

*Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart
Toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest (Jer 31:21)*

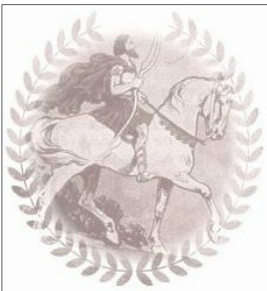
THE CHRISTADELPHIAN WAYMARK

Volume 8

Issue 1

**Devoted to the Defence and Proclamation of the Way of Life
in Opposition to the Dogmas of Papal and Protestant Christendom**

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*"I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that
sat upon him had a bow; and a crown was
given unto him: and he went forth conquering,
and to conquer" (Rev 6:2)*

*"The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable ... " (Jas 3:17)
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3)*

Do we love much?

As we all gather around the table each Sunday, we remember, recognise, further appreciate and thankfully acknowledge the love of our Heavenly Father for each one of us. Once more then we see the love of our God shown to us through the giving of his beloved son in the bread and wine upon the table before us.

Romans Chapter 5 and verse 8

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”.

Each of us, brethren and sisters, have at some point had the love of God, introduced, presented and demonstrated to us personally. Either by an individual, a family member, a friend, a colleague or even by the blessing of growing up in a Christadelphian home. However it occurred, the love of God as commended in the Gospel message impacted us personally and elicited a response in each of us.

Indeed by virtue of our being here today, each of us show that that same love understood, is still producing a response in every one of us gathered in fellowship together around these emblems. But the question is what is that response and what is its motivation? Of course only we can answer personally for our selves.

Is our love that genuine and unfeigned response, that we each showed at the time of our baptisms? Or perhaps our love for the truth has morphed and become like that of the Pharisees in the first century, which loved the esteem of their peers and the people in general?

Whose love was not for Almighty God, but for their traditions and its privileges?

Now even if our love is indeed genuine brethren and sisters, what state is it in? Is our individual love for what has been done for us in Christ weakening? As time goes on, and still our Master has not appeared, so that we might ask, where is the promise of his coming? Have we brethren and sisters allowed our love to diminish or escape as heat does from a hot drink left sitting on the side? Have the pressures of modern life and the lusts of other things crowded in to squeeze out the things of God and the truth? So that like those whom the Master warned in the Olivet prophecy, our love has “waxed cold”?

Or rather brethren and sisters has our love grown over the period of time we have been in the truth, however long or short that has individually been. Has our love, grown deeper? Has it matured? Is our love of greater intensity, than when we were first baptised?

How would you measure your love for our Heavenly Father and for his beloved Son? At this time, as we sit around the bread and wine? We all know the standard set forth in the scriptures of truth.

Matthew Chapter 22 and verses 35 – 40

“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”.

disputes those that say “Lord, Lord” that they performed their works and accomplishments, rather he points out that he did not know them personally, because whatever their motivation was, it was not divine love. That is why he states “I never knew you”.

None of us would sit here and say that our knowledge has not grown - for example - in the last two years. We all know much more about the Scriptures, with its characters and events, than we did just two short years ago. Likewise with our belief, we know that our faith is increased through the hearing of the Word and by placing our trust in our Heavenly Father and His promises.

The point here is simply this – to be known by our Heavenly Father and to be acknowledged by his Son in that day, we must love God. Not as we think and feel, but as He has set forward in the word of life and as our beloved Master has modelled for us in the emblems upon the table.

Love is not so easy to measure, yet it is something we are exhorted to increase in and to stimulate not only within our selves, but also in others.

Let us recall the example of Saul of Tarsus who undoubtedly loved God and thinking he was doing God a great service persecuted and consented to the death of those in Christ.

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 7 & 8

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”.

Indeed 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen in the first few verses, makes it abundantly clear that if we do not have real divine “love”, as the motivation for everything we are and do, then it is to no profit whatsoever in the final analysis. Rather when we stand before our Lord at the judgement we shall hear these chilling words “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”.

Now as we read elsewhere in Corinthians “if any man love God, the same is known of him”. The Master never

Galatians Chapter 1 and verses 13 – 16

“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me”.

Saul would have pointed to his great work here, as proof of his love for Almighty God, therefore brethren and sisters let us beware that we do not fall into the same trap in our work for the truth.

What then is the key to us having the right motivation to our love for our Heavenly Father in Christ?

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 10 & 19

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love him, because he first loved us”.

The key is that our love must come from our appreciation, understanding and gratitude for the sacrifice we have come to remember, once more and yet once less, before our Lord comes. Any other reason, as the basis for our love for God and we are in danger of being like Saul and many others down through history who have “a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge”.

It is this heartfelt response then, to the grace of God extended to us in Christ that motivates us to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and to consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

This same point is brought home to us in the second Epistle of Peter. The Eternal Spirit highlights the great calling we have been given and then shows to us the response we should have in developing our characters to be like our beloved Lord. By diligently adding to our faith another seven qualities, the last of which is love. Then we read these words:

2nd Peter Chapter 1 and verses 9 – 11

“But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Where-

fore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”.

So then a disciple’s failure to respond and to continue to grow in faith and love and all these other important characteristics is because they have lost perspective. The Spirit describes those that so lack as being:

- Blind
- Unable to see afar off
- Forgetful

Do these terms describe any of us, here brethren and sisters? Is this true of you and me? Again only we can answer for ourselves.

For one so blind, then their perspective on the things of God and the truth is clouded with pride, as this word implies in the Greek. As a result of this they have no eye of faith in that they cannot see afar off. This inability to see properly is due to the development of myopic or near sighted vision. Where they would only be concerned with living in the present and have no future orientation towards the kingdom.

Finally those in this state have forgotten that which we have come to remember - the idea here is not that we have forgotten the event. But rather they now fail practically to take into account in their lives of the true meaning and significance of what had been achieved for them in Christ’s sacrifice. Thus through spiritual amnesia they no longer live in the light either of the

Master's example and sacrifice, as living sacrifices themselves nor do they live in the light of the Master's imminent return.

What we actually have here brethren and sisters is a progression we must avoid at all costs, which begins with pride and ends in amnesia. Now lest you think that this can never happen to me, then let this sad simple everyday example give you pause for thought.

Many people within marriage unfortunately end up following this same simple progression. Because of some issue between them they become blind to the love that was theirs and this distorts both the present, they're past memories and any future hope. Thus they end up completely at odds with one another; hurt and so depart in divorce. Let us take careful heed of the Eternal Spirit's warning here through the Apostle Peter, lest we forget we have been purged from our old sins.

Our redemption through the Master's sacrifice must be personally real to us brethren and sisters. We must not let it become, just an acknowledged fact in our lives. Because we are called upon to live out the atonement of our Lord in our own daily lives.

1st John Chapter 3 and verse 16

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”.

Or how about it in more concrete terms within our daily relationships, such as marriage, as its portrayed in Ephesians chapter five.

Ephesians Chapter 5 and verses 22 – 25

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”.

There is nothing easy about our own individual loving response to our Heavenly Father's love commended to us through the giving of his beloved Son to die that death upon the stake. Let us remember it was not easy for the Father to give him up, neither was it easy for our Lord to submit to his Father's will.

Now since these things are not easy to keep always at the forefront of our minds, as we go through daily life with all its distractions and its ups and downs, what can we do to keep our perspective, especially so much the more, as we see the day approaching? Well there are two things: one negative and one positive, which should inhabit our consciousness enough on a daily basis brethren and sisters. Let us deal with the negative exhortation first.

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 36 – 39

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of oint-

ment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner”.

Now brethren and sisters, which of the two people in this incident do you most identify with? Have we indeed become so religious that we identify both individually and even, ecclesially with the Pharisee here? Or do we still each remember our own sinfulness and identify with the previously forgiven woman at Jesus’ feet?

Does our sinfulness move us brethren and sisters as it moved this woman? For she stands here as a type of the ecclesia here. An ecclesia that is neither proud nor short sighted. Let us recall what our sinfulness cost our Heavenly Father and our beloved Lord, it was no small price:

1st Peter Chapter 1 and verses 18 – 20

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”.

Let us remember brethren and sisters that our sins are a personal offence to our Heavenly Father, there is nothing abstract about our sin. As Joseph protested to Potiphar’s wife, how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 39 – 43

“Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged”.

Which of these two debtors best describes you personally brethren and sisters? Indeed, which of them best describes me? Are you a fifty pence or a five hundred pence kind of person?

Now if I am brutally honest, I would say I am more often like Simon here, than this woman for my shame. Yes I am only too aware of my own sinfulness, as indeed I am sure we all are. Especially as we are confronted here at the memorial table by the one who did no sin neither was guile found in his

mouth. Equally I am indeed aware and acknowledge how great is my own sinfulness before my Heavenly Father.

But nevertheless there appears to be in me an in built callousness against it moving me into action, as it moved this woman. Is this indeed a common experience among us brethren and sisters? Are you likewise plagued by this hardened attitude to your sin, as Simon was here?

Yet this unidentified woman stands here as a type of how we ought to respond appropriately to the forgiveness, we have each, received in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Luke Chapter 7 and verses 44 – 48

“And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven”.

Now which of these two characters in this story best portrays how we individually relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? Have we not all come this morning to remember him with thankfulness and expectation in bread and wine?

Let this simple truth spoken by Christ to Simon jar you, as they did me brethren and sisters. “Wherefore I say unto thee to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little”. Do we indeed love little brethren and sisters? Is this true of you and I?

Since each one of us have been so forgiven, while we were yet sinners, how much have we each loved in response?

There is so much more in this incident than we have time to consider now. Brethren and sisters, if you are looking for a topic either for meditation or conversation over the coming week, then this exchange between the woman, the Master and Simon the Pharisee is well worthy of your time and effort.

Now our remembrance of our Lord’s sacrifice and the redemption achieved is not limited to the past only in terms of how much we each have been forgiven. But also importantly brethren and sisters this memorial points positively forward to the blessings, which our Heavenly Father will yet bestow upon those redeemed. Thus our perspective on these things is also coloured by our longing, our desire for the kingdom of God.

These great and precious promises vouchsafed for us in the one we have come to remember in bread and wine, should likewise elicit a powerful loving response in each and every one of us in gratitude and humility. For like the patriarch Jacob we must acknowledge that we are “not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servants”.

How then are we to show our loving response to that, which our Heavenly Father has done through his Son and will yet do through him? Well again the Spirit through the Apostle John instructs us:

1st John Chapter 4 and verses 11 & 20

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

As we now come brethren and sisters to partake of the emblems in remembrance of the great love wherewith he loved us. Let take heed that “love is a verb”, therefore “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”.

I give you this challenge brethren and sisters to spend ten minutes at least two mornings this coming week or in the evening if you're a night person. To firstly think of at least five ways you can show love to your brethren and sisters in this coming week and then carry out those actions. Make sure you record what you have done, so you can build upon it, if given the opportunity.

In the bread before us, we clearly see the bread, which speaks here of the love of our Heavenly Father in Christ, expressed in his word. That word, which is able to transform and renew our minds and characters to love one another, as he himself, has loved us.

Then with the wine it clearly speaks to us of the outworking of that word in a life poured out in loving service, invested into others. This is supremely modelled for us in the Master's sacrifice, which we are to remember now.

Finally can I leave you with these words, which form part of a prayer by the Apostle Paul for the brethren and sisters in Thessalonica, this was his most earnest wish and desire for them?

1st Thessalonians Chapter 3 and verses 12 & 13

“The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”.

Wayne Marshall

“The fear of God, that will warm and purify the inner man, as the result of giving heed to the testimony, is founded on the recognition of the fact, that the presence of God, by the Spirit, pervades the universe; and He is not far from every one of us; that all things are naked and open to Him; and that He discerns even the secret thoughts and intents of the heart. The fact is unintelligible only to the lowest forms of intelligence. A child thinks God cannot see it through the wall of the house; ...and there are many grown children”

Brother Robert Roberts

The Sacrifice of Praise

The inspired writer to the Hebrews spoke of the exalted position that we, as Disciples of Christ have:

“we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the Tabernacle...” (Heb. 13:10)

The teaching is plain: whereas the priests and Levites under the Law were given food from the sacrifices that were offered daily, this right gave them no legal entitlement to partake of the Christ-Altar. The Law gave them a legal entitlement to be sustained by the sacrifices – it was their “inheritance” (Josh. 13:14). But in Christ, we find grace and peace, the basis of acceptable offering being the sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart. So Hebrews 13 continues:

“... here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually: that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate [fellowship] forget not, for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:15-16).

One of the free will offerings under the Law of Moses was known as the sacrifice of Thanksgiving, or Praise. This was a form of Peace Offering – which along with the Passover – the offerer could partake of himself. In essence, it represented a meal of fellowship between the families that made up the people of God, and binding them in fellowship with their God. The allusion in Hebrews 13 is plain; we can partake of the Christ-altar, upon which we offer the Sacrifice of Praise, like the Israelites of old could partake of the food of the Altar offer the Sacrifice of thanksgiving. The difference being, that like the priests (referred to above), the people were given a legal entitlement to the offering, whereas the basis for partaking of the Christ-Altar is faith.

The way in which the various types of Peace Offering comprised a meal of fellowship between Israel and their God is seen in the Old Testament account. Leviticus 7 reads:

“the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered ... but if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice; and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten” (Lev. 7:15-16)

This verse proves that the offerer ate of the Peace Offerings, being permitted to eat it for a certain number of days, depending on the precise nature of the offerings. Leviticus chapter 3 describes how the particular parts of the animal that comprised the Peace Offering was to be treated:

“And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire unto Yahweh” (Lev. 3:11)

So, the actual flesh of the offering was “the food of the offering”. Additionally, speaking of the house to come, Ezekiel was shown the altar for future sacrifice as “this is the table that is before Yahweh” (Ezek. 41:22). The language undoubtedly is that of a meal, the sacrifice being the “food” and the Altar being the “table”. But in this meal, Yahweh was served first: only after the sacrifice was made could the offerer take his share (compare the Law of the “firstfruits” – Num. 26:2).

THE FAMILY OF ELKANAH

In the passing of time, the situation became inverted, with man being served with God’s portion. The first book of Samuel and chapter 1 recounts how a family went up yearly to worship and offer sacrifice to Yahweh. So we read:

“and when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Penninah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters portions: but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah ...” (1 Sam. 1:4-5)

Here is a situation of a family in fellowship, going up to sacrifice and partake of the Peace Offering (how terrible it was then, that at this time of fellowship, Penninah, provoked Hannah to distress and tears because of her lack of children). We find however, that the priesthood had become corrupted to the extent that the priests took meat for themselves, before the sacrifice had been made:

“Also, before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw” (1 Sam. 2:15).

The priests stole that which was Yahweh’s (see also 1Sam. 2:13-14). At this meal, man was served first before God. We might see a similar pattern in the worship of many religious circles of our day. The supremacy of Yahweh is not held with the great reverence that He Requires: man is elevated, and the desires of the flesh are served first, and only when these are accommodated do men turn their attention to the things of the Spirit. Yahweh is a God of convenience, whose function is primarily to rain down blessings upon men, (but also to be blamed when something goes wrong) whosoever they be, and whatsoever ‘faith’ they believe in. Prayers before Him (the fruit of our lips) can become mere shopping lists of those things that we want from Him – this can happen with our own selves, as well as the apostasy. This, however, is not the Divine Way. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness” (Mat. 6:33) is Christ’s injunction, and serve Him first in all our ways.

KING DAVID

1 Chronicles chapter 16 recounts king David’s joy at the bringing in of the ark, and also what he did as a consequence:

“when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings, and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh, and he

dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine” (1 Chron. 16:2-3)

Notice the allusions here to the themes we have been examined: Both burnt and peace offerings were made, and a meal of fellowship was enjoyed. Yahweh was served first in the making of these sacrifices, and the entire Israel of God partook them, recognising that He had given all that they had.

There is another point in this chapter, which links with Hebrews 13, as cited above. Verse 4 of 1 Chronicles 16 reads:

“and he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Yahweh, and to record, and to thank and praise Yahweh, God of Israel ... and he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Yahweh ... Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God (1 Chron. 16:4)

Compare the highlighted words of this quote with Hebrews 13:

“by him therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his Name” (Heb. 13:15)

Then the chapter continues to speak of fellowship:

“to do and to communicate [fellowship] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb.13:16),

The sacrifices that please our Father in this dispensation are not the slaying of animals, but showing forth in prayers and hymns the fruit of our lips. This is what 1 Chron. 16:4 is teaching: those priests who were called upon to minister before the Ark were singers – that which gave God the glory was the fruit of their lips, singing and praising the Elohim of Israel. We would do well to question that which proceeds from our lips: whether what we say is governed by an inward digesting of the Word to the glory of our Father is something only we can say.

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION

A principle linked to the concept of fellowship is the importance of meeting the needs of our brethren and sisters. The spirit of this is seen in the example of the Philippian ecclesia: this short epistle brings out many aspects of the Law, by alluding to Old Testament teachings. Philippians chapter 4, and verse 18 reads:

“but I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, and odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

Notice here, the good deeds in making provision for Paul’s own personal need are likened to a sacrifice: it is a peace offering, a token of fellowship and oneness

in the Lord. But what is particularly interesting in this connection, is what the Apostle writes in chapter 2:

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all” (Phil. 2:17)

The marginal reference for “offered” indicates that the word is literally “poured forth”, as in a drink offering. What a wonderful bringing together of divine principles! The basis for all that we can offer is Messiah’s own sacrifice. He is the Burnt Offering; the entire carcass being consumed upon the altar. The Peace offering was placed on top of the Burnt offering, associating the offerer with that sacrifice, and upon the whole heap, was poured the Drink offering: Paul is here likening himself to that drink offering, being poured out upon the basis of the Philippian ecclesia’s peace offerings. All were involved in a collective giving (peace offering) to meet Paul’s needs in order to continue his service (drink offering), and such a fellowship reflects the main principles of the Peace Offering.

When we turn to Leviticus 22, we find that imperfections were allowed to be offered as freewill offerings:

“either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that thou mayest offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted” (Lev. 2:23)

In this, we behold a gracious accommodation by the Almighty. It is written that despite our imperfections: “truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 Jno 1:3). But we are not “without blemish”. We have an inward lacking of the things of the Deity, and we find ourselves doing those things that we ought not. We desire to fellowship with our Father and His Son: we seek to offer the sacrifice of praise – not perfect, but nevertheless accepted when offered with the humble and contrite hearts of true believers in Christ. Notice here, that the imperfections were only allowed for a “freewill offering”, but not a “vow”. We suggest that one reason for this, is that when we present ourselves before Yahweh of our “freewill”, (as distinct from obeying a legislation that commands it), He will recognise and overlook our imperfections. But when we make a vow, there is not to be any deficiency in the payment of it, and neither is there to be any extra: that which is vowed must be paid according to what was originally spoken.

1 CORINTHIANS 10

We began by showing that we have an altar to partake of, to which there is no legal entitlement. But through faith, we are permitted to come to it in order to offer and partake of our peace offerings. In our day, we follow the Apostle’s example of breaking bread together each Sunday as a memorial of the offering

up of Messiah. This is the antitypical peace offering which was, topped with the meal offering (bread) and drink offering (wine). In this simple feast, we see so many principles converge. Speaking of it, the Apostle wrote:

“the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body, for we all are partakers of that one bread. Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ...” (1 Cor. 10:16-18)

Notice the comparison being made here: Israel could partake of the Sacrifice of Praise, and this eating united them in fellowship. But we are privileged to engage in a different fellowship meal of eating bread and drinking wine - memorialising our Master’s sacrifice in the patient waiting for his return.

We come together each week to partake of these emblems, which comprise, in effect, our peace offering. Feeding upon spiritual principles, we sing our hymns and offer our prayers to the glory of our Heavenly Father – the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name. In the partaking of these emblems of the love of God, we fellowship with each other:- but ultimately our fellowship is with Yahweh and His Son, whose ways we seek to make our own. Truly it is a wonderful thing to fellowship the Great Creator, Who has called us by His grace and mercy. In our fellowship, we recognise our imperfections, which are forgiven us by faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

Christopher Maddocks

Paul’s Sorrow About Israel

There are various matters in the chapter read (Rom. 9) which may profitably engage our contemplations this morning. First we have Paul telling us that he had “great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.” The cause of this sorrow may afford us comfort in a certain way, for we are in some points in a similar relation. The cause of his sorrow was the estrangement from Christ of his “kinsmen according to the flesh, Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.”

To see the full cause of this sorrow, we must recognise the fulness of its extent. The estrangement of Israel from Christ was a national estrangement. It compre-

hended the vast mass of the nation. There were many thousands of Jews who believed, but these were but a handful among the others. The picture before the mind of Paul was the picture of God’s nation as a whole in a state of non-submission to God’s will concerning them; yea, a state of virulent opposition to what He required of them, and that too in the guise of a national zeal for what God had revealed by Moses—a guise that in many cases corresponded with their sincere sentiments, as Paul testifies:

“I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2).

He could remember his own situation in a similar predicament, which enabled him the more easily to recognise their case and the more deeply to sorrow for it. As he said to the crowd whom he was permitted to address on the occasion of his arrest in Jerusalem:

“I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day: and I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:3-4).

Here was Paul’s sorrow, that the one nation upon earth which was divine—divine in its origin, in its history, in its relations, in its institutions, should be out of harmony with its own glorious privileges; should be blind to its own glorious Scriptures; should have rejected its own glorious Messiah, and spurned its own glorious hope, as taught by his apostles.

Nothing was to be expected from classical Greek, or pagan Roman, or the untutored barbarian races: but Israel—God’s witnesses in the earth to whom pertained the promises and the covenants, and who professed subjection to the writings of Moses and the prophets!

Paul deeply sorrowed and had continual heaviness of heart, that while they made their boast of God and Moses, they knew not the scriptures of Moses, which required them to hearken to the promised prophet like unto Moses, who had been raised up in their midst by the Lord who delivered them from the land of Egypt.

While we look at burdened and groaning Paul in this relation, we are reminded that it is only a repetition of the experience of all the prophets. They

were much alone in their day and generation and from the same cause, that the bulk of God’s own nation were out of harmony with the foundation upon which they were professedly founded.

It is easy to see how we may apply their cases to our own comfort. Our position is somewhat similar. We live in the midst of a community professedly subject to Christ, boasting of his name, and doing many great things in connection with their profession, and yet as a matter of fact, they are unbelieving of the great truth of which Jesus was the embodiment, and disobedient to nearly all the commandments he has delivered. We find this out by the test we are commanded to apply—the test of the law and the testimony applied to their works and principles—a process of test which Jesus commended in the Ephesians (Rev. 2:2).

The discovery that this is the state of things is very grievous. It is wholesome as regards ourselves, but sorrow-causing—a discovery causing isolation, cutting us off from the surrounding streams of sympathy, and subjecting us to a soul-parching experience and imparting “great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart.”

What can we do? We can only accept our mournful lot in hope of the better day, when whole nations will seek to learn Yahweh’s ways and to walk in His paths. It would be the act of insanity to do otherwise. We must not let the situation have the effect of making us join the universal departure from God. It is our wisdom to act in the way enjoined on the prophets and apostles:

“Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.”

Jeremiah declares his action to have been in harmony with this advice:

“I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced: I sat alone, because of thy hand.”

Again:

“For thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.”

Paul exemplified the same course of action, and recommended the brethren to adopt the same, even towards men professing to be brethren, who opposed the truth, or set at naught the commandments.

It is a dreary position, but let us not faint. It is part of the situation as appointed. All the promises, as you know, are for those who mourn, who are poor, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and who are spoken evil of because of their zeal for what is right before God.

We all desire to participate in the consolation of the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. Consequently we must be prepared to accept the dark side for the present. All the sons of God have had to do it in their day and generation. It is true of them all, that “through much tribulation they enter into the kingdom of God.” It is grievous while it lasts, but does not last long at the longest. Our days are few if evil, and the days of the recompense are endless and fraught with goodness such as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

Reverting to the unhappy state of things in Israel Paul anticipates and answers a criticism that he does not formulate, but which is manifestly present to his mind and to which the position he takes up is naturally open. This is a very frequent thing in Paul’s letters, where an objection, not expressed, yet visible between the lines, is dealt with where it would naturally arise.

The objection in the present case relates to the apparent complete failure confessed, in God’s dealings with Israel. It is as if the objector said, “How is it that the word of God has had so little effect that the very nation whom He has made the special subject of treatment is in nearly complete rebellion against Him? There must be something wrong.” Paul in effect replies, “Not so: do not judge so harshly; God’s purpose has not failed at all, although I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.” His words are:

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

Here is something at first sight very obscure. We do not at first see in what way it is an answer to the objection with which Paul is dealing. But let us ponder it a little, and we shall see its completeness as an answer shine out with brightness. The first difficulty is in the statement:

“They are not all Israel that are of Israel.”

At first sight it would seem as if to be Israel and “of Israel” were the same thing: for as we look at Israel in the earth, it seems natural to ask, Who are Israel if not those who appertain to Israel? The solution is in the use of the term Israel. There are two ways of using this term; first, in the sense in which it originated in the history of Jacob at the very beginning, and secondly, in the sense of designating the descendants of Jacob as a race in the earth.

Now, it is obviously more appropriate every way to use the term with the meaning in which it originated, for this defines its exact relations. Its meaning is “a prince with God.” It was because of this meaning that it was bestowed on Jacob, who prevailed by his spiritual importunity on the occasion of a certain angel appearing to him. With this meaning it has come to embrace the whole family of God, retrospectively and prospectively. Now, why were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets, esteemed as “princes with God”? Was it because of their extraction or because of their character? The latter unquestionably. God made choice of them on this ground.

“I know him (Abraham), 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; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19).

God chose their descendants as a nation, on the basis of the covenant of circumcision (17:10-14); and as a na-

tion they will remain His as unalterably as the establishment of the ordinances of heaven and earth (Jer. 31:36-37).

But a man may belong to the nation and pass away as an individual, like Achan, or Judas, or the whole generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness because of their insubordination. He may be born of Israel and thus be of Israel and yet not be Israel in the original significance of the term.

It is not sufficient for individual participation in the glorious aion of perfection in reserve for Israel, that a man belong to the nation of Israel. He must be Israel as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were Israel—a prince with God because of faith and obedience. Now this was the case with only a small minority in Israel: hence it came to pass that they were not all Israel that were of Israel. It did not follow because they were the seed of Abraham according to the flesh that therefore they were all “children.” To be children in the complete sense, they required to resemble Abraham in his faith and in the docility of his obedience to God. So Jesus had told them, before Paul by the Spirit wrote similar words:

“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed: but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you . . . If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham” (John 8:37-39).

Paul’s meaning is therefore perfectly clear. The word of God had not been without effect. It had accomplished its work with Israel in all generations: and if it did not leaven the whole body of the nation, it was because “they were not all Israel that were of Israel.” They were not of the right stamp; they were not all of a good and honest heart

(Matt. 13:23; Luke 8:15). Moses recognised this even before they entered the land (Deut. 31:29; 32:5). If it be asked why they were not all of the good and honest heart, that opens out a question which Paul deals with further on in the same chapter.

Meanwhile, let us deal with the principle before us as it bears upon ourselves; for we handle these matters in vain if we do not extract from them something of an improving and purifying effect.

You may say, How can it be made to bear upon us, seeing we are not Israel after the flesh? The answer is, though we are not of Israel after the flesh, we are Israel by adoption, as Paul teaches, styling the adopted in Christ “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), and plainly teaching that such are no longer strangers but fellow-citizens in the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:19). Now, is our adoption irrevocable? Does it follow that we shall always be Israel because we have been adopted?

On this point Paul is very explicit. Using the figure of the olive tree to represent the commonwealth of Israel and its natural branches, as the Jews, he says:

“Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee . . . Continue in his goodness; otherwise thou shalt also be cut off” (Rom. 11:20-22).

From this it is evident that we stand related to precisely the same principles of standing as those which governed God’s dealings with Israel after the

flesh. What follows? That it may be true of us as of them:

“They are not all Israel that are of Israel.”

You may say, Why put such an idea forward? Merely because of the great importance of its recognition. Some people are apt to imagine that it is all right with them because they have been baptised upon a profession of the truth—that because they are associated with the brethren, their salvation is sure; that because they assemble with the brethren and are of the brethren and so recognised, therefore they are brethren.

It is well to see that they are not all Israel that are of Israel; that they are not all brethren that are of the brethren: and that if a man have not a loving and a fearing heart towards Him, and a zealous affection for the things of the Spirit, and a readiness for prompt obedience of the commandments, his standing among the brethren will weigh nothing in his favour when the day comes for the selection and manifestation of the princes of God in all the earth. The choice will only fall on “Israelites indeed”: mere Israelites can have no useful place in the house of God, which is the house of His glory and the house of holiness.

Paul’s quotation of what was said concerning Isaac is a similar example of a truth having two applications easily made to appear inconsistent one with another. He proves his assertion that the mere seed of Abraham after the flesh are not necessarily his children, by the words addressed to Abraham when he was distressed about sending Ishmael away:

“In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

This might be thought a strange way of disproving the standing of those who were actually descendents of Isaac. It would seem to have the opposite effect, for if in Isaac, as contrasted with Ishmael, the seed were to be called, surely the Jews had a right in claiming sonship as the descendants of Isaac.

Go deeper, however, and we find Paul's argument right. Why in Isaac and not in Ishmael were Abraham's seed to be called? For a reason which when applied to the subject of Paul's contention, established his argument that all were not Israel who were of Israel. This reason as defined by Paul is in Rom. 9:8, as follows:

“They who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

Ishmael as the mere offspring of the mechanical law of generation was not a suitable foundation for a work of God in the earth which was to be His own direct work and for His own glory, exclusive of all ground for human complacency. The foundation of this work was to be a son, which had to be given outside the power of nature. Such a son was Isaac. Concerning his maternity, we read:

“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude.”

This fact in Abraham's history was a distinct enunciation of the principle that Paul was contending for. Ishmael was the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, yet he was excluded from the covenant, because no more than this. Isaac was a child of Yahweh's own promise and production, and was of Abraham's character in addition to Abraham's blood.

Surely nothing could be more logical than Paul's deduction from this, that they who are the children of the flesh are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. If it be contended that this excludes the Jews from divine relation altogether the answer is No; God has chosen them as a nation. This is the natural root out of which the spiritual flower is grown: first the natural, afterwards the spiritual. It was needful there should be a nation as the foundation.

This nation was chosen “in Isaac,” that is, his descendants in Jacob were chosen nationally on the basis of flesh extraction, but a step higher in the same process was necessary to give an individual place with Isaac in the perfect state contemplated in the promises in their ultimate fulfilment. Faith and obedience were needful in the individual members of Isaac's race in order to their being “counted for the seed” in its final form.

If it be asked, what, then, about the Gentiles? the answer is that we get by adoption what the Jews get by birth, and we are no more exempt than they from the necessity of building on the foundation of our adoption that spiritual structure of faith and obedience which they were required to add to their natural extraction from the holders of the promises. Such, whether Jews or

Gentiles, are the children of promise as Isaac was—the children contemplated in the promises to the fathers, and the children produced by God’s own operation among men: for where would they have been apart from the fact stated by James:

“Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth”?

He has placed the truth in the world with this mission. It is his power unto salvation to everyone believing. Apart from it, all is barbarism and death, albeit the barbarism may be very elegant, and death decked out in a beautiful wreathing of false immortelles.

Bro. Robert Roberts

The Prayer of Hannah (2)

In our previous article we considered the background to Hannah’s prayer, referring to the great changes which the man of God spoke of to Eli in 1 Samuel 2:27-36. In her prophetic prayer she foresees these great changes with their ultimate fulfilment in the reign of Messiah. But there was a primary fulfilment in the reign of David who Samuel was instrumental in anointing. The kingdom was about to dawn in the person of David through whom Israel would have salvation from their enemies. We believe that it is these enemies and the enemies of Messiah that Hannah is rejoicing over more than over the provocation of her adversary because she was barren. One can think of six women in the Scriptures who were barren, namely, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Manoah’s wife, Hannah and Elisabeth. In each case their barrenness preceded the birth of a notable child. Sarah was typical of the seventh example, namely “Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother city of us all”(Gal.4: 26-27). We may feel barren now, but let us strive to walk faithfully, that our names may be “written in heaven”, that we may be part of the “general assembly and ecclesia of the firstborn” when “the tabernacle of God is with men”. So Hannah’s barrenness came before the birth of the notable prophet, Samuel.

THE PRAYER

The word rejoiceth in verse 1 means to jump for joy, to exult. She rejoiced in Samuel’s birth for the consequence of this was that her horn was exalted in Yahweh. Horn represents power (Dan.8: 7), so she continues, “my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies”. The word enemies has the idea of hating. It is a stronger word than adversary in chapter 1:6 therefore we conclude that it is prophetic. This is reinforced by the words that follow; “because I rejoice in thy salvation”, which takes us forward to Jesus, whose name means “Yahweh is salvation”, but also these words had a primary fulfilment in David saving Israel from Goliath and all their enemies. Her words “My heart rejoiceth in the LORD (Yahweh)” are significant therefore, for it is only in Yahweh that we can be saved. Hence Jesus’s name “Yahweh is salvation”. Moreover when David stood against Goliath, he said;

“I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel” (1 Sam.17: 45).

Hannah then continues:

“There is none holy as Yahweh: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God”.

David spoke similar words in 1 Samuel 22:2-3:

“And he said, Yahweh is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence” (see also v.31-33).

Hannah recognised the complete dependability of Yahweh in responding to her prayer. Furthermore she was confident of his strength and power to deliver Israel from her enemies. We need also to completely put our trust in Yahweh, in the words of 1 John 5:19:

“we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness”.

We know that this wicked world will be judged when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and we shall have to help Christ in this work. Now our warfare is spiritual but when the Master returns we have to be, “in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (11 Cor.10: 4-6).

With Hannah, her adversary spoke arrogantly, but now she knew that “Yahweh is a God (Ail) of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (1 Sam.2: 3). Yahweh had weighed up the actions of Hannah and her adversary and in response to her prayer had provided her with a child. The same applied to David. Yahweh saw David opposed by his adversary Saul and eventually exalted him to kingship. This was the case with Babylon, the adversary of Israel, when God said to Belshazzar, “Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting”. The same will apply to the latter day Babylon who will oppose Christ when he returns, of whom we read:

“For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities . . . How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” (Rev.18: 5-8).

How important it is that we remember that God (Ail) knows and by him our actions are weighed. We shall have to give account of ourselves before the judgement seat of Christ. Moreover, where we suffer adversity as Hannah did it is a great comfort to know that Ail, he who is a God of Might and Power knows; he weighs men’s actions and will show us all up at our true worth. This mighty power of Ail is now shown in verses 4 and 5 in the following way between those who trust in their own strength and those who trust in God’s strength:

MAN'S STRENGTH

“The bows of the mighty men are broken”

“They that are full have hired out themselves for bread”

“she that hath many children is waxed feeble”

GOD'S STRENGTH

“they that stumbled are girded with strength”

“They that were hungry ceased (from hunger)”

“the barren hath born seven”

The blessing of trusting in God's strength was shown by the Master in his Sermon on the plain:

“Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy (as Hannah did): for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets” (Lke.6: 20-23, see also Eccl.9: 11 & Ps.33: 14-20).

It should be noted that Hannah did not bear seven (see v.21), therefore her words are prophetic of Sarah's children of whom we read;

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Yahweh”(Isa.54: 1).

The fulfilment of these words is shown by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4:26-28, where they are applied to Jerusalem, the mother city of the saints. The saints have not been recognised in all ages and Jerusalem has appeared as barren, but this will be changed when the Lord Jesus Christ appears as we read in Isaiah 66:8-14:

“for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. . . Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her. . . Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem”.

The words of 1 Samuel 2:6 , “Yahweh killeth, and maketh alive” will have their ultimate fulfilment when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and we read of this in Deuteronomy 32:39-43:

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive. . . neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever (these words apply to Christ not the Father). If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. . . Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people”.

It is noteworthy that these words are very similar to the theme of Hannah’s prayer.

1 Samuel 2:8 is very significant:

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory”.

How true this was of David. To begin with he was raised up from the sheepfolds, not thought worthy by his family to be brought before Samuel when he came to anoint one of Jesse’s sons. He was cast out and pursued by Saul, so that he and his men were without food and David literally became a beggar, having to firstly plead with Ahimelech for the Shewbread, then having to plead to Nabal. Furthermore he had to flee into the land of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, for safety and sustenance. But he was exalted by Yahweh to inherit the throne of glory and was set among the princes of the land. Above all this applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of Jesus in Psalm 40:17:

“But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God”.

The word needy has the same Hebrew root as beggar in 1 Samuel 2:8. Jesus and his disciples as David suffered hunger, so that they had to pluck ears of corn as they went through the fields. Jesus said:

“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head”(Mt.8: 20).

Jesus was truly was poor and needy, yet he has been exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, being given, “the name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil.2: 9-11) and Jesus is destined to inherit the throne of glory, when he “shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously” (Isa.24:23).

But then in 1 Samuel 2:8 we read:

“the pillars of the earth are Yahweh’s, and he hath set the world upon them”.

What are the pillars of the earth? The Hebrew word *matsuq* means something narrow, i.e. a column or hilltop. I suggest that this refers to the hills, perhaps, particularly Mount Zion. The world can apply to the inhabited earth but also to a particular land as Babylonia or Palestine. Could Hannah be speaking here of the land of Israel, the kingdom of God on earth, which was described as, “a land of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills”? But again these words will have a far greater application when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and when his feet touch the Mount of Olives and the great earthquake will lift Jerusalem above the hills and no doubt transform the whole earth. Note, the pillars of the earth are Yahweh’s. Yahweh created it to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18), with one particular nation in mind, namely Israel (Isa. 45:17) and one particular person to reign on the throne of glory, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of David.

We shall continue the concluding part of the prayer of Hannah, God willing, in the next article.

Carlo Barberesi

Correspondence: The Breaking of Bread

A brother has forwarded the following letter taken from The Christadelphian Magazine, published in 1998 where the writer expresses concerns similar to ours:

Dear Brother Michael,

My mind has been exercised over the last few months by ideas which seem to be held about the reason for the Breaking of Bread and what it should do for us.

Is it just my imagination or are we as a body coming to the conclusion that this act of remembrance is a form of sacrament that brings with it a special blessing? Many who are called upon to give thanks for the emblems do not do so; instead they ask God to bless the bread or wine that it may strengthen us. In doing so they use the word “bless” differently from the giving of “praise and thanks” extended by our Lord (compare Luke 22:17–20 with Mark 14:22, 23).

Not wishing to detract from the excellent exhortation by Brother Elliot in the September issue, words in parenthesis in the opening sentence also remind me of another idea we seem to have. Is the memorial service really a time for “renewing our faith”? Does the fact that it is held on the first day of the week really suggest to us that each week begins anew with a confession of our sins and a rededication of our lives as we also sometimes hear?

Surely this feast was inaugurated that we should remember our Lord (Luke 22:19) and “show forth his death” (1 Corinthians 11:25, 26). Thus our faith is sustained or strengthened rather than renewed. Whilst the words of the Apostle Paul in that chapter develop implications because of our relationship with each other as being “in Christ”, and call upon us to recognise our own and each other’s needs, these are personal matters and should be dwelt on during the week leading up to the Breaking of Bread, so that we come to the table with a right frame of mind and heart.

I appeal to all, especially those who pray on behalf of us all at such meetings and to those who exhort, let us not impart some mystic meaning to what we do but accept that it is as simple as our Lord made it, a token meal in remembrance of him to show forth his death.

Sincerely your brother,

H. DENNIS PALMER

Swansea

Jeremiah’s Letter to the Exiles

Our daily readings over the last few days have taken us through the difficult circumstances surrounding Israel, as they were to be led into captivity because of their rebellion against the Almighty. Jeremiah, though a faithful prophet, suffered personally because of the message that he gave. He warned of coming judgments at the hands of the Babylonians, but chapter 28 of the prophecy that bears his name describes how for this, he suffered at the hands of a false prophet who spoke of peace, and not destruction. Chapter 29, however, describes how Jeremiah wrote (as he was moved by the Holy Spirit), to the exiles who had already been carried away into the land of Babylon. In this letter, he warned the Jews to make preparation for a long stay in the land of captivity, yet be ready to leave at the “expected end”, when a period of 70 years would be accomplished. In some measure their circumstances are similar to ours: they looked to the time when the kingdom of Israel would be restored – and so do we. Living in Gentile nations – as did they – we embrace the hope of Israel, which is the hope that Israel will be reconciled to their God, and restored to their land. We recognise that judgments will surely come, but we look beyond them to the glory and state of blessedness which will fill the earth. This being so, we can take to our hearts the words of Jeremiah’s letter, to apply them to our similar circumstances.

In the first instance, it is interesting to note exactly who it was that the letter was addressed to: “...unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon” (Jer. 29:1). Who were these “prophets” to whom Jeremiah wrote? We know that Ezekiel and Daniel (with his three brethren) were both contemporary with Jeremiah, and in the land of Babylon with the exiles. Daniel is particularly interesting to consider in con-

nection with Jeremiah, for the record of Daniel’s prophecy specifically informs us that he was personally acquainted with Jeremiah’s writings. Daniel 9 recounts Daniel’s words:

“... I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem ...” Dan. 9:2)

Daniel then, knew from Jeremiah that there would be a 70 year period of captivity, and it is significant to note that Jeremiah 29, addressed to the “prophets” amongst others, mentions this seventy years in verse 10: “For thus saith Yahweh, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place” (Jer. 29:10).

Verse 28 states that “this captivity is long” – as we have seen, it was for seventy years. That being the case, the people were to make preparations to remain in Babylon for a long duration. So the Prophet wrote to them: “Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them: take ye wives and beget sons and daughters: and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands that they may bear sons and daughters; that they may be increased there, and not diminished” (Jer. 29:5-6).

In these things, we have examples for our situation. We, as they, have to live in Gentile lands awaiting the restoration of all things to Israel. Unlike them, we do not know the precise time when our Lord shall come to accomplish this work, but the principle remains the same: we need to make provision for ourselves whilst within this evil world. As we await the promised time, we must be ready to leave and be joined with our Master when required – but until that time come, we must make provision for our mortal requirements, trusting that the Lord will provide all that we need. As the Master expressed it: “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). We seek after the re-establishment of the ancient Davidic seat of power, to be the nucleus for Divine world government, but until that time come, our mortal needs will have to be met.

The people were given the command that after the 70 years had ended; they would turn and pray to their God for deliverance:

“ ... then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you” (Jer. 29:12)

Returning to the example of Daniel, we find that this is precisely what he did. As alluded to above, Daniel 9 shows that he understood from Jeremiah that the 70 years had almost been completed. In response to that recognition, we read:

“I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes: and I prayed unto Yahweh my God ...” (Dan. 9:3-4).

Daniel was truly a man of faith and prayer. Each day, three times a day, he kneeled upon his knees, “and prayed, and gave thanks before his God ...” (Dan. 6:10). This he did “in his chamber towards Jerusalem”, that is, with a constant yearning for the captivity to end.

In fact, this action was following Solomon’s prayer, as described in 1 Kings 8:

“... if they shall bethink themselves wither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication ... and so return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for my name” (1 Kings 8:47-48).

This was “the hope of Israel” at that time, and it leaves us with an example. Do we earnestly desire the kingdom to come like Daniel did? Do we pray for it daily – let alone 3 times a day? Only we can individually answer for ourselves.

Interestingly, the Jews were told to pray for the city of Babylon, where they were exiled:

“seek the peace of the city wither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto Yahweh for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer. 29:7).

Notice the reason for this prayer: “in the peace thereof shall ye have peace”. We are given a similar commandment: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We know not how long it will be before we are brought before Christ, but before that time comes, we must seek to “lead a quiet and peaceable life”, and pray that the authorities will allow us to have it so.

Verse 13 gives a promise: “ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart ...”. Here, the allusion is back to Deuteronomy chapter 4:

“And Yahweh shall scatter you among the nations ... but if from thence ye seek Yahweh thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and all thy soul” (Deut. 4:29).

Here is the promise: if we turn from our ways of folly, and seek Israel’s God, then we will find him also. Notice the point, however: there is no virtue in a half-hearted attempt. We must seek Yahweh with “all” of our heart, with “all” our soul. In fact, this is the prerequisite for Baptism. So Philip discoursed with a certain Ethiopian:

“as they went on their way, they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest *with all thine heart*, thou mayest ..” (Acts 8:37).

A whole hearted service is what our Master requires from us. Like the burnt offering under the Law, every aspect of our lives must be laid down in service to our Heavenly Father. So the Apostle exhorts elsewhere “... present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1). The point is clear, but like so many other things, what is easy to understand is hard to actually do. We must believe and do, believing in the saving power of Messiah to save us from our sins. It is possible to have an outward show of righteousness, with a corrupt heart. Such is the servant in the parable that Christ taught: “... if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of ...” (Mat. 24:48-51)

Returning to Jeremiah 29, the prophet describes how that the exiles were without excuse, with regards to the judgments that came. Warnings were given, yet went unheeded: “Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith Yahweh, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, but you would not hear, saith Yahweh (Jer. 29:19).

Notice one of the points here: “rising up early”. Jeremiah 7 reads likewise: “... I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not”. And again: “Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them” (Jer. 7:13, 25).

This aspect of “rising up early” emphasises the principle that from the very beginning of the day, from the moment we awaken, we must be devoted to service. It is significant that Yahweh himself is spoken of here as “rising up early” to send the prophets. Not that the Almighty needs rest, or has to rise up from sleep as we do. Rather it is, from the time of the suns’ rising, prophets were being sent to admonish the people. And it logically follows that if the prophets were delivering their messages early, then the people had to be up and ready early, to listen.

There is much benefit from rising early, to pay attention to the Word. As we waken from sleep, our first thoughts should be towards the things of the spirit, and reading a portion of the Word helps to direct our minds and thoughts to accomplish this. “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me” (Prov. 8:17) is the cry of wisdom. If we would be wise, we must begin our day with the Word, to set us up for the day ahead.

The testimony of Peter applies the example of things passed to things present:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you ...” (2 Pet. 2:1).

Jeremiah 28 provides an example of this, with Hananiah, the false prophet, who claimed that Israel would be back in their own land, dwelling peacefully and safely within two years. Jeremiah himself testified that it would be much longer, 70 years. Of course, Hananiah's message was much nicer and more palatable, and this is the danger of false prophets. They teach in such a way that their message is nice and sweet – but because it is false, such as these are no more than blind leaders of the blind, with both falling into the ditch.

The promise of liberty and freedom is a strong one. Especially for Israel who were desiring liberty and freedom from the Babylonians. But in the long term, things that sound nice and palatable to the carnal mind, can lead to death and destruction. As Peter spoke again: “while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption ...” (2 Pet. 2:19). Time goes by, “prophecies” go unfulfilled, and the false prophet himself shall descend into the grave, with no God and no Hope.

As we mentioned earlier, our situation is similar to that of the Jews living in a Gentile land. The hope they had was for the kingdom to be restored to Israel – and that is our hope also, and the extent of the dominion of Israel's King – the Master Jesus Christ - shall be global. In that day, for those who repent and seek Yahweh: “I will be found of you, saith Yahweh: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith Yahweh: and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive” (Jer. 29:14). That is the day for which we so earnestly long for. Just as Daniel prayed for the kingdom to be restored, so Psalm 122 exhorts us to “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (Psa. 122:6). That is where our heart is: in the restored, peaceful haven of Jerusalem, the “city of the great king”. We must therefore give ourselves wholly to the service of Yahweh, with all of our hearts, seeking wisdom early, let us leave it too late. And if we do this, just as Israel had the certainty of being restored, so we have an appointed end, that we also might be delivered, and become part of that glorious new kingdom to come.

Christopher Maddocks

“For whosoever shall do the will of God”

My dear brothers and sisters, we are certainly dear to each other because of the precious truth and knowledge of the kingdom of God which we each one of us possess in his heart. We have accepted the teachings of the Bible as being able to make us ‘wise unto salvation’ and have endeared ourselves to the practices set out by the apostles by walking as they did. We have discarded each one his father's traditions and have come to be truly the body of Christ by association in obeying his commands.

When we come together there might be some with their mind somewhere else, some hearts that can not really focus and comprehend what manner of people

ought we to be and what kind of lives we ought to live? The purpose of most our exhortations is to help each other focus and set our hearts to the 'expected end'.

It is for this very reason we have to remind each other that of all our times on this earth the most important time is when we are alone. For when we are in the company of others we are merely responding to influences imposed by the presence of individuals around us. This is also true by what is around us in terms of sound, objects whatever our senses can respond to and cause a distraction and input some change to how we calculate issues. One is reminded by a passage in scripture of the very same principle which points out to the ever present danger of being 'led' into sin by that which one has put around himself or is naturally around us, for the world lives in sin and there is not many things that will automatically put us on a vantage point.

Our Master speaks of these things in that offences will come, things that cause people to sin will always be there, this is now our reality, for we live in a real world with real people, were sin is an everyday reality and our overcoming those realities is through practice and obedience of God word, experiencing a lot of conflict with the processes of what we call life. Matt 18 vs 8 -9.

Now no man can help you deal with all that which we have mentioned above, it is each man for himself. We can see your pain and sorrow but we are not able to truly share with you all that. Therefore it is that individual sacrifice that one has to make, benign to one and all, we can only suggest, we can influence by all means available to us, but it is that personal desire to see fault and error in oneself, it is that ability to let the word of God sieve you, it is that willingness to practice daily that which one has learn, it is more than daily readings and attendance at meetings, it is the mustard seed that one has in himself, potential in abundance to do the will of God. The apostles spoke of our life as one running in a race, there is that personal participation, the putting forward of consecutives steps one after another with synchronised effort and determination to complete as well win the race.

Our Lord teaches us by way of parable that our enterprising in his kingdom are like a king who takes account his resources before he goes to war or one who builds to see if he can finish the construction work. The participation of an individual in response to God's word is a principle that need no exaggeration as it is enshrined in all the core teachings of scripture and acceptance of this teaching is an opening to greater things in understanding matters of the kingdom.

Our life is built by small events that take place every second , how we live every second in recognition of how it has all been possible without taking any one second for granted is paramount to development of a habits that will see us characterize our master and how we will live a life that is truly of servants awaiting his return.

We have to find time to take stock individually, we have to find our Mt Olivet, in the midst of the busy schedules we have, WE MUST find time to be alone, to be

with Christ, and use the his mirror to see 'how' we look. Once we have gotten hold of that image we must try our best to remember how we look by fixing our minds on building and maintain that.

In our household we have certain things that we mention often than others, sort of issues we read from the Bible but faced them on real life and learnt the lessons which already should have covered and would have spared ourselves sorrow. At one point we lived with family that took us for granted and abused us in every way. It reminds of Hezekiah when he showed the Babylonians the treasures of the kingdom, which ties up with drinking waters from your own cistern and if they ever flow let them be yours alone. There is that which is meant to be yours, entrusted to you by God for provisions and custody as a true steward till the day of Christ.

Many other such things we learn, like the folly of Shimei, like the humility of David, his ability to admit error and endure hardships. When we have time to oneself and see such things they will make us strong as we add continually in our encounters with God word. We will then even be able to extract from our proximities that which we can use to our advantage. We will be of untold blessings when in the company of brethren. Meetings will be mutual exercises by which all will benefit, and the unity of such nature is possible in our times, anything contrary indicating compromise, cowardice and falsehood. Fellowship based on fault lines in the name of tolerance, clearly serving man as opposed to our master as outlined in his letters of responsive rebuke to the Ecclesia in the book of Revelation.

After the manner of man we prefer to be sensitive to man at the expense of the truth. I remember having a meeting with some of our number where I made my point in that I am in this to benefit, that is my first port of call. If I see that I do not benefit in my search for a meaningful attempt to serve Christ, why waste my time. Christ spoke about our personal service to him in this manner. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me". When our hearts are in the right place we will know what that means.

Let us stand in the right position, the position asked of us by the word of God, 'rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;'

God will make us stand upright before him, he will make us right before him and will give us an entrance into his kingdom. We have the knowledge, but this knowledge is only making us accountable if we do use it, or rather, if we do not let it bring changes in our personal lives. This is no time to follow others blindly. We should seek the truth and once the truth is found that personal decision as was on the day of baptism still continues in us, daily learning and ever vigilant to see a day as it comes, not seeking out that which gives us honour among man (Jeremiah 45 v5) But fully aware of the dangers lurking in the immediate surroundings even in our household, even amidst in our Ecclesia, only your friend knows your secret, only he can reveal it. Jeremiah was amidst a nation ready to

accept the teachings of false prophets, the need for a false prophet came from the people. As a result of the bad levels of appreciation of God's word and fear for His name we have more danger from within the Ecclesias than before. One will only be able to say no to error when he is firstly and foremost ready to be the only representative and in that situation when can truly enjoy fellowship when they see value added to the endeavours they are already making.

We are here today because of our willingness to start anew when we are shown the right way, we are disciples because each day we learn new ways and implement them with joy, we are servants because we look nowhere else but to our Master. We shall be like him if we see him as he is.

The emblems before us helps us bring our minds to that day, when he had us also in his mind. I saw you under the figtree he said to one. I saw you in such a place he will say to one and all.

Things might not be as dramatic as in those days but they our calling is equally real. For those he had set apart he sent them out to go and preach the gospel to every creature and that same gospel was preached to me first by correspondence by one Englishman and now by many African, English and all other that I come into contact with through many divers means everyday. May the Lord bless us all for the efforts we make individually (behind the scenes) in preparation for service in His vineyard. And for all those that make contributions I can not start to recount and for the memories that truly edify thank you

Gombera Tendai

POLLUTION

The rabbit population of the UK has increased considerably in recent years following the devastation to the population caused by disease and changes in farming methods. But whether you think rabbits a pest or like to see them as part of the rich pageant of the English country side, they are hard to miss. No doubt most of you have seen rabbit warrens in hedgerows, fields, parks and a myriad other places. Once whilst out on a walk I passed by one particularly extensive warren. Not being the quietest of walkers, the rabbits quickly scattered and disappeared down the nearest available hole at my approach. One in particular shot down a rather large hole, which caught my attention because the holes are not usually that large. So being curious, I took a closer look, from about 1 foot down (0.3 metre) the hole was studded with assorted bits of rubbish, broken brick, bottles, plastic bags, jars etc. The rabbits had widened the hole in an attempt to dislodge the rubbish, but instead had ended up having to negotiate an obstacle course of rubbish in order to enter or exit the warren and hence why the mouth of the hole was so large. The hole was testimony to the amount of rubbish carelessly discarded in hedgerows for many years.

Again, whilst out on a walk along a disused canal it was very easy to note the foam on the surface of the water where land drains emitted the run off from

fields. The foam is caused by excessive nitrates and other pollutants in the water. Walking on a beach one year, I trod on what looked like a ripple in the sand, only to find my foot covered in black tar like oil. Our environment is a delicate balance of nature which mankind is polluting with disastrous results. Pollution is responsible for the destruction of plant and animal life, global warming and disease. There are vast swaths of land fill sites vomiting methane gas and other forms of pollution into the soil. Rivers become so polluted that fish die and there is a rise in asthma and other diseases because of atmospheric pollution, the list could go on. The point is that the beauty and delicate balance of nature is destroyed because of mankind's mismanagement of his environment.

But for all this, there is a far greater danger that is ever present for each and every one of us, something that might be termed 'mind pollution'.

Our minds are constantly bombarded with the noise and clamour of the world in one way or another, yet we willingly add to this cacophony! We mismanage our minds! I met a man recently who quite openly said that he always had a radio, TV or CD on so that he was never alone with his own thoughts. How sad!

Little time is set aside for thoughtful contemplation and self examination. Yet we all have a great need to redress the balance. Like nature, the good fertile soil of our minds will become totally unproductive in the Truth, if we are constantly filling it with rubbish. Or like the poor rabbit having to dig around all the discarded junk, our thoughts about the scriptures will become equally hard to negotiate if we have to constantly dig out the junk to make headway. It is bad enough when we must do this for reasons beyond our control, let alone inflicting it upon ourselves. The problem is that human nature is so good at mindlessly creating rubbish.

Just imagine that your mind is like a fertile hedge row and God takes a close look, seeking to find something that He can take pleasure in. What will be seen? Will He find a mind cluttered up with the discarded litter of humanistic thought, the latest gossip, and the day to day trivia that pervades everyday life? On the other hand, will he find healthy growth, balance and harmony, a peaceful environment in harmony with its Creator? Will He find a small reflection of His Divine characteristics within our minds? It will in the best of us, be but a pale reflection, but non-the-less it should be present.

So what does the scripture say that we should do?

"Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13)

There is no other way of preventing 'mind pollution' other than to fill the mind with the things of God. Think of His way when in need and pray. Think of His goodness when happy and sing praise. Think of His Word when in need of guidance and obey it.

Here are some more words that we do well to meditate upon and put into practice:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8)

In other words, fill your minds with the Word of God day by day. Meditate upon His wisdom, His mercy, His love. Think carefully about the examples of the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ that Paul describes in Hebrews 11. Think of the great Apostle Paul himself, as an example to follow:

“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil. 4:9)

Meditate daily about the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is altogether pure, lovely, praiseworthy, admirable and noble. Do this and we are promised that God will be with us.

Such thoughts will drive out and purge away the pollution of humanistic thought:

“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” (2Tim 2:21)

What sort of mind do you have?

Andy Peel

CHARACTER AND SPEECH

Circumstances may prepare the mind, experience may ripen the judgment, but the ideas from which we act, and form rules of conduct, are mainly conveyed to us in some form or other by speech. It may therefore very correctly be said that character, to a considerable extent, is molded by speech- those around us are molding our characters, whilst we in turn are molding theirs. This action and reaction of speech cannot be too fully realized, for it places within reach of all, a field of influence, which cannot be gauged. As speech plays so important a part in life, the question arises: In what light do the Scriptures view the use of it? “Life and death,” says Solomon, “are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it, shall eat the fruit thereof.” Graver issues than these there could not be. That our whole expectation and hope can be forfeited by this active little member! Nevertheless so it is, for Yahweh has set a standard for the mouth of the righteous man, and it is that it shall be a “well of life.”

Sister Clara Abbott 1881