

The SCRIPTURE STANDARD

*Pleading for a complete return to Christianity
as it was in the beginning.*

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A VERY SMALL REMNANT

Quite often, in our readings of the scriptures, we encounter a word or phrase which intrigues us, and we make a mental note to give it further investigation, when we get the time. The years go by however, and we never seem to get around to chasing up all the subjects in the queue. Some words can conjure up all kinds of notions, which very often, upon closer inspection, do not carry the meaning we thought they did. Many Bible words and phrases continue to mystify us no matter how long we may have enjoyed their acquaintance, and we still ponder subjects like demons and demon possession; cherubs and cherubim; Paradise; Melchizedek; "the Godhead"; "The Tree of Life" etc., etc. Think of all that has been written on words like "Armageddon", (a word which appears only once, and vaguely. in the N.T.).

"Remnant" is one of those words which has always interested me, and one which occurs quite often in the O.T. Indeed it occurs no less than 80 times in the Bible, (but only 6 times in the N.T., 3 of which are in the Rev.). Mostly the word is used in its ordinary sense, i.e. "a residue" or "fragment left over". No doubt we all have memories of the time when, as children, we were dragged by our mothers, around all the "Remnant Sales" looking for a bargain. Most bales of cloth, or rolls of linoleum, ended up with a stump or remnant of cloth not large enough for a normal sale but capable of being put to good use by a thrifty housewife talented with a needle. Thus a remnant was, and is, a portion left over; a residue, and this can take various forms. The Bible talks of remnants of meat (Lev. 2:3); remnants of oil (Lev. 14:18); remnants of children (Deut. 28:54); of nations (Josh. 23:12); of giants (Og being the last giant: Deut. 3:11); remnants of Philistines (Amos 1:8) remnants of Ashdod (Jer. 25:20); and the Gibeonites were "the remnant" of the Amorites (11 Sam. 21:2). Thus, each time we come across the word we know that a remainder or residue is meant, but we must always ascertain the **type** of remnant being talked of, whether animal, vegetable or mineral. Jesus used the word only once (Matt. 22:6) and meant a small section of the wedding guests.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

By far and away the most numerous use of the word in the O.T. is, however, related to the "The Remnant" of Jews destined to survive the Captivities. It is used thus about 50 times and is an ever recurring theme in the writings of most O.T. prophets. The history of the Jews could, I suppose, be condensed very roughly into five main periods: **Servitude** (in slavery to the Egyptians): **Preparation** (40 years in the wilderness): **Conquest** (Conquering of enemies and entering Canaan): **Glory** (Ascendancy over the nations and general prosperity): **Decline and Servitude** (Back in captivity because of idolatry). Perhaps Israel had its best time around the period of

Solomon, its decline beginning just after his death. At Solomon's death the 12 tribes were divided under the rule of his son Rehoboam and one of his officers, Jeroboam, the former ruling the southern kingdom of 2 tribes (Judah) and the latter ruling the northern kingdom of 10 tribes (Israel). The northern kingdom had a series of 19 kings, mostly bad men who took Israel further down the road of idolatry, culminating in the Kingdom being destroyed and the 10 tribes being taken captive by the Assyrians in 721 BC. The southern kingdom likewise had about 18 kings, most of whom were bad and although the Kingdom survived for over 100 years longer than the Northern Kingdom, they too succumbed to idolatry and were taken into captivity by the Babylonians (Chaldeans) about 600 B.C., and did not emerge from that captivity for 70 years. Biblical historians seem fairly unanimous that the 10 tribes did not emerge from their Assyrian captivity, and there is still much speculation as to what became of the "Lost Ten Tribes".

In describing why Israel and Judah were cast into captivity by God, nothing could improve upon the words recorded in 2 Chron. 36: 14 - 20, "Moreover, all the chief priests, and all the people, transgressed very much after the abomination of the heathen and polluted the house of the Lord, which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending: because He had compassion on His people and His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against the people, till there was no remedy." Having outlined the reason for God's anger, the writer continues, describing the outcome. "Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees who slew their young men with the sword in the house of the Sanctuary, and had no compassion on young men or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the House of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the House of God and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his son until the reign of the kingdom of Persia . . . to fulfil three-score and ten years". This admirable passage not only explains why God allowed the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to conquer Judah (2 tribes) but also intimates that "A REMNANT" survived the slaughter, and went into servitude to the Babylonians for 70 years: i.e. until the king of Persia (Cyrus) would defeat the Babylonians and release The Remnant. It also records the utter destruction of Jerusalem: the razing of the temple to the ground; the city walls being broken down and the removal of some of the temple vessels (5,400 of them: Ezra 1:11). All of this refers specifically to Judah, for Israel (the 10 tribes) at this time had already been in captivity in Assyria for over 100 years.

THE PROPHECIES

The most obvious difference between an historian and a prophet is, I suppose, that one records past events while the other predicts events yet to come. Many of the prophets fulfilled both functions, however, i.e. were prophets and historians; and quite often they did not fully comprehend the import of their utterings. Care must therefore be exercised in reading the prophets, for sometimes they jump from one subject to another, or from current to future events, without warning. A prophet should be regarded as a man who is as it were, studiously recording all that he sees through an adjustable telescope but who is not always aware that God has suddenly and briefly altered the point of focus, shortening or lengthening the range of the instrument, and running together current events with long-distance gospel-age predictions. Thus in most of the O.T. prophecies we get brief but ever recurring flashes or glimpses of the coming Saviour and His kingdom. This is particularly true of Isaiah who is sometimes referred to as the "evangelical prophet" and who said more about

the coming Christ than all the other prophets put together. Isaiah mentioned "the Remnant" many times and to such effect that he is quoted on the subject by Paul (in Romans).

The Remnant is mentioned advisedly some 50 times in the O.T., and many of the prophets mention it at least once. Isaiah wrote approximately 40 years before the captivity of the 10 tribes, and (over 100 years later) Jeremiah wrote about 40 years before the captivity of the 2 tribes, and both prophets describe these events and mention the Remnant. Daniel was actually one of the captives taken off to Babylon, as was Ezekiel 12 years later, and both describe their experiences and the return of "The Remnant". Jonah, Amos and Hosea wrote prior to the captivity of the 10 tribes, and Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah wrote prior to Judah's captivity. The last three books of the O.T., Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi describe the return of the Remnant and the post-exile period.

Space is obviously limited but there follows a small sample of the many references to the Remnant.

Isaiah 1:9 "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a **VERY SMALL REMNANT** we should be as Sodom, and we should have been as Gomorrah."

Jeremiah 23:3 "And I will gather **THE REMNANT** of My flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds: and they shall be fruitful and increase."

2 Kings 25:11 "And the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with **THE REMNANT** of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan, the Captain of the Guard, carry away."

Micah 2:12 "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee, I will surely gather **THE REMNANT** of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock in the midst of the fold."

Ezekiel 6:8 "And the slain shall fall down in the midst of thee, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Yet will I leave **A REMNANT**, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries."

Nehemiah 1:2 "Hanani, one of my brethren came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, **THE REMNANT** that are left in captivity are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down and the gates thereof burned with fire."

A large number of passages to like effect could be quoted did space permit, but these give some idea of God's strong commitment to the rescue of that ever small minority who, throughout all the years of Jewish idolatry and disloyalty, always remained faithful.

THE RETURN

As prophesied, Judah (2 tribes) remained in captivity for 70 years at the end of which period the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians (King Cyrus). God put it into the heart of Cyrus not only to release **THE REMNANT** but to assist them in the rebuilding of Jerusalem. "Thus sayeth Cyrus king of Persia, **The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His god be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God)**" (Ezra 1:2). Ezra, and others, continue to describe how the The Remnant trickled back to the Holy City, in various stages, and numbering the Remnant at 42, 260 (which may seem a lot but is very small compared to the original number of well over 2 million). The "Captivity" had merely been an "exile" in many cases, for many of the Remnant had flourishing businesses in Babylon, and some like Daniel achieved high office. The prophets deal mainly with the return of the 2 tribes but it must be assumed that a portion of the Remnant of

the 10 tribes also returned at this time to Jerusalem from Assyria. When we remember that Israel (10 tribes) had now been in captivity for over 170 years (more than two generations) we realise that only their grandchildren would be alive, and in many cases would have integrated with their heathenish captors. Certainly large numbers of Jews elected not to return to Palestine, and certainly the bulk of the 10 tribes are still reckoned as being lost. It is interesting to note, however, that when the Remnant had in fact returned to Jerusalem, and when religion there had normalised, sacrifices were offered expressly for **all 12 tribes** (Ezra 8:35); and when we come to N.T. writings (some 550 years later) we find that **all twelve tribes** are regarded as still subsisting and waiting on the service of God (see Acts 26:7). And James (1:1) writes **"to the twelve tribes scattered abroad."** And so, perhaps we can take it, that when The Remnant returned in 530 B.C. members of **all twelve tribes** were involved and included.

CONCLUSION

Paul mentions the Remnant twice (in Romans 9:27 & 11:5) and refers to them as evidence that God ever loves His people (Israel) and has always preserved a residue, however, small. Firstly he quotes Isaiah, viz. **"Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, though the number of the Children of Israel be as the sands of the sea, A REMNANT shall be saved,"** and, a verse later, quotes Isaiah's remarks that God did not destroy Israel utterly as Sodom and Gommorrah, but left to Himself a Remnant. Paul knew that this was not accidental but in strict accordance with the eternal purposes and strategy of God for did not Jesus, Himself, say that exactly 14 generations existed between Abraham and David; and 14 generations between David and the Captivity into Babylon; and 14 generations between Babylon and Christ (Matt. 1:17). We must also bear in mind that God, apart from His love for His people, had also to preserve a remnant of Jews, not only that Christ's birth be accomplished, but that his lineage could be traced down the royal line to King David. It must surely be a thing incredible, when we consider all the upheavals, national disasters, captivities, military defeats, and drastic reductions in population, which befell the Jews that the predetermined lineage ever survived intact.

In Paul's second reference to The Remnant (Rom. 11:5) he mentions the remnant in Elijah's time and says, **"Even so then AT THIS PRESENT TIME also there is a REMNANT accordingly to the election of grace."** Thus Paul brings the matter up-to-date. Paul is not here talking about some future millennium, but about his own **"present time"** and, using the analogy of **"The Remnant"** emphasises the fact that only a **small number** of Jews were availing themselves of Christ and His promises. Like their forefathers of old, the Jews were stiffnecked and still in a state of unbelief. They had not only rejected their Messiah: they had crucified Him. It was all their own doing and had been described most accurately in the words of Jesus, on His way to the cross, when He said, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate ..."** (Matt. 23:38). Paul's mention of Elijah was to show that God always has had a small band of faithful followers, a remnant, and that even when Elijah cowered in a cave, in fear of his life from hostile Jews, believing that he alone was left of the faithful and complaining to God about his predicament, God's answer greatly amazed him; **"I have reserved unto Myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal"**. And based upon that incident Paul adds, **"Even so then, there is at this present time a remnant according to the election of grace."** God has been the God of minority groups right from the time that only eight souls survived the flood. The world is impressed with large numbers and is quick to **"follow the crowd"**. The world also believes that there is safety in numbers and we even see advertisements which say **"Ten Million People Can't be Wrong"**. However Jesus warned that whereas many are called few would be chosen and also said, **"Enter**

in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it". (Matt. 7:13). Yes, God is the God of the remnant, not only of the past, but of the present. As Paul says, "Even so then **AT THIS PRESENT TIME** there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The days of national religion have gone and men are now saved on a completely personal basis, as individuals. Where even just two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, His presence is never absent, and there is rejoicing in heaven over just one sinner that repenteth.

EDITOR.

GLEANINGS

"Let her glean even among the sheaves." Ruth 2:15

"Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Peter 2:9 (R.V.)

MASTER

Resting on the faithful saying,
Trusting what Thy gospel saith,
On Thy written promise staying
All my hope in life and death,
Yet I long for something more
From Thy love's exhaustless store."

WE QUOTE - F.C. DAY

"Thus faith becomes a reality. We cannot remain unchanged. In our sins we are lost, God and sin cannot dwell together. The soul that sinneth it shall die. If I would live, I must be rid of my sin. God has determined to banish all sin from his domain. If I cling to my sin, I must be destroyed with it. If I would have life, then I must be separated from my sin. Praise His name! Jesus can do this for me and no one else can. **'Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'** (1 Timothy 1:15). Peter says (Acts 4:10-12): **'Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other Name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.'**

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Jesus Himself testifies to Thomas that He alone can do this for us (John 14.): **"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you: for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you unto myself: that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know the way. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest: how know we the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me."**

F.C. DAY.

SPREAD THE GOOD TIDINGS

"In a small mountain community the water supply ran low. One woman, however, had a deep well. All day long a friend watched as she cheerfully helped with the filling of all the buckets and pitchers brought to her house. Complimented on her glad

generosity, she indignantly replied, "Why, where in the world is there a person mean enough to have plenty of water and not be glad to give it to anybody that needs it!"

C. G.

HIS BEAUTY AND HIS LOVELINESS

"Living in a God-rejecting world, up against all the hard problems and facts of life, surrounded by the poisonous atmosphere of sin in the world, and apostasy in Christendom, the great purpose of the Holy Spirit's fullness is that the Lord might find in you and in me an agency through which He may express Himself; the beauties of the Lord Jesus, His glorious fragrance, emanating from us day to day, moment by moment, wherever we are, that others may know that the Lord Jesus is living within us. Thus He finds a means whereby He may show forth His beauty and His loveliness. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.""

Reginald Wallis.

MAKE ME CHRIST-LIKE IN ALL THINGS

"I am persuaded that nothing is thriving in my soul unless it is growing." "Grow in grace." "Lord, increase our faith." "Forgetting those things which are behind" ... I am persuaded that I ought to be inquiring of God for more humility, more purity, meekness, patience under suffering love. "Make me Christ-like in all things" should be my constant prayer. "Fill me with thy Holy Spirit."

R. M. McCheyne.

WE QUOTE — J.B. ROTHERHAM

"The God of heaven has made a communication to men on earth. That communication is in the form of a Message; and consequently requires, in the first place, to be faithfully delivered to those whom it concerns; in the next place, to be well considered by those who receive it; and, finally, to be answered in a manner suited to the nature of the message and the infinite majesty of Him who has sent it. Delighted to tell, the Message of God is altogether a thing of grace and gladness."

WE QUOTE — LANCELOT OLIVER

We wish to urge, in the first place, that what is called New Life, or simply Life, in the New Testament is not to be regarded as a mere figure of speech for a reformed life. Jesus said that He had come that men might have life, and might have it abundantly. "I am," He said "the way, the truth, and the life." He added words which shew His idea of life, "No man cometh unto the Father except by Me!" He regarded it as life that is life indeed, to come unto the Father. So He said, "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He evidently conceived our ordinary natural life as a temporary unreal thing, and union with God through Him as true life. John's account of the purpose of his Gospel takes the same view: "These signs are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His name."

WE QUOTE — SAMUEL HORTON

"Well, mis, yo' remember what the Apostle Paul says about being workers together wi' God. He conno ha' bin thinking about preaching so much as about the ordinary duties of life, because many of those to whom he wrote wonno preachers at all; and so, every morning, I remind myself that I've a great Partner in my business, and I say to myself, He likes order, for order is heaven's first law; and He likes beauty, so I will make my bit of the world as beautiful as I con: and He likes perfection; so, although I conno hope to reach perfection, even in roses, I will come as near to it as possible. It makes a wonderful difference if yo' remember that, and work together wi' Him."

WE QUOTE — H.G. HARWARD

"Christ is the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of the world, the King of Kings, the Ruler of earth and heaven, the highest interpretation

of the possibilities of humanity, the Salt of the earth, the Light of the world, the dawn of the light from beyond the grave, the fairest among ten thousand, the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon.

He is the Truth – all truth converges in him; he is the Light – all light radiates from him; he is the Friend of the friendless, the world's Example, the Judge of all men, the Leader, the Hope, the final Advocate of man." Because of what Jesus is, he claims your life, your love, your service. What then will you do with him?

Selected by Leonard Morgan.

A CONSUMING FIRE

Fire, in Holy Scripture, is quite often a type of the Holy Spirit. While minding sheep on Mt. Horeb Moses saw a bush afire. It is often referred to as "the burning bush" but it did not consume, but was aflame by the power of God. Moses' natural curiosity made him 'turn aside' to see this strange phenomenon, but was stopped in his tracks and told to remove his shoes. The place upon which he stood had become holy ground. Why had Moses to remove his shoes? It was a confession of personal defilement or unworthiness.

Shoes are earthly things, if not earthy things, and nothing of an earthly nature is to be allowed to come between us and God. Sometimes our prayers may be hindered, or we may be unsuccessful in our efforts for God, because the things of this world have not been removed, and have come between us and our God. To be servants of God we must be pure and true. No surgeon would use dirty instruments and neither will God.

We are all acquainted with the use God made of fire in the confrontation between Elijah, on Mt. Carmel, and the prophets of Baal. This contest between the servants of God and the forces of evil was also a testing-time for Elijah himself. The odds against poor Elijah were certainly enormous and apart from anything else he was outnumbered by 850 prophets of Baal. This confrontation between God and Baal is eternal and we must all emulate the courage and strength of Elijah, and each in our turn, put to flight the prophets of Jezebel. We notice that in the proceedings of that day Elijah began by "rebuilding the altar of the Lord that had been broken down." What a wonderful testimony. May it be possible that the same should be said of us when we leave this world – that we devoted our lives to rebuilding God's altars that have been broken down. The fire that God sent (1 Kings 18) destroyed not only the sacrifice but also the stones of the altar, and shows that God's fire can preserve (the 'burning bush') or can completely destroy.

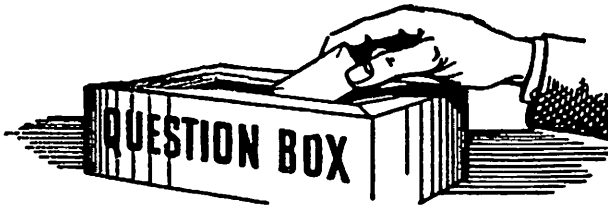
The 'one baptism' (Eph 4:5) is in water and the 'baptism of fire' is yet future, but at Pentecost God sent his Holy Spirit upon the apostles attended, it seems, in the fiery manifestation of 'cloven tongues, as of fire' alighting upon each one of them. The fire, and the noise, signifying the coming of the Spirit of God. This was a beautiful, if striking symbol of the burning energy and the immense power of the Spirit, now descending upon the Church and about to pour itself throughout the world to every tribe under heaven, on the tongues of the apostles. **Are we on fire for God?** Jesus had much to say about fire, yet said that He would spue lukewarm disciples 'out of his mouth.'

The appearance of fire and flame has always been regarded as the most awe-in-spiring emblems of God's power and divinity, not only in the case of the 'burning bush' but also when he descended on Mt. Sinai in the midst of thunders, and lightnings and smoke, and fire; vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. Until that time let us, in the service of God take the shoes off our feet and remember

that we tread on holy ground. Let us devote all our energies, like Elijah, to the building up the altars of the Lord which have been broken down, and let us be 'set on fire' for God.

O, Thou who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love,
Upon the mean altar of my heart.

T.H. Blackmore, Weston-Super-Mare.



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“Would you say that the Breaking of Bread service is the most important Meeting of the Church. I have heard a number of brothers say this when they have been presiding at the Table?”

As far as I understand – and I have not the slightest doubt that someone will correct me if I am wrong – the Meeting for the Breaking of Bread is the only one which is directly commanded in the Bible. This is when the church comes together for a specific purpose. I am well aware that the Great Commission says that we are to go into all the world with the Gospel, but this does not necessitate the whole church coming together. Our fixed Gospel Meeting is a very important Meeting provided that we have someone in to listen to the Gospel; it becomes relatively unimportant if this is not the case, and little effort is made to get people in. I am also aware that we have Bible Schools and Womens’ Meetings, but I find no scriptural warrant for these even though they may be necessary expedients. If we are to be really objective, then I believe we would have to say that without the event which the Breaking of Bread service portrays, there would be no need for the other Meetings which I have mentioned, So this Service is very important indeed, and I would like to discuss with you at some length why I believe this to be so.

I have attended Breaking of Bread Services for almost forty-five years, and during that time I have seen attitudes displayed by some Christians which have made me wince. Some have wandered in fifteen or twenty minutes after the scheduled time for starting; the same ones have done this quite regularly. Others seem to have wanted to get away so quickly that they have left their contribution with someone else, and immediately they have partaken of the emblems they have made an unseemly bee-line for the exit. Yet others have seemed so disinterested in what is taking place that they have spent all their time looking around at other people, or even talking among themselves. What has saddened me most has been to see Christians, who were obviously in some sort of dispute with each other, meeting around the Table, ostensibly worshipping the Lord, and yet completely ignoring each other. Brethren, such attitudes should not exist. When we meet to remember the Lord, **He is present with us**, according to His promise. The realisation of that should fill us with great joy, and also with great reverence. We do not meet exclusively because of command; we meet because of love for Him, and the fact that He is there with us should refine our attitude of loving adoration and worship. Why should this be so? Surely it is because the Breaking of Bread is a:—

FEAST OF REMEMBRANCE

When Jesus instituted His last supper with His disciples, Luke records, “**And he**

took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, **This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you**". (Luke 22:19,20). We in the Church have dissected these words with textual precision so that we should not do anything wrong at the Table; I do not quarrel with that, because textual precision when applied to the Word is necessary. But surely what the Lord was saying to His disciples was, quite simply, 'remember me'. But how could we forget you, Lord? Ah, but He knew how fickle was the fidelity of the disciples at that time. Impetuous Peter had said to Him, "**Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples**". (Matt 26:35), but after Jesus had been arrested in the Garden, v 56 records quite sadly, "**Then all the disciples forsook him and fled**". The Lord also knows how quickly we forget as well; how quickly we are engulfed with the cares of this life so that the memory of Him fades. In His wisdom He says to us remember me; come to the Feast and look into My face. You see those lines of pain and suffering? They were for you. But look closer still; you see the serenity and hope in My face? They are for you also. Come, remember Me and stay close to Me. All will be well'. How can we slight this gracious invitation. How can we slight this gracious Saviour and Friend?

FEAST OF THANKSGIVING

Oh, how our feet should hurry to be around the table with our Lord, to offer our heartfelt thanks for the wondrous blessings wrought for us by both Himself and His Father. Peter says that we are given great and precious promises, "**that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust**" (2 Pet. 1:4). Paul also, commenting on the Table, says, "**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread** (1 Cor, 10:16,17). We being many are one bread. We do not stay in our own homes, we come around the Table together, to be partakers of that one bread, the Lord Himself. It is the KOINONIA, the 'communion', and it is epitomised in the fellowship of the saints around the Table, sharing their Lord in the emblems of the bread and fruit of the vine; loving Him, praising Him, adoring Him, thanking Him. How dare we stay away wilfully from this Feast of Remembrance and Thanksgiving? How dare we come together with unwholesome thoughts in our hearts and minds?

The Hebrew writer says, "**We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.**" What shall we offer on our altar? After speaking about Jesus suffering outside the gate, he goes on, "**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. 13:10-15). Paul also on this theme, Says, "**present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable (spiritual) service.**" (Rom. 12:1). Yes, indeed! The hymn writer puts it quite succinctly, "Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee." At our Feast of Thanksgiving we say with fervent hearts, "**Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.**"

FEAST OF PROCLAMATION

Speaking about the Table Paul says, "**For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come**" (1 Cor. 11:26). Did you believe, dear reader, that when you meet with your fellow-saints around the Table that you are proclaiming the Gospel? And what a proclamation it is: let the Apostle explain, "**For I delivered unto you first of all (as of first importance) that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures**" (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Oh, what a Feast ineffable is this. Do you hear what the Apostle says; "**he rose again.**"

Our Feast with all its memories of the sacrificial offering by the Lord of Himself, with all of its attached blessings and promises, with all of its overtones of grace and love, **is only temporary**. It is preparing for the time when we shall Feast with Him in Heaven. The Good News which is proclaimed to the world is that the Lord is risen. Every time we meet around the Table we tell it forth. Brother, sister, never let your feet drag when you leave home to meet your brethren around the Lord's Table. Hurry there; the Table is spread, and the blessings are on the Table.

CONCLUSION

Remembrance, thanksgiving, proclamation, they are all there around the Table. Is the Breaking of Bread Service important? Well, what do you think, dear questioner? Fifty-two opportunities we have each year, God willing, to meet our Lord and our brethren around the Table. Let's not just resolve to be there: **Let's do it**. I feel I can do no better than end with a few words from the poet John Donne;

Since Christ embraced the Cross itself, dare I
His image, the image of His Cross deny?
Would I have profit by the sacrifice,
And dare the chosen altar to despise?
It bore all other sins, but is it fit
That it should bear the sin of scorning it?"

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
Winstanley, Wigan. WN3 6ES).

THE DENOMINATIONS

2. - THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

This is the ancient Latin speaking Church of the West with its centre in Rome, the ancient capital of the Roman Empire. It is often mistakenly spoken of as 'The Catholic Church' but no instructed person should so speak of it. The word 'Roman' should always be used in connection with its name, for it is the Church throughout the world which acknowledges allegiance to the Bishop of Rome. It is the largest of all Churches and less national than any other, including in its fold almost all races and nations of the world. At the time of the Reformation it lost heavily in Northern European countries, but since that time it has entered most of these countries again and made enormous gains. It is a Church which is many-sided, rich in so many things, apostate in so many others, and therefore difficult to describe. It gains immeasurably through the prevailing ignorance amongst Protestants of Church history, and through the prejudiced and inaccurate accusations which many Protestant agitators hurl against it. In the old days there was little to choose between an Orangeman and an Irish Nationalist, as I often feel there is little to choose between the methods of the Protestant Truth Society and of the Catholic Truth Society. Many Protestants are satisfied to know the New Testament and the history of their own denomination. They have no interest in the history of the Church and, therefore, when faced with a Roman apologist, they fail to distinguish between good and bad history, and are easily won over.

An Unfounded Claim

The Roman Church claims to be the Church founded by Peter and Paul in Rome, and claims that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome and that the Popes are his successors. There is no real historical evidence to prove that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, indeed there is a good deal of evidence to shew that episcopacy developed later at Rome than in some other centres. There is fairly reliable evidence that Peter was in Rome, but it goes to show that he arrived there later than Paul. That Peter had some kind of primacy amongst the Apostles is clear from the Acts, but that it was a primacy

based on Matt. xv,18,19, is denied by the fact that there is no knowledge of such an interpretation of this text for centuries. Even St. Augustine, in the fifth century, does not so interpret it. Such an interpretation is an afterthought on the part of the Roman Church. Moreover, Peter's primacy was that of an equal among equals as the New Testament plainly shows; neither is there any evidence during the first three centuries that it was communicated to the Bishop of any one See. The idea of the Papacy was of gradual growth, and the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome has always been resisted by the Churches of the East. The latest development of this doctrine takes the shape of Papal infallibility, a doctrine which was accepted by the Roman Church in 1870. Throughout the Vatican Council which accepted it, the doctrine was resisted by many Bishops, and as a result of its acceptance the Old Catholic Church split from the parent body.

The Reformation

The result of the Reformation in the sixteenth century was to cause Rome to define her doctrine more closely. Few people realise that there was far more freedom in the pre-Reformation Church than there is in the modern Roman Church. Especially is this so before the fourteenth century. During the Middle Ages there were many developments in doctrine and practice, and since the Reformation there has been some development in doctrine and a good deal in practice. Amongst post-Reformation doctrines made binding are those of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and Papal Infallibility. Generally speaking, the Roman Church is most rigid in doctrine where it is in the midst of strong Protestant opposition.

A Double Entity

To understand Rome one must understand that she is two things, not one. First there is ecclesiastical Rome with the richness of its devotional life, its culture and learning. Second there is political Rome with its open and hidden hand in every political move. The Roman Church rightly equates the Kingdom with the Church, but it thinks of the Kingdom as a political entity as well as a spiritual entity. The Pope, therefore, is invested with temporal as well as spiritual power. In countries where she is in a minority Rome generally stands for freedom of religious opinion. In countries where she is in a majority she does nothing of the sort. It is the subtlety of political manoeuvring which gives rise to the general Protestant suspicion of double-dealing on the part of every Roman Catholic. As applied to every Roman Catholic or to every priest, it is demonstrably false, but it is certainly created by Roman Catholic action itself.

True and false

No doubt Rome has preserved many things which belong to New Testament Christianity, as, for example, elements in her doctrine of the Church, her soundness on some of the great central doctrines of the Faith, her setting the Lord's Supper as the central act of Christian worship, her pastoral understanding. But mixed with this there is much that is pagan and superstitious, such as cults connected with the Blessed Sacrament and with images, doctrines of infant damnation and infant regeneration, Mariolatry, doctrines connected with purgatory and indulgences, the rigid domination of the hierarchy over the laity, and the like. The doctrine of transubstantiation, which dates from about the tenth century, has come to be associated with the belief that the priest *repeats* the One Sacrifice of our Lord every time he celebrates the Mass. This is a perversion of the New Testament doctrine of the real action of God in the sacrament, and of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which the Lord's Supper really is.

Diversity

It is a favourite plea of Roman Catholics that their Church shows a united front against the broken front of protestantism and the many voices of Protestant theologians.

This unity is no more than superficial. Within the Roman Church there are many different schools of thought, as between the Dominicans, the Benedictines and the Jesuits, and reform movements are not wanting. Laymen are beginning to play a more significant part. Some Churches like those of Spain and Latin America, are very ultramontane (i.e. lean heavily on Rome and on the Papacy). The Roman Church in this country is much the same. But others, like those of Germany and U.S.A., are far from being this. There has been much more fraternising between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Germany and Belgium than in any other countries. What will come of this? It is hard to say. But we can depend upon it that the Papacy, as at present constituted, will resist every movement to fraternisation and to serious reform. Still there are Jacques Maritain and Christopher Dawson and men like them, as there was once Baron von Hügel, and so far as union is concerned we should not be without hope of even this Church, whose history is a strange intermingling of good and evil.

W. Robinson.

COURAGE BORN OF COMMITMENT

The Christian life must be marked by conviction (Heb. 11:6). Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, came to the tomb of Jesus on the first day of the week. They had to be fully persuaded that Jesus was no longer there before they embarked on the commission to "go quickly and to tell" the good news of his resurrection. Conviction prepares us for the temptations of Satan and the trials of the world. It takes conviction to strap on any kind of armour. Taking up the shield of faith is courage born of commitment.

True commitment comes only after real conviction. Without genuine conviction we are like the plant that grew from the seed on stony ground. There is no depth of soil. The plant will soon wither and die under the heat of tribulation. The roots were never developed.

Christ calls for complete commitment of all who follow him. Anything less than full commitment will not provide the courage necessary for putting on the whole armour of God. Consequently, we will not be able to say, "**I have fought the good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith.**"

Jesus is our example of commitment. He was able to suffer and die because of the commitment to him that judges righteously. Because of Jesus our plight has been turned into light (1 Peter 2:21-25).

Where is your conviction? "**With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak**" (Eph. 6:18-20). That is courage born of commitment.

J. L. Roberts.

A THIEF OF TIME AND SOULS

A sober-minded person will not befriend a thief knowingly. We all want friends whom we can trust in every situation and at all times. He who is a thief of material values is loked upon with scorn and dis-favour. We avoid such and warn others about them. A thief is an outcast of society. Sooner or later if he does not repent he is imprisoned. Society refuses to tolerate or deal kindly with a thief.

Unfortunately there is a thief who dwells among brethren who not only is tolerated, but dealt kindly with. This thief is far worse than he who steals material values. He

is a thief whom the law cannot touch. Not once has he been arrested, and I am certain he never will. He has befriended good moral people. His thievery goes unnoticed by most because of those with whom he associates. He exerts a tremendous influence for evil, but still remains free to plague every believer in Christ. He is the devil's number one man. He is held in the highest esteem by the adversary of this world. He is a thief of time and souls! Children of God love him for providing them with excuses for not doing the Lord's will, but later hate him because he leaves them with a guilty conscience and a fruitless life.

At times this thief is a guest in every Christian's home. He is a frequent travelling companion of the saints. Whether we are at work or play, he is with us. Who is he? His name is "procrastination!" He has prevented more personal evangelism, Bible study and worship, and transformity of life than all other ministers of Satan combined. He who befriends him will be cast into outer darkness! (Heb. 3:12,13; John 9:4).

Selected.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

June 7	Job 42:	James 5:
June 14	Habakkuk 2:	Rom. 1:1-17
June 21	Genesis 19:15-29	Rom. 1:18-32
June 28	Isaiah 1:1-20	Rom. 2:1-16

JAMES CHAPTER 5

James in this chapter mentions two of the great characters of the Old Testament scriptures (Job and Elijah), whose lives should be studied to appreciate the comments. He speaks of the patience (Greek *hupomone*) of Job and recently at a Social at Newtongrange I took this word as the theme of my address. A more accurate translation of the Greek term is "steadfast endurance". In other words, it is not the patience which grimly waits for the end, but the patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.

We read, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (14-15). The late brother Tom Nisbet in a letter to me on this passage wrote: "The prayer of faith? This was a special faith; a miracle working faith; one of the spiritual gifts with which some in the church were endowed

in the days of miracles and before the complete law of liberty was written down which could make the man of God complete. Does anyone doubt that there was a spiritual gift called FAITH? See 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 13:2".

THE ROMAN LETTER

Author: the apostle Paul.

Date: about A.D. 57

Purpose: "The letter was to prepare them for his visit to their city and to explain the purpose of his visit; and he judged it wise while writing it to set before them a full statement of the gospel as he understood and proclaimed it". F.F. Bruce.

Main Theme: Justification by faith.

Rome: "Rome in Paul's day was the capital of an empire which stretched from Britain to Arabia. Wealthy and cosmopolitan, it was the diplomatic and trade centre of the then known world. There was constant coming and going. The Roman Peace made travel safe: Roman roads made it relatively swift and easy." (The Lion Handbook of the Bible.)

The Church at Rome: probably established by those Romans who had been converted on the day of Pentecost by the preaching of the apostle Peter (Acts 2:10).

Comments: Samuel Taylor Coleridge described the epistle as "the most

profound work in existence." F. Godet referred to Romans as "the cathedral of the Christian faith." Martin Luther said "it was the chief part of the New Testament."

THE GOSPEL AND FAITH

Paul wrote "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Romans 1:16,17 N.I.V.) The gospel is simply the "good news" that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). The word "power" is from the Greek *dunamis*, from which we derive such words as dynamo, dynamite and dynamic. One writer has said: "The power in the gospel is derived from the fact that the death of Christ removes from us the guilt and penalty of sin, while the resurrection provides for us hope which transcends the fear of death."

The preaching of the gospel results in faith. But what is faith? It is true that faith is the belief of testimony, but it is not mere mental assent to the veracity of that testimony. It goes far beyond this. It involves the surrender of self without reservation to him who is the object of faith. Faith in Christ is a pledge of allegiance to Christ. Inherent in it is the idea of trust which leads to commitment, the utter abandonment of one's self to another in the full confidence that what He has promised He will do.

Here are some passages to consider on faith: "Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see" (Hebrews 11:1, J. B. Phillips' Translation). "But without faith it is impossible to please God: for he who comes

to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have life through His name" (John 20:30,31). "Then said they unto Jesus. What will we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent" (John 6:28,29). "And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith . . ." (Philippians 3:9). "For whosoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith" (John 5:4).

THE GENTILE WORLD

Paul depicted an age when right and wrong were confounded; an age when violence was running amok; an age when things seemed out of control; an age of unparalleled immorality. One writer has said: "Vice did not stop with the crude and natural vices. Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. Fourteen out of the first fifteen emperors were homosexuals". What a catalogue of depravity is revealed in chapter one!

Three times we read that God gave them up. Why? because they gave up God. (1:24); because they deliberately forsook the truth of God and accepted a lie (1:25,26); and because they had not seen fit to acknowledge God (1:28). W. Carl Ketcherside has written: "Noteworthy are the strictures against homosexuality, effeminacy and lesbianism. Instead of these being regarded as exhibitions of liberty of personality they are branded as disgraceful passions, abnormal, unnatural, shameful horrors and

sexual perversity.”

THE JEWISH WORLD

The Jew in that day regarded himself far superior to any Gentile. In fact many a Jew thoroughly despised all Gentiles, believing that God had created them for the fires of hell. The Jewish approach to life was, of course, a legalistic one. He believed in justification by law. In the end, he condemned himself by his judgement of others.

Law can never bring justification to anyone. The weakness, dear reader, does not lie in the law, but in the human being. No one can live up to law perfectly because no one is perfect. But why was the law given? In simple terms, it was given to diagnose the disease (which was sin), but Jesus was the one who provided mankind with the remedy. Justification is now by faith in Him.

At one time I regularly read the Jewish newspapers and I must admit I feel very sorry for many of them. They are obsessed with all sorts of rules and regulations like whether or not they can eat smokey-bacon crisps: switch on a light on the sabbath day; press a lift button on the sabbath day; etc. The tragedy is that they are living B.C. lives in an A.D. world. A greater tragedy is that a lot of Christians today are trying to make it on similar lines. They think that God has transferred His people from one system of law to another system of law. To them, the New Covenant writings constitute a legal document which must be perfectly interpreted in every detail in order to obtain salvation. But Paul is clear in this epistle – we are no longer under law, but under grace.

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES

MANCHESTER (Bramhall Green): Please delete the Directory entry for MANCHESTER (Stretford) and insert the following:

MANCHESTER (Bramhall Green):

Bramhall Green, Guide Hall, Bridge Lane, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire. S.S. 10.30 a.m., B.B. 11.30 a.m.

Please contact us for details of other meetings.

Sec.: Stephen Worgan (P. Maureen),
10 Tollard Road, Cheadle Hume,
Stockport, Cheshire. SK9 7RD.
Tel. (061) 439 6326.

Tr.: John S. Purcell (P Margery),
3 Dale Avenue, Bramhall,
Stockport, Cheshire. SK7 2JP.

MANCHESTER (Bramhall Green): Things have been happening in South Manchester!

Having outgrown “The Green Hut”, what was formerly the Stretford congregation set about finding an alternative place to worship. As nothing appeared to be available in Stretford, we were forced to look further afield. Hence our re-location to Bramhall Green with effect from Sunday, 12th April.

A number of existing members live in and around Bramhall and we are enthusiastic about the opportunities and challenges presented by this move.

The congregation has also been considering methods of taking the gospel to the people. Since January we have been planning the launch of a correspondence course programme. We have decided to use the local free press to deliver reply-paid postcards offering a selection from the excellent courses written by Jim McGuiggan. Although one of the local free papers is delivered to almost half a million homes in South Manchester alone, we shall content ourselves with an initial distribution of 10,000 cards to homes in and around Bramhall!

We are also pleased to report that in recent months we have welcomed into our fellowship Song Tuen and Julia Tan from Singapore, and two new Christians, Bob and Chris Henshaw.

Finally, I wish to express a special “Thank you” to Alan Ashurst who, until recently, served as Secretary. The

church in Stretford began in Alan and Gretchen's home some twenty years ago and it is mainly thanks to their persistence that there is a congregation in South Manchester today,

Stephen Worgan.

HINDLEY, Wigan: The Elders of the Church of Christ, meeting in Argyle Street, Hindley, recommended to the Church, that Brother John Morgan, be appointed an Elder of the Church.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Church accepted our recommendation on March 8th, 1992.

Leonard Morgan.

OBITUARY

West Hallam, Derbyshire: We regret to report the passing of sister Edna Ashurst, 81 years, who was called home to rest on 27/3/92. She was immersed on October 3rd, 1985 and though failing in health she presented herself at the Lord's Table whenever it was possible. Our sympathies go out to her son Alan and daughter, sister June, in their sad loss.

W. Wheatley, Sec.

The shipwreck of some should be the sea-markers for others

COMING EVENTS

ANNUAL SOCIAL

(A note for your Diary)

The Newtongrange Annual Social will be held (God willing)

On Saturday, 10th October, 1992
(Details later)

NEW CUMNOCK SOCIAL

Saturday, 2nd May, 1992
at 3.00 p.m.

Speakers:

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell
Dean English, Livingstone

INTROSPECTION

To get his goodnight kiss he stood

Beside my chair one night,
And raised an eager face to me,
A face with love alight.

And as I gathered in my arms
The son God gave to me,
I thanked the lad for being good,
And hoped he'd always be.

His little arms, crept 'round my neck,
And then I heard him say,
Four simple words I shan't forget—
Four words that made me pray.

They turned a mirror on my soul,
On secrets no one knew,
They startled me, I hear them yet;
He said, "I'll be like you."

Author Unknown.

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