Progress in fellowship: Three groups addressed, 2. 12-14
Walking in the light: Test – refusal to love the world s , 2. 15-17
Walking in the light: Test – Person of Christ d , 2. 18-28
Warning: The arrival of antichrists, 2. 18-19
Resource: The anointing from the Holy One, 2. 20-21
Test d: the Person of Christ, 2. 22-23
Key to preservation and confidence, 2. 24-28
Cycle 2 Revelation of the children of God, 2. 29 - 4. 6
Their character revealed
Children of God: Test – righteousness m 2. 29 – 3. 10a
Children of God: Test – loves 3. 10b – 24
Children of God: Test – the Person of Christ d 4. 1-6
Warning: false prophets active in the world, 4. 1
Test: their doctrine of Christ, 4. 2-3
Resource: the divine Indwelling, 4. 4-6
Cycle 3 Revelation of the love of God, 4. 7 – 5. 12
The essential nature of love
Love of God: its Source, 4. 7-13
Love of God: Test d 4. 14-16
Love of God: its perfecting in us, 4. 17-19
Love of God: Test – love for the children of God s , 4. 20-21
Victory: enabled by faith, love, and obedience, 5. 1-5
Three Witnesses: the ground of assurance, 5. 6-12
Epilogue Certainties of Christian belief, 5. 13 -21
Assurance of eternal life, 5. 13
Confidence in prayer, 5. 14-17
Three things that are known, 5. 18-20a
Conclusion and warning, 5. 20b-21

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Endnotes:

- 1 A. PLUMMER lists the following: Abide, advocate, be of God, be of the truth, be of the world, believe on, children of God, darkness, do sin, do the truth, eternal life, evil one, joy be fulfilled, have sin, keep His commandments, keep His word, lay down one's life, life, light, love, manifest, murderer, new commandment, Only-begotten, pass over out of death into life, true, truth, walk in darkness, witness, Word, world. *The Epistles of St. John*. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Cambridge University Press, 1894, pg. 49.
- 2 See 2. 15, 24, 28; 4. 1; 5. 21
- 3 'My little children', 2. 1, 12, 28; 3. 7, 18; 4. 4; 5. 21; 'Beloved', 2. 7; 3. 2, 21; 4. 1, 7, 11. Their challenges, 2. 19; 4. 1, danger posed by false teachers, 2. 26; 3. 7, their spiritual development, 2. 12-14, 21, their victories, 4. 4, and perils, 5. 21. He alternates between the 'you' of direct address, 1. 3, 5; 2. 1, 7, 8, 12-14, and the 'we' expressing close fellowship with his readers, 1. 6, 10; 3. 1-2; 4. 7, 10, 11.
- 4 EUSEBIUS, *History of the Church*, London: Penguin Books, 1981, pg. 153.
- 5 PLUMMER, ALFRED. *The Epistles of St. John*. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge University Press, 1894. pg. xl.
- 6 To evaluate the evidence linking John to the region of Ephesus see the helpful discussion in: F. F. BRUCE, *Men and Movements in the Primitive Church*, pgs. 120-152.
- 7 The term 'catholic' in this context simply means 'universal': the three Epistles of John do not name any specific congregation.
- 8 'Incarnation' means the entry into human flesh and blood of the eternal Son of God, see John 1. 14; 1 Tim. 3. 16.
- 9 Compare the differing tenses of 1 John 4. 2 and 2 John 7. The latter implies by the present participle that false teachers were denying the very possibility of the incarnation. The former by use of the perfect participle implies the abiding reality of His incarnation – His humanity remains.
- 11 'The writer was in the best possible position to state the criteria of truth and life, and to help his readers see that they, and not the seceders, satisfied these criteria', F. F. BRUCE. 'It is a specimen of apostolic preaching to believers, a masterpiece in the art of edification', G. G. FINDLAY.
- 12 PLUMMER, ALFRED. *The Epistles of St. John*. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge University Press, 1894. pg. 36.
- 10 A brief overview of Gnosticism may be found in: CHADWICK, HENRY. *The Early Church*. London: Penguin Books, 1993. PGS 35-41.
- 13 STOTT, JOHN R. W. *The Letters of John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. 2nd edn, IVP, 1988. pgs. 58, 59.
- 14 Although, in a delicious irony, that is an absolute claim! See VEITH, G. E., *Guide to Contemporary Culture*, Crossway Books, Leicester, 1994.
- 15 In the case of 1 John, those who have attempted to arrive at a succinct and fully satisfactory outline of this Epistle will appreciate how challenging this is, a fact reflected in the bewildering variety of analyses offered in commentaries and Bible dictionaries!
- 16 'There is the peculiarity that subjects touched upon and left are frequently reappearing further on for development and fresh treatment. The spiral cycle, which is so conspicuous in the prologue to the Gospel and in Christ's Farewell Discourses [John 13-16], is apparent in the Epistle also', PLUMMER, ALFRED. *The Epistles of St. John*. Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. Cambridge: University Press, 1894, pgs. liii, liv.
- 17 LAW, ROBERT. *The Tests of Life: A Study of the First Epistle of St. John*. Reprinted Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1979. pg. 5.
- 18 VINE, WILLIAM E. *The Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978. pg. 7.
- 19 The student will notice an obvious debt to the analyses of LAW, and STOTT in particular.



A HISTORY OF THE ASSEMBLY IN ST. MONANS, FIFE, SCOTLAND

St. Monans on the East Fife coast was a very busy fishing village when the assembly began in 1924. For several years before this, God had been at work in what is now called the 'Jock Troup revival' affecting fishing communities from Wick in the north to Great Yarmouth in the south. This powerful preacher brought the gospel to many Fife fishermen and their womenfolk as they followed the great herring shoals along the North Sea coast, and many were saved and baptized. Others were saved and baptized locally as the gospel was preached in churches, halls and in the open air.

During the 1914-18 war, one local fisherman, John Smith, saved and recently baptized at Fraserburgh, was put in charge of a minesweeper on the Clyde. One weekend, he went ashore at Ardrossan to seek a scriptural Christian fellowship. Seeing him with a Bible in his pocket, a lady invited him to a Bible Reading. On Lord's Day he returned and witnessed the breaking of bread. He found what he had been seeking and joined himself to that assembly. Over the next few years, he found fellowship in assemblies in different ports he visited while fishing. When at home, John, with two other brethren regularly cycled a 24 miles return trip over a long hill to remember the Lord in their nearest assembly at St. Andrews.

In the autumn of 1923, he met a Scottish evangelist called Arthur Gilmour at Great Yarmouth and invited him to St. Monans. For two weeks that winter gospel meetings were held in John's home, just across the road from the present Gospel Hall. Six souls were saved. Later, another evangelist, Jack Roberts, came and pitched his gospel tent on a piece of common ground where fishermen dried their nets. Meetings were held for young and old, a few more were saved and also heard from the scriptures about baptism and church principles. Mr Roberts stayed with the Fergusons who ran a bakery in the next street. James Ferguson himself had just been saved in the local Congregational Church. He had been quite a man of the world, keen

and skilful on the football field and at the draughts-board. On the Sunday night he was saved, seeing elderly folk making their way to a service he said to his wife, 'See these old folk? That's what the kirk's for - not for the likes o' me!' But that evening, he became a changed man.

The preacher in the Congregational Church during these eventful years was Mr. Thomson, a brother with experience of assemblies elsewhere. He had come to St. Monans to work as a builder, but when the minister took ill he was invited to take over the preaching which he continued to do after the minister died. He preached a sound gospel, and also explained the need for baptism and the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.

Convinced of the truth of these things, some believers severed their links with that church in the summer of 1924, to gather into the Lord's Name in a scripturally-based assembly. They first met in the Fergusons' home for the breaking of bread, prayer and preaching. Often, extra prayer meetings were held in the flour-loft above the bakehouse. Soon a large wooden hut was acquired from the naval base at Rosyth, dismantled and brought to St. Monans, covered in tar and oil. It was cleaned and painted by the brethren themselves, most of them fishermen briefly at home at the end of their summer fishing. By the time it was ready for use most of the brethren and sisters had gone to the autumn fishing at Yarmouth. So on that first Lord's Day morning in the first Gospel Hall only six believers met to remember the Lord, but numbers increased when the boats returned in December. At the end of that year twelve more were added, some in their early teens, being baptized one night at a special meeting held in Union Hall, Cowdenbeath.

The assembly continued to meet in that wooden hut with its corrugated iron roof in a backstreet for 32 years, during which remarkable local

gift was encouraged and developed. Sadly, some left the fellowship having 'received new light', but others were added, including families of many of the original couples. Baptisms took place in the sea, even in winter. In 1956 the present Gospel Hall was built for around £4,500, sacrificially provided by working men from their very modest incomes, debt free, without appeals for outside finance. On 16th June that year, around 55 local believers first met in the new hall for a time of prayer and thanksgiving. James Gowans, James Ferguson, Bob Cargill, David Fyall and Alex Allan gave short messages. The next weekend around 300 believers gathered for the Opening Conference when nine well-known visitors preached.

For many years before this, an annual weekend conference had become established in December, with up to 500 visitors arriving from many parts of the country by train and by busloads to hear gifted brethren teaching the word of God. In 1960 the date was moved to September to eliminate winter travel. This conference continues to the present with annual attendances now around 150. Over the years, there were open-air meetings all year round, some in neighbouring villages, a thriving Sunday School and Children's Meetings in two locations, and Bible Readings on Saturday evenings which continued into the 1980s. These are now held on Monday evenings, and monthly ministry meetings during the winter attract good attendances from nearby assemblies.

In this village of less than 1400 people, at one time eight different groups met on Sundays. Now there are only three. The UK trend towards materialism and apathy has had its effect so that our numbers have fallen considerably as older saints have been called home. But we continue with a well attended Gospel Service, regular tract distribution, meetings in three care homes, and a summer Holiday Club for children, still seeking to honour our Lord Jesus in every possible way.



THE AUTONOMY OF

By **STEPHEN G. BAKER**
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This is an expression that is used a lot by Christians, especially when they are justifying the rights of a local church to make and be responsible for their own actions and decision-making processes. The challenge of this article is to seek to describe the way God means a local church to function and to make decisions.

Autonomy - a definition

This definition is from general dictionary sources, as the actual term and a specific definition is not given in the word of God. The *New Collins Dictionary* states that the word 'autonomy' means, 'the right or state of self-government', or 'freedom to determine one's own actions, behaviour, etc'. The actual word 'autonomy' is not used in the New Testament but the general concept is clearly seen in the teaching of the Epistles and the practices of churches in the book of Acts. However, this definition falls short of what the New Testament teaches as it does not teach that a local assembly has an independent right to self-government.

What is expected of a New Testament assembly is that:

- 1 it acknowledges the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head, 1 Cor. 11. 3; Eph. 1. 22; Eph. 4. 15; Eph. 5. 23; Col. 1. 18;
- 2 it seeks to obey the teaching of scripture in all matters of teaching and practice, 1 Tim. 3. 15;
- 3 it is not controlled by other local congregations of believers but should behave in line with truth that is common to all churches, 1 Cor. 11. 16.

We have no scriptural authority for saying that each church just 'does its own thing'. We do, however, have authority to state that a local church should act responsibly in the light of scripture. Every church is answerable to the Lord in all matters of doctrine and practice, with the ultimate aim of bringing glory to God. The aim of this article is to establish these facts from scripture.

The power of influence

It is almost impossible to go through life without being influenced by other people. This can be a good thing or, at times, it can be a bad thing. This is equally true in spiritual matters. Most congregations of Christians will be influenced by other congregations, especially where there are friends and relatives involved. This is to be expected. However, this article is seeking to emphasize that the ultimate responsibility lies with the local congregation of believers and their leaders (elders and teachers).

Local assemblies working together from time to time

Another issue that we should mention is this. Local churches will, from time to time, work together. This is a good thing and we have scriptural authority for this. This will often increase the influence between New Testament churches and we should be aware of that. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8 Paul describes the way the churches of Macedonia had responded to the poverty of other Christians in other lands. Paul is using the example of the Macedonians to motivate (influence) the Corinthian believers, i.e., he is using influence as a force for good. In this scenario we also see local assemblies in a region working together, v. 19. The assemblies in the area all respected a particular brother and jointly chose him to travel with Paul to administer aid. In verse 23 a group of men are described as 'messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ'. All of these assemblies in this one area had confidence in these men, they had a common desire to meet the practical needs of impoverished saints and they organized themselves to meet the need. This is fellowship – doing work for God without the formal structure that the ecclesiastical world sees as so essential. Each local church still operates as directed by the word of God and the Spirit of God.

What about church unity?

When the New Testament talks about





THE LOCAL CHURCH

the church being united as one it always describes it in terms of the church which is composed of every believer in the Lord Jesus. We have a common bond of salvation, we have one faith, are one body, one Spirit, have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Eph. 4. 4-6. Ephesians chapter 3 verse 15 speaks about 'the whole family in heaven and in earth'. This is a wonderful truth. Every believer is 'in Christ', we are family and we are all part of the church, which is His body, 1. 22, 23. Local churches are never spoken of as merged together and creating a 'church of', rather they are described as being the 'churches of' indicating the locality in which they are found. We should always seek to adhere to the New Testament church principles, as obedience is a reflection of our love for our Lord.

Are there individuals who are have authority among churches?

The Lord has given gifts to the church for the wellbeing of His people, 4. 11. I believe that the gifts in this passage are for the benefit of the whole church. The apostles and prophets are gifts to the early church and the other gifts of evangelist, pastor and teacher are for now, and will remain with us until the Lord returns. Local congregations will benefit from these gifts but they are not restricted to one local church. What this does is maintain the standard of the teaching of scripture across all local churches so that we



should be able to say when problems crop up, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 16, 'We have no such custom, neither the churches of God'.

The elder is distinct from the pastor/teacher of Ephesians chapter 4 and is attached to, and in fellowship in one local church. He serves the Lord and His people in that setting, cf. 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; Phil. 1. 1. All elders must have the ability to teach scripture, cf. 1 Tim. 3. 2; 5. 17. I take it that the Lord maintains order in the churches through the work of the Spirit of God, the leadership and shepherding of elders and the teaching of scripture. If this were so there would be no need for the ecclesiastical structures that are so divisive and unscriptural.

Case Study from Acts chapter 15 - Did Antioch look to the Jerusalem church for direction?

This chapter describes a problem of false teaching that arose in the church in Antioch. As a result, the local assembly made a decision to send Paul and Barnabus, and certain other believers, up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about the question that had been raised, see Acts chapter 15 verse 1 for a more detailed description of the problem. This is the main example that is usually used to prove that one church reported to or was controlled by another.

To be fair, at a first reading the situation outlined there might lead some to believe that there is a responsibility for some churches to report to a more established 'mother church' such as Jerusalem. To come to this conclusion there are a number of factors that

need to be ignored!

- 1 The apostles were still alive and had a major role in establishing doctrine in the early church and so it was wise to consult them, Acts 2. 42;
- 2 The rest of the New Testament teaches that church government and leadership is locally based. It clearly indicates local men were responsible for the welfare and development of God's people and the teaching that they receive and adhere to, Phil. 1. 1; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1;
- 3 The third major factor that would need to be ignored is how the risen Lord handles the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. In these passages the Lord, described as the Son of Man, is seen as communicating directly to these churches. The churches are held in His right hand and He has the sole authority to commend and rebuke them. Truth is communicated through the apostle John, but he is not involved in the control or censure of these local assemblies. The point is that the Lord speaks directly to each local company of God's people and not through any central body, regional eldership, synod or church board. It is the Head of the church speaking to each individual church. As you think this particular point through, be aware that all the seven churches mentioned are in the same region. If God intended churches to form a coalition of churches this would have been an ideal situation to make this clear.

In closing, there are two other helpful points to note in this regard. The first, the false teaching that came to Antioch originated in Judea. Secondly, Barnabus had come from Jerusalem and it was appropriate for their advice to be sought.

My conclusion is that each local gathering of believers should be taught the same truths but is responsible through local leadership for their obedience to the word of God. What a blessing it would be if we could operate in this way for the glory of God!

STEPHEN BAKER is editor of the *Young Precious Seed* section of *Precious Seed International*.



The Position of Older Believers in the Assembly and our responsibility towards them (2)

The needs of the carer

There is little time here to cover this complex and difficult area, but we must never forget the needs of those who have become full-time 'voluntary' carers. It may be the husband or wife of an elderly believer becomes sick, either in mind or body, and, suddenly, they are a full-time carer. The carers are often elderly themselves, but they do it anyway, but it can be a burden. Never forget the needs of the carers; we should consider ways to give them a break so that perhaps they can get out to meetings, even if the person they care for cannot be left. It may be that a younger son or daughter finds they fulfill this role for an elderly widow or widower parent. They too have physical and spiritual needs; they must not be overlooked just because they themselves may be healthy and well. It can be doubly difficult if the person doing the caring for a believer is unsaved or vice versa.

Practical help

If our Lord returns very soon some may be spared from growing old. We do not know when that moment will be, so it may be that some of us, God willing, will grow old. As we age, many of the things we found so easy in our younger years become just that little bit more difficult and a lot more time

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consuming. Things that were easy can become a burden or even eventually just not possible. We have talked about spiritual needs, but there are practical needs that the Lord's older people will face as age takes its toll and we need to face up to them and deal with them. Those who are older need to plan in advance to make their lives more manageable; if growing needs are ignored, they won't just go away! If an aged saint has no family, or no family living in the area, and chooses not to move, he/she will need practical help.

This help may be a work of fellowship that can be carried out by those younger brothers and sisters who do not feel up to offering spiritual support. It may be as simple as cutting the grass or helping with shopping, perhaps help with attending hospital appointments, which do become more frequent as age takes its toll! There is, of course, help of a more specialist kind with advice on what financial and practical assistance is freely available from the Government. People have a right to these things and should not feel guilty about

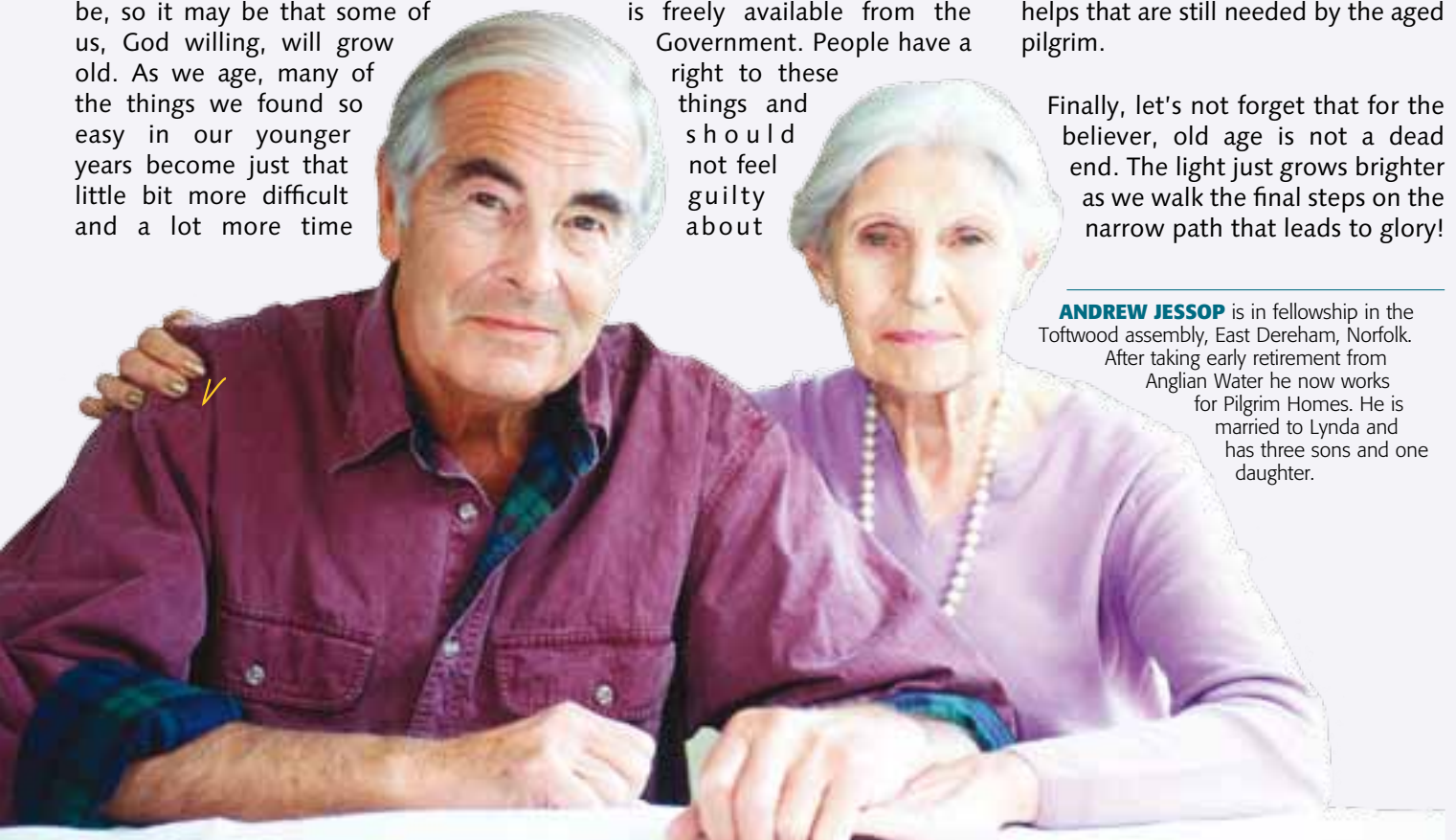
taking them! This kind of advice is perhaps best left to an expert, but a good general level of knowledge can be gained from internet research, again something a computer literate brother or sister from the assembly could carry out, followed by some help filling in the forms.

The solutions

Dependency on the Lord! But we must fulfill our responsibilities individually, as brethren, family, and those in fellowship at the local assembly. 'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me', Matt. 25. 40. There could also come a time when the very frail or dementia-suffering believer's care needs can no longer be met at home. For those of our readers with responsibility for making the decisions, don't forget the spiritual needs when making your decision. A Christian care home will be able to provide equally good care as a secular care home and will, in addition, provide fellowship with other believers and will, at least in part, provide some of the spiritual helps that are still needed by the aged pilgrim.

Finally, let's not forget that for the believer, old age is not a dead end. The light just grows brighter as we walk the final steps on the narrow path that leads to glory!

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THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK**
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There is no doubt that all authority, whether in relation to heaven or earth, has been vested in the Lord Jesus; He it is who must, and will reign until all enemies are beneath His feet. He will yet be revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords and before Him every knee shall bow. Such a position will not be attained by force of arms nor by popular vote, but by virtue of His own Person and the value of the work of Calvary, 'The highest place that heaven affords is His by sovereign right', T. KELLY.

Of all the thrones and dominions which are His, there is one which occupies a unique place in the purposes of God; it is essentially an earthly throne, the throne of His father David. This seat of authority will be His as the true Man after God's own heart and, in this capacity, He will administer justice with equity over a restored, regathered people in a redeemed earth wherein dwells righteousness.

As soon as the death of David was announced, we read that Solomon, the appointed heir, 'sat upon the throne of David his father', 1 Kgs. 2. 12. Thus commenced an unbroken dynasty of father to son ruling at first over all Israel; then, when the kingdom divided, over the house of Judah. Rulers over the ten tribes had no such continuity; the longest hereditary reign is seen in the four generations promised to Jehu as a result of his ruthless extermination of the house of Ahab. The significance of the throne of David, however, was not lost sight of, and it became the subject of prophetic ministry in the days of Isaiah, and later, Jeremiah. The far-reaching and familiar promise given through Isaiah never fails to thrill the heart of the believer: the child born; the Son given; authority guaranteed; the five-fold name intrinsically His, giving assurance of His qualifications to rule 'upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and establish it . . . even for ever', Isa. 9. 6-7.

The line of descent from Solomon continued for over 400 years with kings good, bad and indifferent. The adversary, realizing the importance of this unbroken line, did his best to disrupt and destroy; reducing the progeny of Ahaziah to just one, Joash,

a babe in arms in the days of the wicked Athaliah. The last king of any moral worth was Josiah who sought to introduce reforms and re-establish the temple worship. However, on his death at Megiddo, challenging Pharaoh's army, the people chose his son Jehoahaz to succeed him. His term of office lasted only three months before he was taken captive to Egypt and Jehoiakim, another of Josiah's sons, was placed on the throne by Pharaoh. Opposed to all things good, it was this king who cut up and burned the writings of Jeremiah. He reigned for eleven years becoming a puppet king under the rising authority of Babylon. Following his death, his son Jehoiachin, also known as Jeconiah and Coniah, reigned for three months and ten days before succumbing to the siege mounted against Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. The final king, Zedekiah, another of Josiah's sons also reigned for eleven years under the hand of Nebuchadnezzar until the final destruction of Jerusalem and the descent into captivity.

The reign of Jehoiachin was brief and ineffective, yet it was of this man that a significant word was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. In view of the evil which characterized his life and addressing him as Coniah, thus diminishing the meaning of his name, he was pronounced, 'a despised broken idol, a vessel wherein is no pleasure', Jer. 22. 28. In a solemn pronouncement, and calling on the earth to bear witness, the prophet proclaimed, 'Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Jerusalem', Jer. 22. 29-30. We do know that Jehoiachin lived for some years in Babylon, even being restored to favour by Evil-merodach the king. In fact, he did have children, 1 Chr. 3. 17, but none to sit upon the throne of David; the ruling dynasty had come to an end, hence Jeremiah's declaration of childlessness.

But a sovereign God was overruling. The divine counsels could not be thwarted; how then could the Lord

Jesus lay claim to the throne of His father David? Both 1 Chronicles chapter 3 and Matthew chapter 1 confirm that an unbroken line continued to a man called Jacob, who 'begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ', Matt. 1. 16. It was essential that this male line of descent was established to give a legal right to the throne since Joseph became the guardian of the Lord Jesus, and was addressed by the angel of the Lord as 'Joseph, thou son of David'. However, the promise to David was, 'Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations', Ps. 89. 4. The apostle Paul confirms that the Lord Jesus Christ was born 'of the seed of David according to the flesh', Rom. 1. 3. Yet this could not be through Joseph who had no part in the conception of the Lord Jesus, and, indeed, in view of Jeremiah's prophecy, no natural son of Joseph could claim the throne promised to David's seed.

Yet, unbeknown to the world at large, a line direct from David through another son, Nathan, was being preserved and this is the genealogy given in Luke chapter 3. This also appears, at first glance, to be that of Joseph. However, since the descent from David differs from that of Matthew, and scripture contains no contradictions, we must look for another explanation! The construction of Luke chapter 3 verse 23 does not state that Joseph was begotten of Heli. In fact, clearly, his father was called Jacob, Matt. 1. 16. Convention allowed that a son-in-law be deemed a son, e.g., 1 Sam. 24. 16, and with the telling little phrase in parenthesis added by the Spirit of God, 'as was supposed', we are surely right in accepting that this genealogy is that of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus in direct line of descent from David. Thus, the One, conceived of the Holy Spirit, the seed of the woman yet virgin born, is without doubt the One 'whose right it is' to occupy the throne of His father David at the appointed time and reign in fulfilment of scripture. We concur with the sweet psalmist of Israel, 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable', Ps. 145. 3.

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FACING THE FUT

(iv) The Prevailing General Fear of Approaching Catastrophe

There is apparent increase in the number and scale of various natural disasters, the rise, in recent decades, of world terrorism, and the economic turmoil which has been caused by the misjudgement and greed of a few men in strategic financial positions. All these things combined have generated a general fear in the world of approaching catastrophe, such as the scriptures confirm will occur at the end of this age. How near we are to this crisis we do not know, but, one suspects, not very far away lie the storm-clouds of impending divine judgement. God is certainly giving mankind many warnings to repent, or face the dire consequences of their continuing rebellion against Him.

(v) The Growing Movement towards a False World Religion

Since the mid-twentieth century there have been various attempts to form an ecumenical religious movement embracing all the major world religions, regardless of doctrinal differences, and certainly regardless of the true teaching of the scriptures. These appear to be precursors of that false bride of Christ described in Revelation chapter 17 as 'Mystery, Babylon the Great', which the Beast will use for his own ends before destroying it. Such false religion, stemming from ancient Babylon, has always been the implacable enemy of true believers down the ages, and has persecuted and killed many of them. Certainly, believers in many parts of the world are still suffering for their simple faith in Christ, and this will come to a head after the one true Bride of Christ, the church consisting of saints from Pentecost to the rapture, has been taken to heaven. Tribulation saints will suffer terribly at the hands of the false church and the Beast. Judging by vigorous contemporary efforts to achieve religious unity at any price, this time may not be far away.

(vi) Worldwide Nationalism

In Luke chapter 21 verses 28 to 32, the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples the sign of 'the fig tree, and all the trees' budding. This would be one of many signs of the approach of His Second Coming to the earth in glory. The fig tree in scripture is a symbol for Israel as a nation. This verse, therefore, is usually taken to refer to the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in their land in 1948. That event is a sign of the approach of the end-times. But the addition in Luke of the phrase 'and all the trees', meaning all other nations as well, refers to the

accompanying tide of nationalism in the world generally during the same period of history. And this has been our experience since 1945. Since then, most of the former colonial powers have granted independence to their colonies, from India in 1947 onwards to the present day. 'Summer is now nigh at hand', that is, 'the kingdom of God', the millennial reign of Christ. How much nearer, therefore, must be our Lord's coming to the air for His own blood-bought church at the preceding rapture!

(vii) Conditions similar to the Days of Noah before the Flood Judgement

Ever since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution about two hundred years ago, mankind has developed a highly sophisticated civilisation which is openly independent of God and very similar to that which early man developed in the days of Noah before God's judgement fell upon them in the worldwide flood. This, too, the Lord Jesus predicted as a sign of the approach of the judgements of the end-times and His coming in glory to reign. Mankind is still largely heedless of God's claims upon them, and engaged in many self-centred activities. Moral conditions have fallen to a low level, and the governments of the world have difficulty in restraining the rise of lawlessness. The 'days of Lot', when people broke the laws of marriage, are upon us today, as the Lord

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predicted would be the case before His coming. Our contemporary world is certainly ripe for God's judgements as foretold in the book of Revelation!

(viii) The Contemporary World Population Explosion

During the past century, and especially since the end of the Second World War in 1945, there has been a population explosion, notably in the Eastern nations. Genesis chapter 6 seems to indicate that there was a similar population explosion before the Flood judgement fell upon the world of that time. Again, therefore, present world conditions seem to parallel those of the days of Noah, and to portend imminent divine judgement.

(ix) The Modern Worldwide Missionary Movement

We should also consider the increasing momentum of the modern missionary movement (ever since about AD 1800) into all the remaining parts of the world which have never yet been evangelised. This has more recently been facilitated by vastly-improved methods of communication, such as, radio, television, the internet, and sophisticated means of translating the scriptures into vernacular languages.

Reports by the Lord's servants in many developing countries, where the population explosion has been most marked, suggest that many are turning to Christ for salvation, so that it may be true to say that there are more Christians alive today than have ever lived up until now during the church age. Therefore, the rapture of the living church could be a greater event than we have supposed!

While the coming of the Lord does not depend in any way upon the church's obedience to her great commission to evangelize the whole world, and since the Lord Jesus said that the moment when His Father will decide to send Him back to this world to reign is known only to His Father, it is probably significant that in our day the gospel is being both preached and accepted more universally than ever before. God is calling men to

repentance more urgently as His judgement approaches.

(x) The Parallel Growth in the Understanding of the Prophetic Scriptures

The other significant positive factor today is the undoubted growth in believers' understanding of the prophetic scriptures. Since the 1820s there have been more students of prophecy than ever before, and a gradual, but definite, clarification of the meaning of Bible passages relating to the rapture of the church and subsequent end-time events. We know from Daniel chapter 12 verse 4 that there will be a more diligent search and understanding of prophetic scriptures during the Tribulation days by saints who live then, but perhaps we should also have expected that during the final part of the church age there would be a similar revived interest in prophetic truth. Until AD 1800 church saints majored on various aspects of doctrine, such as the Person of Christ, and the doctrine of salvation, during the Reformation period. But now, towards the end of the age, the focus has fallen more on church truth and future events as prophesied in scripture. Certainly, before AD 1800 few believers understood the true doctrine of the imminence of the rapture of the church and the meaning of the book of Revelation. In that respect, there has been a gradual increase in the light given to believers during the church age, whilst the unbelieving majority of mankind have remained in ever-increasing spiritual darkness.

All these trends and events have occurred since about AD 1800, but there has been a marked acceleration of them during the past century, and especially since the end of the Second World War in 1945, that is, during our own lifetimes. They could easily come to a head in the prophesied end-time events in the near future. Although it is true that the rapture

of the church need not be preceded by any prophetic signs, nevertheless, since it will probably occur shortly before the commencement of the Great Tribulation judgements, we should not be surprised that we are seeing clear indications of the approach of these latter events in the closing days of the church age. The storm-clouds of imminent divine judgement are surely gathering quite quickly around us today. Since we are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation from it, according to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 9, and this certainly includes the horrors of the Tribulation period, let us lift up our hearts and our heads in eager expectation of the imminent return of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Maranatha! The Lord is probably coming for us quite soon!

Conclusion

Whether, therefore, we are currently facing a very traumatic personal future, or a very uncertain one, or perhaps one full of interest and exciting hopes, the scriptures contain invaluable instruction for us which will enable us to face that future with calm confidence in God our Saviour. Most of all, however, the Bible tells us much about what is undoubtedly the most important future event for us as Christian believers, namely, the rapture of the church at the Second Coming of Christ to the air for 'His own'. For this event, above all others, should fill us with the joyful expectation of seeing our Lord and Saviour for the very first time in redeemed bodies and heavenly glory. Yes, the Christian's ultimate future and surest hope is to meet Christ Himself! So, are we fully prepared to do this? By God's grace, we can be, if we heed the teaching of the scriptures which have been referred to in this series of articles.



MALCOLM DAVIS was saved in 1951 in Colchester, Essex, baptized in 1956, and, with his wife Ruth, has been in fellowship with the saints at Harehills Gospel Hall in Leeds since 1980. He has written a number of articles for *Precious Seed International* as well as other assembly magazines.



Before time began, and before anything had been created, God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, existed and dwelt together in holy harmony, love, union and communion. Then the wonder of creation occurred, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', Gen. 1. 1. The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten, beloved and eternal Son of God, who is co-equal and co-existent with God, was the agent through whom all things were created. Everything was made by Him and for Him, and now He maintains and holds together the entire creation, John 1. 3; Col. 1. 16, 17.

John stated that he wrote his Gospel 'that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God', John 20. 31. At the beginning of His public ministry and at the close of that ministry, God spoke from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', Matt. 3. 17; 17. 5. Peter made those wonderful declarations when he said that the Lord was the 'Christ, the Son of the living God', 16. 16; John 6. 69.

In Genesis chapter 3 we read of the entry of sin when our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. Sin is lawlessness; it is a missing of the mark, a falling short of God's standard of absolute holiness. Irrespective of who else is involved, all sin is first and foremost against God, Gen. 39. 9; Ps. 51. 4. The punishment of sin is inevitable, for God is holy, Lev. 19. 2. We have all sinned, Rom. 3. 23, and deserve to be separated from God eternally, suffering for our sins, ultimately in the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 15.

Only Begotten

'God is love', 1 John 4. 8, and the greatest revelation of the love of God is found in the giving of His only begotten Son to pay the penalty for the sin of the whole world, John 1. 29; 2. 2. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life', 3. 16. The Lord came into the world to save

Eternal Son of the

sinners, 1 Tim. 1. 15, to seek and to save those who are lost, Luke 19. 10, and John wrote, 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father', John 1. 14.

The relationship between the Father and His only begotten Son is unique and eternal. However, at the climax of His suffering on the cross the Lord cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Matt. 27. 46; Ps. 22. 1. This is the only time we read of the Lord addressing a question to His Father. The answer to the question is found in Psalm 22 verse 3, where we read, 'But thou art holy'. God is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look

on iniquity', Hab. 1. 13. On the cross, the sinless, only begotten Son of God was made 'to be sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in him', 2 Cor. 5. 21. The Lord had been forsaken by His disciples, Matt. 26. 56, by the Jewish nation, John 19. 15, and now by His God. He was forsaken of God that those saved by grace through God-given faith in the Person and finished work on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 2. 8, would never be forsaken, Heb. 13. 5. Although He was forsaken by God, the relationship between the Father and His only begotten Son was unbroken, for He is 'the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father', John 1. 18.

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The Living God

This is His eternal position. The fellowship and communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is eternal and unbroken.

Well-beloved

The Father's love for the Son is eternal. The Lord referred to this eternal, divine love when He said, 'Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world', 17. 24. Love delights in giving and we read in John chapter 3 verse 35, 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand', and, in chapter 5 verse 20, 'The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth'.

God's delight has been in His Son eternally. The Son was 'daily his delight', Prov. 8. 30. The Lord always did the Father's will and the things that pleased Him, John 8. 29; Luke 22. 42; Heb. 10. 7. The Lord obeyed and glorified His Father in His life and when He was on the cross, suffering, bleeding and dying, 'the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God', 1 Pet. 3. 18. It was His ineffable love to God, His Father, John 14. 31, and to us which made Him willing to suffer as He did. Now God can be 'just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus', Rom. 3. 26.

Express image of His Person

God has revealed Himself to mankind. Until the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the revelation through the prophets was gradual and fragmentary, Heb. 1. 1. During His incarnation the Lord appeared outwardly as man, Phil. 2. 8. He was a real man, Heb. 2. 14, 17, but He was not a mere man, for He never ceased to be what He is eternally, and that is God. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners', Heb. 7. 26. He was like us in every way apart from our sin,

4. 15. There is no sin in Him, 1 John 3. 5; His humanity is unique, holy humanity. He was 'God with us', Matt. 1. 23, God 'manifest in the flesh', 1 Tim. 3. 16.

The Lord has revealed God to man, for He is 'the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person', Heb. 1. 3. He is 'the image of the invisible God', Col. 1. 15. In Him 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily', Col. 2. 9, and He could say, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father', John 14. 9.

The Father sent the Son

The sending of His only begotten and 'altogether lovely', S. of S. 5. 16, Son into the world to suffer, shed His precious blood and die as a substitute for sinners, gives an insight into the love of God, 1 John 4. 9. He 'sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons', Gal. 4. 4, 5. God sent His beloved Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as an offering for sin, Rom. 8. 3. The Lord said, 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me', John 8. 42. The Lord was sent by His Father, but He came voluntarily. The will of God the Father was the will of God the Son. He said, 'I and my Father are one', 10. 30. He delighted to do His Father's will, Ps. 40. 8, and could say, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work', John 4. 34. Speaking to His Father He said, 'I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do', 17. 4. When He was on the earth, God's only begotten, beloved, eternal Son glorified His Father and procured for us a wonderful and eternal salvation, 3. 36.

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E-Magazine

The month of December will see the launch of the first issue of our new e-magazine. It is available only through the Precious Seed web site (www.preciousseed.org) and can be downloaded in pdf format to be read on desktop, laptop, or tablet computers, smart phones, or iPad and iPhone with Adobe file reader software. Alternatively, you can download it to your computer, print it off and distribute to any in your local assembly that might welcome it.

This first magazine will be in a similar format to the printed magazine that is issued quarterly and will include: the first of a series of articles entitled 'Their finest hour', looking initially at Abraham; a couple of articles from the web site archive, a tremendous resource for anyone seeking guidance and help from the scriptures; a historical article on the work of Robert Young, of *Young's Analytical Concordance*; and a book review.

Although the magazine is designed for those more familiar with electronic gadgets and who would prefer to carry their magazine around electronically, it could be used to distribute to those unable to attend mid-week meetings as a means of providing spiritual food to needy believers. This purely web-based resource will be available during the month following the publication of the printed magazine – March, June, September, December – and it is our prayerful desire that it might be a help and encouragement to many.



In November of this year, God willing, Emmaus Bible School UK will celebrate sixty years of the work in Britain. Over that time thousands of Christian folk have studied the word of God using Emmaus distance learning materials. Over that time thousands of people have come face to face with the Saviour of the world and had to make a decision. Lives have been changed and lives continue to be changed. This is especially true of the work in Britain's prisons. Through the faithful provision and direction of the Lord, the work continues today and is expanding

'The Word to The World'

EMMAUS BIBLE SCHOOL UK

Today, there are four members of staff. In addition, the Lord has blessed the work with an ever increasing number of volunteers. Most exciting is the development of a team of volunteer tutors based across the UK. Tutors are now operating in Northern Ireland, Manchester and Kendal, as well as locally. The School continues to look for Christian folk to add to the list.

this significant change in the way the School operates. Never has the need for the word of God been greater. Consequently, we wish to remove any hindrance that there may be to studying using Emmaus materials. We step out in faith knowing that the Lord will always meet our needs. However, be assured that we will be prudent stewards of the resources that the Lord has given to us.

This year the School is looking to undertake a major 'outreach' to assemblies and fellowships across the UK. This will be done by one area at a time. As already stated, the School is keen to add to its nationwide team of volunteer tutors. We also have a vision of establishing an Emmaus 'rep' in every evangelical church in the land. Most importantly we believe that the Lord would have us establish Emmaus Bible Centres in Britain. These would be satellite centres working from the Eastham 'hub' delivering and servicing courses nationwide.

Dr. Ed Harlow, a Canadian Missionary home on furlough in Toronto, Canada, was struck by the need for Christian men and women to be trained for their role in the 'Great Commission'. Consequently, night school classes were arranged, closely followed by the emergence of a 'study by correspondence' ministry. The work of Emmaus Bible School, in all its various guises, had started.

In 2010 a website was created through which prospective students could find details of the work and the courses. Once interested, students can then order their chosen courses online. This facility continues to play a major role in attracting new students. In 2009 the School experienced its first increase in the number of current students to 586. By the end of 2010 the number had increased to 743, a rise of nearly 27%!

During a lengthy business trip to North America, Harold Catlow, an eminent food scientist, met with Dr. Harlow and his colleagues and recognized the need for exactly the same ministry in the UK. Consequently, with the support of Dr. Harlow, Emmaus Bible School was introduced to Britain in 1951.

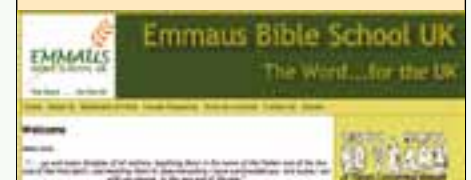
Far more important than any of these figures is the knowledge that souls are being saved and lives radically changed. For example, 'N', on rem and for serious drugs related charges, saved and now ministering to fellow inmates, and 'J' a young Brazilian teenager given a course to keep him out of trouble, asked for a second course and gave his life to the Lord. Week by week we receive such news.

The motto of the world-wide work of Emmaus is 'The Word to the World'. In the UK we have adopted 'The Word . . . for the UK'. We remain as committed as both Dr. Harlow and Harold Catlow in wanting to share the Good News with as many folk as possible and in equipping His people in doing the same.

The aim of the School, as declared in its first constitution, was, and remains to this day, to see 'the advancement of the Christian faith by the study of the Bible, Christian Doctrine and related subjects and by training and preparing Christians for Christian Service in the United Kingdom or abroad'.

As from 1 January 2011, the School no longer charges fees for courses supplied and tutored. Given 60 years of the work and 400 years of an accessible Bible in English it was felt that the timing was right to make

For more information contact
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www.emmausbibleschooluk.co.uk





REPORTS REPORTS REPORTS

GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Gloucestershire

In August, the assembly at Hesters Way, **Cheltenham**, ran a Holiday Bible Club with Philip Dean leading the team. There was a good response to the many invitations given out. By the end of the week numbers attending doubled. The sisters worked to give a varied programme of tasks in the hour of crafts before the hour of Bible Club. These activities were related to the theme of the week; the story of Joseph being hated by his brothers, put in a pit, sold in to Egypt and ending in the palace. The children were brilliant with memory verses and quizzes. The week ended with a full hall for the Friday night prize-giving. On the Sunday the hall was full again and the gospel presented by Philip Dean and Jonathan Luker of North Leigh.

Lancashire

The Lancashire Gospel Tent was pitched in Sefton Park, **Liverpool**, during June. Stephen Baker conducted children's meetings in the tent for two weeks and Ian Jackson preached the gospel to the adults for four weeks. Please pray for Kim and Vicky in particular – two teenagers who were interested in private but easily distracted when among the crowd of teenagers.

Newsham Park Chapel, Liverpool, had two weeks of intense gospel outreach led by Thomas Jennings. The combined team of eleven from the USA, Ireland, and Canada contacted 11,000 homes in the immediate neighbourhood of the hall and had conversations regarding spiritual issues with hundreds of people. They distributed around fifty Bibles as well as assisting and encouraging in the ongoing assembly activities.

A number of people from the area came to hear the gospel preached

using PowerPoint presentations on astronomy and one man placed his faith in the Lord Jesus. To date twenty requests have been received for more information.

Oxfordshire

In August a two-week series of gospel meetings was conducted by Dan Gillies and Terry Topley in **Bicester**.

Surrey

A Bible Exhibition in the Gospel Hall, **Wallington**, saw about 335 children and 75 adults (including 40 teachers and assistants) attending. It provided a number of opportunities to answer questions from visitors and the feedback from one school contact was that 'she had only heard positive comments from the children who had come to the Bible Exhibition'. The **Mitcham Junction** assembly, and especially those who maintain this outreach in Wallington were greatly encouraged.



Gospel Hall, Wallington

East Midlands

The Postal Bible School had a stand at the Birmingham and Staffordshire Agricultural Show. This is the fourteenth time that Postal Bible School has been present at the Show. This year the presentation was supported by a team of eight for each day.

On the Wednesday, the stall was opened at 9.00 a.m. and the first children turned up about 9.30 a.m.; these were two girls who immediately asked for the quiz – the younger girl also took a 'starter' lesson and, having obtained parents' permission (who were responsible for a neighbouring stall), set about it straightaway and came back for help with the lesson on two occasions.

There was steady interest throughout the morning and afternoon, which resulted in about seventy young people filling out the quiz and taking away items in a plastic bag (inscribed with the Postman Pat logo), such as a Bible bookmark, a text for colouring, a Mars bar, and not least – an application form. Opportunity was taken during the period of quiz completion, to talk with the parents, and to explain the Postal Bible School scheme. People came from a selection of districts, including Milton Keynes, Shrewsbury, Cheadle, and Scunthorpe.

Amongst the people with whom conversations were held were, the Bishop of Stafford, who showed a great interest in the PBS lesson material, and a Radio Stoke reporter who included an item on the next Sunday morning programme.

The Thursday brought examples of the various barriers to the interest in and acceptance of the gospel. One show official, in denial of an 'after life', rejected any significance in the message, claiming 'When you are dead, you are done with'. The response of the English Scooter Association enthusiast was, 'You mustn't be too serious about it'. He thought that all religions are 'Okay' as long as they were not extreme. He was, however, happy to accept the UCB Bible reading notes.

In contrast, there was the West Indian woman that was employed as a doorkeeper for one of the sponsoring organisations of the Show. She had been there for the 2010 Show and, in a simple conversation with her then, reference had been made to Psalm 84 and the rather special importance of a 'doorkeeper' role. What a thrill it was when this young lady came looking for the Postal Bible School stall, and with a smile related that when she had gone home after the conversation, she had looked up the verse in a Bible and had started to think again about spiritual things. During the year she had also started to go to church. Two of the team were able to explain to her the way



of salvation before she went back to her 'door-keeping' taking some helpful literature.

The team was encouraged by a number of passers-by who graciously accepted literature, parents who accepted application forms for their children, and by Christian visitors to the stall, who clearly understood what was being made available in the vital task of reaching out to young people with the scriptures.

Sussex

One of the saddest events during the summer was the death of the Red Arrows pilot, Jon Egging, at the Bournemouth Air Festival. One week prior to that event the Red Arrows had been at **Eastbourne** and many thousands of people watched the display unaware that eternity would soon be a reality for one of the pilots. During the four-day air show at Eastbourne, the believers had the opportunity to hand out thousands of postcards to visitors. These postcards are rarely ever refused by the public and on every one there is a scripture verse! All the hotels on the seafront are keen to have the postcards for their guests as well. Only the Lord knows where they end up and who reads them; His word is not bound!



Somerset

Opportunity was taken at the four-day, Royal Bath & West Show to witness to more than 160,000 attendees. Over 6,000 tracts were given out and a display celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible offered many openings for conversation.



Cardiff

Over the past year, and particularly in recent months, the assembly in **Adamsdown, Cardiff**, has seen much blessing in the work with children and young people for which they give thanks to the Lord; it has been a great encouragement to them to continue in prayer and service.



Adamsdown Gospel Hall

Throughout the year forty-five children attended Sunday School and as in previous years, attendance was very variable: anything between ten and twenty-four children each week. Behaviour and attention was generally good considering that many children come from broken homes. The children were taught five memory verses throughout the year and most of the regulars knew them all well by the end.

The assembly has for many years arranged a Holiday Bible Club during the first week of August. This year it was arranged again and it was a very encouraging but tiring week with the largest number of children they have ever had. Fifty children attended (more than in the whole year of Sunday School!): fifteen were

Adamsdown, Cardiff



children the workers had never seen before. The sessions commenced with craft and somehow the workers managed to find sufficient craft activities and materials to occupy them all. After light refreshments the children participated in quizzes and chorus time before listening to a Bible story. The subject this year was 'Saved!', and they were told five scripture stories of men who proved that 'The Lord saves', 1 Sam 17. 47. They were also taught two appropriate memory verses, Acts 16. 31 and Ephesians 2. 8.

It was particularly encouraging to have some parents also stay for the whole session. Some had never been in the hall before, so it was a wonderful opportunity to build bridges.

Recently the believers have had the great joy of hearing of two brothers who attended the Sunday School and the Gospel Meeting for some years, profess faith in the Saviour. The older lad, after hearing ministry on the Lord's coming again from Eric Parmenter in Deri, and the younger brother the following week.

The assembly was very encouraged by the commitment and enthusiasm of the younger members with the work amongst the children.

Swansea

In the middle of August the young people of the assembly at **Treboeth Gospel Hall**, with the help of a few older ones, ran a Children's Holiday Bible Club for a week. Each day the children enjoyed a time of singing and various activities before the Bible Story Time, and a quiz on the previous day's stories. The theme was a visit to 'Luke Street' where they were invited into the houses of Jairus, Zacchaeus, Mary and Martha, and the house where the lame man was let down through the roof. Eighty-five children were reached in total and there were seven or eight mothers attending every day. There was one very encouraging contact with a mother who said she had made a profession of faith many years ago when Peter Brandon was preaching. All contact had been lost with her for a number of years, but now she is back in the locality just in time for another visit from Peter



Brandon to the assembly. Please pray she will come along to hear him again.



NORTHERN IRELAND

County Down

A week of meetings were held at **Northfields**, Newcastle, in July at which hundreds of unsaved were reached over the two weeks and on several nights a bishop from the Catholic church attended. As well as the lost, there were also many needy believers attending and on several nights time was taken in counselling those who have been badly damaged by the cruelty of others. How thankful we should be that the Lord is not only 'able to save', Heb. 7. 25, but also 'able to succour [to run to the help of] those who are tempted', Heb. 2. 18!



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Summer has seen many outreach opportunities at shows and fairs. In **Newcastle West**, due to the severe weather and strong winds, it was decided that it would be unwise to put up the marquee for the day. This is the first time in five years this has happened and while it was disappointing, there were encouragements from other shows. In **Dungarvan**, County Waterford, while it was not the busiest of shows, it did end well with a long talk with a lady who lives near Waterford. Only four weeks previously she had met someone from the Waterford Fellowship at the Tall Ships event. David and Beth Wilson and two helpers from a team they were hosting helped for the day.

A good day was also had at the **Cappamore** show and a lot of material was given out. There were also some very interesting conversations with

both visitors to the show and other exhibitors.

At the **Cork** show the marquee was set up on Thursday morning for the show to start Friday, only to receive a phone call late Thursday evening from the show organiser to say they had placed the marquee in the wrong area and could it be moved early Friday morning. The alternative site was one near to the public entrance and what a blessing that was!

Friday and Saturday morning proved to be quiet with not many people around, however, from 11.30 a.m. on Saturday and then all day Sunday there were multitudes of people passing by. There were many good conversations about the gospel and it was an encouragement to see New Testaments and John's Gospels being taken. Hundreds of John 3. 16 shopping bags were given out and it was a joy to see people walking around the show using these bags.



WEST INDIES

Antigua

In Antigua the assemblies in **St. Johns** are seeking to witness faithfully and maintain assembly principles. The work in Shiloh Gospel Hall also sustains an outreach work in Five Islands Village and good contacts are made through continuing literature distribution and an evening gospel meeting.

The assembly meeting in Bethel Gospel Hall have a three-part Bible study divided into ages. The Lord's



The believers in Castries holding their gospel meeting outside

Day meetings were full to overflowing with old and young and there is always an enthusiastic response to the word.

St. Lucia

In St. Lucia the assembly in **Castries** hold a gospel meeting outside the Hall with a loud speaker-system that reaches half the town. The small assembly in **Soufriere** suffered severely in the 2009 hurricane that did so much damage in the island. All had their homes destroyed and are even now living in temporary accommodation. One family lives in the Gospel Hall.



MALAYSIA

Klang Gospel Hall celebrated one hundred years of God's faithfulness with a thanksgiving service held on 16th September 2011 and the publication of a centenary souvenir book.



SINGAPORE

The Bethesda (Ang Mo Kio) assembly, which is the largest assembly in Singapore, held its annual Family Bible Camp in The Pines Resort Hotel in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia in June. Around 300 (including many young believers) attended for a week of intensive Bible study. The teaching ministry was shared by Roy Hill and Kenneth Wong.



The assembly now also has the opportunity of preaching the gospel on radio through TWR and the messages started being broadcast in October. They are at peak listening time 8.30 – 9 p.m. on five evenings each week for a year. About 80% of the messages will be given by brother Kenneth Wong and prayer is requested that through this ministry many will find the Saviour and believers be encouraged.



The believers in **Thrissur, Kerala**, have held a Inauguration and Thanksgiving Service on completion of a new hall.



Lutsk Gospel Hall has just had its 8th summer conference. This was held from July 8th - 17th and conducted by Paul McClarty (Kingsmoss, N. Ireland) and James Colledge (Pamber Heath, England). A large number of believers and unsaved attended from the UK, Ireland, America and different parts of Ukraine. Over the eight-day period there were six ministry meetings, four Bible Readings, eleven gospel meetings, six children's meetings and one baptism (see photo - Olga who was baptized with her mother, father and brother – who are all in assembly fellowship). Thousands of gospel



Olga, with her father, mother and brother.

tracts were distributed in Lutsk and surrounding villages. Brother McClarty took up the book of James and his ministry was exceptional and very much appreciated. Brother Colledge spoke to up to eighty-six children daily and was very faithful in preaching the gospel; we have no doubt God will use the seed that has been sown. The conference was truly a time of blessing for saints and unsaved, a number of whom expressed an interest in salvation.

NEW! Faith Matters – a new gospel pamphlet

Many people find it difficult to source good gospel tracts for distribution in their area, either door to door or in open-air work. Now, a new resource is available and it will fill this need admirably. It is a 12-page A5 high quality, full colour pamphlet and will initially be published twice per year. There is space provided on the back page for details of local evangelistic services.

The first issue, Winter 2011-12, has an interesting personal testimony by Alec Catchpole and four short gospel messages by Stephen Grant, Ian Rees, Paul McCauley and Blair Martin. Subsequent issues will be in similar style with the gospel articles written by those serving the Lord in gospel work in the UK or abroad, doctrinally sound and in language that is easy to read and understand.

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CORRECTION

Note from Roy Hill, General Editor

In the August 2012 Reports section of the magazine we included a story on page 28 entitled 'Egypt'. This had already been published by a respected US assembly ministry and checked by normally reliable sources, but we now know there was serious error in the details. The assembly in Nazareth was not involved in this ministry and neither was the help allegedly given in Egypt received by assemblies there. This new information has been confirmed to me personally by brethren George Khalil in Nazareth and Geoff Payne from Manchester on behalf of assemblies in Egypt. I am now not even sure that such a visit took place. We were misled and apologise unreservedly to those embarrassed or concerned by the report.



A WORD FOR TODAY

**dia-cwnnuma (also-nnua),
dia-zonnumi (also-nnuo), to gird round**
diaqhka, -na, a, (diathêkê, -ns, e)
a disposition, covenant, testament, will
da-airesia, -ewa, a, (di-airesis, -eos)
difference, distinction

The terms 'covenant' or 'deed of covenant' are rarely used today in general conversation other than in formal legal contexts. But the practical use of prescribed 'deeds of covenant' was quite popular at one time with many parents in the United Kingdom to gain tax relief to help fund their children's higher education. A far cry from the present student loan regime! We are, however, probably more familiar now with the terms 'testament' or 'will', although the Greek word *diathêkê* can be translated in the New Testament as either 'covenant' or 'last will/testament'. DE WITT BURTON states that 'the essential distinction between the two meanings is that in a testament the testator expresses his will as to what shall be done after his death, especially in respect to his property; the covenant is an agreement between living persons as to what shall be done by them while living'.¹

The corresponding Hebrew word *berith*, meaning covenant, occurs extensively in the Old Testament. It is used generally of non-theological agreements or treaties that individuals, or states, enter into for some specific reason or other. For example, in Genesis chapter 26 verses 28-31, Isaac enters into a covenant, or treaty of peace and amity, with Abimelech; similarly, in 1 Kings chapter 5 verse 12, Solomon makes a state treaty with Hiram based upon mutual friendship. Marriage and family arrangements are also closely linked with this word as is evident from Malachi chapter 2 verse 14, where a wife is literally referred to as a covenanted spouse, cp. Ezek. 16. 8. In Genesis chapter 31 verses 43-54, Laban and Jacob settle a family dispute by way of a treaty or covenant endorsed by the swearing of oaths before God, and then ratified by the offering of sacrifice. W. E. VINE suggests that the expression to 'cut a covenant' came from the practice of cutting in two the various sacrifices that would be made to initiate a covenant, see, for example, Genesis chapter 15 verses 9-10 and 17.² Covenants drawn up between peoples or states in the Old Testament are generally bilateral agreements requiring action on the part of both contracting parties. This is contrasted when the word *berith* is used of the covenants that God enacts with His chosen people. These covenants, which are normally unconditional, are directly linked to the sovereignty of God, and are guaranteed by His immutable character, i.e., the covenants are not only promissory, but depend on His faithfulness alone, thus they are a matter of grace and mercy; see, for example, Psalm 89 verse 28. MCCONVILLE points out that, 'steadfast love is the typical quality of the covenant relationship, a quality of God (Ps. 136; Jer. 9. 24(23))'.³

The table below shows important *unconditional* covenants between God and men.

Covenant (s)	Text	Nature / Sign
Noahic	Genesis 6. 18; 9. 8-17	Promissory / Rainbow
Abrahamic	Genesis 15. 18; 17. 2-14	Promissory/ Circumcision
Davidic	2 Samuel 7. 8-17; 2 Chronicles 13. 5	Promissory/ Salt ⁴

The Mosaic covenant described in Exodus chapters 19 to 24 is, however, the exception, in that whilst it still depended

upon the faithfulness of God, it also required compliance and a loving response on the part of Israel, see Deut. 7. 9. This was therefore a *conditional* covenant, and despite Israel's failure on so many occasions to comply with their covenant responsibilities, the relationship endured because of God's steadfast love,

In the Greek classical period *diathêkê* mainly came to be understood in terms of a will or testament especially linked to the adoption of an heir. The Septuagint (LXX) follows this use of *diathêkê* as the main translation of *berith*, and what is remarkable is that the translators chose the word *diathêkê* in the first place to translate *berith* rather than use the normal word in Greek for a covenant, *sunthêkê*. This latter word was used to describe reciprocal agreements which could be changed by the contracting parties. *Diathêkê* brought with it the notion of a legal disposition, hence a testament or will that could not be altered. Invariably, this was the sense applied to the word by JOSEPHUS, and in the large number of non-theological papyri of the New Testament era. An appropriate word, then, to describe the unalterable agreements that God effected with men.

When we come to the New Testament, we find that the word *diathêkê* occurs over thirty times. It is the word used by Stephen to describe God's covenant with Abraham, Acts 7. 8, and the word Paul uses in his allegory of the two covenants typified in the lives of Hagar and Sarah, Gal. 4. 24. But its frequent occurrence in the Epistle to the Hebrews makes it an important theological term as it relates to a *new* or better covenant. The very fact that this covenant is termed 'new', Heb. 9. 15, means that if the first covenant had been perfect it would not have been superseded, 8. 7. Christ Himself is declared to be the mediator, 8. 6, and guarantor of this new covenant, 7. 22.⁵ The first covenant was inaugurated by blood through a mediator, 9. 18-22; similarly, the new covenant has been formally sealed by the death of Christ, i.e., the death of the testator, 9. 15; 13. 20, making it therefore legally secure.

The purpose of this new covenant is seen not only to secure the forgiveness of sins once and for all, Matt. 26. 28; Heb. 9. 15 – something that could not be achieved under the old covenant, Heb. 10. 1-4 – but also to enable God's people, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live the sort of lives they should, in conformity to His word, Jer. 31. 31-34; Heb. 10. 15f. If, under this new covenant, we have the promise of an eternal inheritance, Heb. 9. 15, an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, 1 Pet. 1. 4 NIV, why do we fail, so often, to rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 1 Pet. 1. 8 ESV?

For further reading/study

Introductory

The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament by KENNETH S. WUEST.

Advanced

'Covenant' (pgs. 65-111) in *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* by LEON MORRIS.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Galatians*, pg. 500.
- ² *Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, pg. 45.
- ³ *NIDOTTE*, pg. 752.
- ⁴ The expression 'covenant of salt' in 2 Chronicles chapter 13 verse 5 may be a metaphor for permanence based on Numbers chapter 18 verse 19.
- ⁵ LANE (*Hebrews*, pg. 188) states that the term guarantor 'refers to an individual who offers his own life as the guarantor of another person'.

Radio Stations on the Web

Revival - <http://revival.fm>

This is a local radio station, broadcasting on 100.8 FM in West Central Scotland. Some of the presenters are in fellowship in various Scottish assemblies. Most of the shows play Christian music, which is quite 'contemporary' during the day, but sounds more sedate in the evening. There are also testimony interviews. The news, travel and other information has a strong local focus on the West of Scotland. It is possible to listen live via the website, or via a streaming player like iTunes or Windows Media Player.



UCB - <http://www.ucbmedia.co.uk>

This station broadcasts nationally on DAB digital radio. It is also possible to listen live via the website. Podcasts (MP3 downloads) are available, for catching up on previous programmes. Another good feature of the website is its useful daily devotional page, called *Word for Today*. UCB features music from various Christian genres across the spectrum from traditional to modern. Some programmes have in-depth Bible teaching. As ever, one needs to be extremely careful with any doctrine from unknown and potentially unreliable sources. We must follow the example of the Bereans, Acts 17: 11, to search the scriptures and verify the teaching.



Radio Outreach - <http://www.radiooutreach.org.uk/>

This one-man channel provides a 30 minute broadcast each week, which is relayed at various times on international stations. It is also possible to download the podcasts directly from the website. The programmes feature hymns, Bible readings and a message. As the station's name implies, the focus is on evangelical outreach. Recent themes have included 'God who sees' and 'God who hears'.



F. B. Meyer – additional note

Readers are asked to note that issues of published works in the public domain (out of copyright) vary from country to country depending on publication dates in that country and the length of the term of copyright. Meyer's works were not published in the USA until many years after his death and will remain in copyright for 95 years from the date of their publication. The availability of material on the Internet does not guarantee that it is free from copyright in every country and readers need to ensure that those laws applicable to their own geographical location are adhered to.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Postal workers refuse to deliver Bible recordings because the CDs are 'offensive'

Postal workers refused to deliver CD's of Bible readings after deciding they were 'offensive material'. Several churches had paid for discs with recordings of Mark's Gospel to be produced to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. They were due to be delivered to all households on the Channel Island of Jersey, but church leaders were stunned when they were told postal workers would not handle the 45,000 CD's.

Jersey Post said there were guidelines about mass material that is sent out across the island and that religious recordings could offend people but apologised for the incident, saying staff had misinterpreted the guidelines. Chief Executive Kevin Keen said, 'I understand that one of my colleagues did say the material was offensive. This decision was made on the basis of our terms and conditions which states that we have the right to refuse to distribute something that falls under the category of promotional material which could cause offence'.

'Clearly this was interpreted in the wrong way. I have spoken to the person involved and have written to all of my colleagues asking that they come to me if there is any doubt in their mind in the future'.

Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2035760/Postal-workers-refuse-deliver-Bible-recordings-CDs-offensive.html#ixzz1YbFTYILY>



Doctors fear monitoring of private beliefs as 'praying GP' faces hearing

Doctors fear their private lives and personal beliefs will soon come under increasing scrutiny from regulators, as a Christian GP who prayed with a patient faces a formal hearing. The General Medical Council is asking medics if it should 'regulate doctors' lives outside medicine', in a review of its guidelines on ethics. Currently it would only be a disciplinary matter if behaviour after hours affected a doctor's work or brought the profession into disrepute, or if they imposed their views on others. Some respondents to an online consultation have already said they would be unhappy if health professionals 'supported racist organisations' or those that 'promote conflict', or 'advocated religious fundamentalism'. Others argue that doctors must 'moderate what they disclose online' in order to avoid making personal information public or breaching patient confidentiality. But critics say that GP's and consultants are only human, and should not be expected to lead blameless lives.



In addition, it has been claimed that what they get up to when they are not at work does not affect the care they provide to patients. Bob Bury, a recently retired radiologist in Leeds, wrote in a blog post: 'For what it's worth, I'm

an atheist and yield to no one in my disregard for religious fundamentalists of any stripe, but my GP's beliefs are no concern of mine unless they have a negative impact on the quality of treatment I am offered, in which case sanctions already exist to deal with the problem'.

The GMC is to investigate the case of a GP in Margate, Dr Richard Scott, who is accused of upsetting a patient by offering to pray for them. The GP says their conversation turned to religion after they had finished discussing medical options, and that he asked permission to raise his Christian beliefs with the patient, who is of another faith. But the GMC sent him a warning letter, claiming his comments had 'distressed' the patient and 'did not meet with the standards required of a doctor'.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8769073/Doctors-fear-monitoring-of-private-beliefs-as-praying-GP-faces-hearing.html>

Cedars of Lebanon under Threat

Lebanon's majestic cedar trees, famously used in the building of Solomon's Temple, 1 Kgs. 5. 6, have survived thousands of years of human use and exploitation. Now the precious few cedar forests that remain face a new challenge, climate change. According to Nizar Hani, manager of Shouf Cedar Reserve, Lebanon's largest natural forest, not enough snow is falling in the winter months to ensure that future generations of cedars will be able to thrive in the mountainous country. 'The expected threat to the cedar forest is [that] the natural regeneration will be affected', said Hani. 'The cedar seeds need to be under snow for two months minimum'.



Source: <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org>

Bits & Bobs

IBM researchers are working on a new computing device that could process massive data sets while using very little energy. It would also be able to quickly learn and remember patterns, which might make it able to 'issue tsunami warnings in case of an earthquake' or calculate the likelihood of contaminated produce on grocers' shelves.

The inspiration for their prototype? The human brain!

The project—funded by IBM—is called SyNAPSE (Systems of Neuromorphic Adaptive Plastic Scalable Electronics). Its principal investigator, Dharmendra Modha of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, said, 'The computers we have today are more like calculators. We want to make something like the brain'.

Thus, 'neurosynaptic computing chips' have been engineered as the first stage in building a more brain-like computer.

Core differences separate even the most powerful modern computers from the enormously more powerful human brain. In today's computers, memory devices are separate from processors, so the two are connected by a channel called a 'bus'. The size of the bus often determines the flow rate of information, and this can impact the computer's processing capabilities. But processing and memory in brains, as far as researchers know, operate in the same place and time. This increased efficiency in internal connections has the side benefit of requiring much less energy.

The brain consists of billions of neurons that connect with each other via trillions of synapses. Each neuron has vast numbers of individual proteins that act as computational switches, making the total computational power of the human brain literally astronomical. In fact, one recent study compared the number of brain synapses to the number of stars in 1,500 Milky Way galaxies, which could be more than 450 trillion. Modha's estimate of 100 trillion synapses is at least within the same order of magnitude. But all of those brain synapses operate on very low energy, and huge sections of them 'dial down' when not in use. The SyNAPSE research group hopes that its machine will model the brain's 'structural and synaptic plasticity', which would enable it to rewire itself according to what it learns.

In the end, millions of dollars, thousands of man hours, and the countless painstaking efforts of intelligent engineers has resulted in two silicon-based processing chips, each consisting of only 65,536 electronic synapses. Apparently, the chips are able to play the first Atari video game, 'Pong', in which two simulated paddles bounce a dot back and forth across a computer screen.

The next phase, requiring an unknown additional quantity of time, energy, and funding, should result in multiple chips wired together to make a prototype computer. Eventually, the researchers aim to build one 'as powerful [as] the human brain'.

Some of the best and brightest engineering brains are involved in seeing this project to completion. If and when they succeed, they will also have succeeded in proving that the human brain they used as their model could only have been created through intelligently and purposefully directed power; something that intricately designed could never have 'just happened'!

Source: <http://www.icr.org/article/ibm-attempts-build-computer-brain/>

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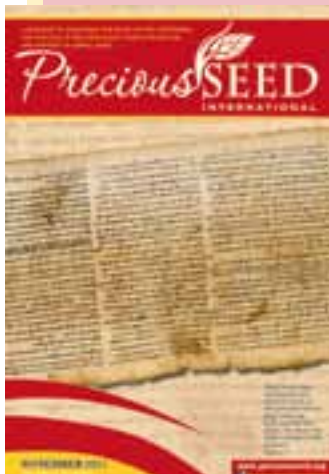
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Front Cover illustration:

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in a set of caves known as the Qumran caves on the northwest edge of the dead sea in 1947. A number of shepherds accidentally found the manuscripts sealed in clay jars and passed them on to dealers in antiquities. It wasn't until three of the scrolls were passed to Professor Eleazer Sukenik of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, that the true significance was realised. Although parts of all Old Testament biblical books were found, the only complete book discovered was Isaiah. It is comforting to observe that the text of the Isaiah scroll hardly differs from the Masoretic text used to translate the beloved King James version. And so 400 years on we still continue to have complete confidence in this faithful version of the Bible.

It was the Lord Jesus Himself who on that Sabbath day in the synagogue took hold of the scroll that Isaiah's prophecy was written on and read these words, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord'. Luke chapter 4 verses

18 to 19. These words from Isaiah 61 were profound when read out loud, but what must have astounded everyone in the synagogue was the Lord Jesus attributing them to Himself "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke chapter 4 verse 21. Only the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah could bring hope to the poor, the broken hearted, those in captivity, the blind and the bruised. He was able to do this 2000 years ago and he is able to do it today. Praise His name!



Question Time

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

Unless otherwise stated all
scripture quotations are
from the New King
James Version

QUESTION

**Does the Bible specify a
dress code for the meetings?**

ANSWER

It is easy to assume that the 'biblical' dress code for the meetings is the one that prevails in the part of the world where we live. However, to do so overlooks the fact that what we wear may not be suitable for, affordable by, or available to, believers living in another culture or location. It is also a mistake to think that the style of clothing worn today is the correct one for all time because fashions change, a look at very old photographs proves that point. In contrast to this, God's standards will always work. They are not restricted by place, time or ethnicity and therefore, whatever teaching is given in the scriptures regarding a dress code will be achievable by all Christians everywhere at any time.

An analogy that is used to indicate that we must dress up when meeting together is that if we were to be presented to the Queen, or some other dignitary, we would not go along wearing our 'ordinary' clothes. Whilst this analogy has some merit it ignores a couple of important points. Firstly, the Queen is only able to assess our attitude towards her by looking to see how we dress; she cannot look into the heart. God does not need to look at our external appearance to know what we feel and think about Him, for He knows us through and through. Secondly, if we were the Queen's children we would not dress up to meet her for we would be part of her family. Our salvation has brought us into a relationship with God, for we are His children and He is our Father.

The question refers to a dress code 'for the meetings' but the New Testament doesn't deal with the issue of what we wear 'to the meetings'. Under the terms of the ceremonial law instructions were given regarding the garments of the High Priest, and those that served in the priesthood, but those instructions do not apply today and I am not aware of any instance where the apostles, or the believers in the early church, changed their clothing in order to meet together. Unlike the employees of a well known burger restaurant who are all required to wear the corporate livery, God has not stipulated a standard mode of dress and, therefore, we must be careful not to legislate where God has not.

However, this does not mean we can dress carelessly, for God has given instructions that should control our appearance at all times. One of the primary principles that must govern what we wear is modesty. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul states, 'And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, on these we bestow greater honour; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need', 1 Cor. 12. 23-24. The apostle is teaching that there are parts of the body that should never be on public display, they should be covered up. This means that no brother or sister should dress in a manner that is immodest, that accentuates their sexuality and which may stimulate impure desires in others.

Another principle that ought to regulate our appearance is motive. Whilst there might not be anything inappropriate with our clothes, the reason for wearing them could make it wrong to do so. If we dress in order to attract attention to ourselves (be that positive or negative attention), or to show off our affluence, or to rebel against authority, then we are amiss. In the meetings, Christ and God ought to be the centre of attention, not us, and therefore we should avoid wearing anything that would make us the focus of interest. Furthermore, we are to be subject to those whom God has raised up as elders, 'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls', Heb. 13. 17. Elders will need to ensure that they are not imposing constraints unnecessarily, and which cannot be substantiated from the Bible, but it is the duty of the flock to comply with their leadership.

In addition to what has just been mentioned, there are a number of questions we can ask ourselves which will help us make right choices. Do my clothes indicate that I am careless about the things of God? Having thought about things, is my conscience at peace regarding what I wear? Am I more concerned about what I wear than what I am? Will my standard of dress give the impression that God is interested only in the middle and upper classes? Am I showing an indifference to the feelings of others? If we can genuinely answer 'no' to all these questions and that what we have on is comfortable, modest, not ostentatious and our desire is to please God then what we wear will be acceptable to the Lord.

There is one form of dress code the New Testament does stipulate for us all, 'Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble', 1 Pet. 5. 5. Our outward clothing ought to be a proof of the humility of our hearts. Question Time