

A SERIES OF BOOKLETS IN
HARMONY WITH THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

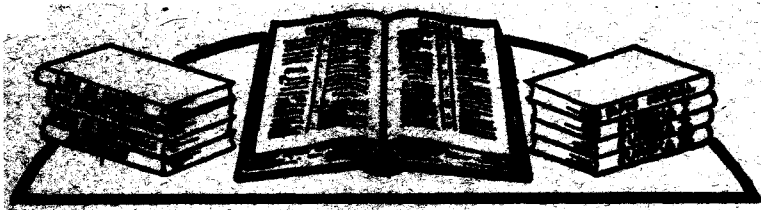
"ISRAEL SHALL
BLOSSOM AND
BUD AND



FILL THE FACE
OF THE EARTH
WITH FRUIT"
Is. 27.6.

No. 9

PREACHING TODAY



The Christadelphian community rightly claims to have the Truth concerning salvation. Our position is defined by precise beliefs involving the whole of the Bible. These were embodied in a Statement of Faith and The Declaration about a hundred years ago, and continue substantially unchanged to the present. It would appear that all things continue as they were. Nevertheless a process of change may be in train even though no change in formal definitions has been proposed. Important changes of emphasis can be taking place without any apparent conflict with basic statements. Such changes of emphasis will show up in our preaching, for we preach those things about which we are enthusiastic. With the autonomy of ecclesias, outlook will change in some places and not others, as illustrated by the differing states of the seven ecclesias addressed in the Revelation, ecclesias all within a circle of 50 miles or so. So it is that change goes on little by little unnoticed by many, and a rising generation is unaware of different standards and outlook of previous generations.

The intensity with which our convictions are held affects our presentation of Bible Truth. Where there is understanding and zeal such as Jesus had- "thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity"- the need is seen to expose the false as well as to unfold the true. Witnessing is never pleasant, and the strength to do this generally decreases as time goes on.

The time has come for each of us to examine our own state of mind, and the outlook of our local ecclesia.

PREACHING TODAY

by

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No. 9 of a series of booklets based on the Hope of Israel.

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CHAPTER ONE

PREACHING THE FULL GOSPEL

The revival of the full gospel

In the middle of the last century there had developed in this country a widespread interest and respect for the Bible. It was read in the home, read at school, its standards were widely accepted, and many people went to church or chapel. But people were still told the old falsehoods of heaven going, and a limited New Testament gospel of Jesus the saviour. The Old Testament stories were read with respect, but everything there belonged to the past, or were made into spiritual lessons.

On such a religious world the Truth was launched under the hand of God, through Brother Thomas. The true gospel requires the whole of the Bible, Old Testament, New Testament, including the book of Revelation. There is but one gospel unfolding with time. God is the God of Israel, Jesus is the king of Israel, the kingdom of God is the nation of Israel restored under her immortal king and princes. The words of the prophets are to be taken in their simplicity and literality:

"Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called the LORD (Yahweh) our RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Therefore, behold, the days come saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, the LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the LORD liveth which brought up and led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all the countries whither I have driven them: and they shall dwell in their own land". Jer.23.5-8.

In the plainest terms this prophecy is summarised and confirmed by the angel to Mary:

"He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end". Luke 1.32-3.

And Jesus himself confirmed this picture of the Kingdom of God:

"That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also

shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel". Matt.19.28

Paul's gospel rested on the same Law and the prophets:

"I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great; saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses say should come". 22 Acts 26.22.

"To whom Paul expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning to evening". Acts 28.23.

And when Paul carried the gospel to the Gentiles, it was the same gospel. Gentiles must be as wild olive branches graft into the good stock of Abraham, and hope for the eternal life in the land of promise:

"If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise". Gal.3.29.

This is the one true gospel brought to light again by Bro. Thomas in the last century.

This Truth leading to salvation was presented to the world in the book *Elpis Israel*, and it continues with us to this day as a foundation statement. In the second generation from Bro. Thomas, as the good seed of the gospel bore fruit, ecclesias were formed of those who had come out of darkness into light, and a witness against the apostasy of the churches developed. The power of this witness is reflected in the book *"Christendom Astray"*. Many have been guided to the Truth by studying its pages. As local communities were formed they adopted the word *"ecclesia"*, - a people called out. The contrast between the church and the children of God was as darkness to light. There was no mingling, no compromise. The call to all who became interested was *"Come out"*. There were no variants of the gospel - there is only one Truth. And that word *"the Truth"* was the frequently used phrase to define our position. The attitude of Paul was accepted. *"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed"*; and, *"God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness"*.

Another falling away

We are now 120 years or so from the emergence of the full gospel, and the absolute position held by the first few generations is not accepted by all. Especially in the last 20 years there has been an increasing tolerance towards the churches, and with a minority a degree of sympathy with some of their doctrines. There

are those who say we should not oppose the churches: they are preaching Jesus Christ to a godless world; this is a good work and we should cooperate with them as far as we can. The fashionable ecumenical movement is having its effect on us.

The change in our outlook, speaking of our community as a whole- though there are ecclesias that are exceptions- is shown in some of the titles used for public addresses: "Christian discipleship", "A christian in the 1970's", "Moral standards today". And often these are dealt with in a general way that never gets to the peculiar gospel Truth for which we stand. One can say afterwards, 'That could have been heard in a church or over the radio'.

The developing 'apostasy' in our midst can also be gauged by the false views of a small minority, which the rest of the community tolerate. It is not the purpose of this article to examine these false ideas, but a reference to them will make the point that a change is now taking place in our community.

The following points of summary will suffice:

1. The Old Testament is down-graded: the kingdom of God, as the restoration of the nation of Israel under Jesus, taught by the Old Testament prophets, is rejected. What is called the 'angry God' of the Old Testament writers is also rejected.
2. Emphasis is put on the church idea that 'the kingdom of God is within you'.
3. The Christadelphian body has no claim to special status in God's eyes amongst the various christian denominations.
4. Baptism is important but may not be essential: some not baptised are "Christ's children".
5. All christians possess the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit.
6. There is speculation about heaven-going.
7. The theory of evolution is espoused, which must gradually cause the Bible to lose its importance, and exalt the philosophy of men.

All these ideas may be found in recent issues of 'The Endeavour' magazine or its companion, the quarterly 'Christadelphian Newsletter'.

And the serious thing is, not so much that a small minority are bold enough to circulate such unscriptural ideas, but rather that nothing appears to be done about it; we as a community tolerate it. As we have said, the ideas just stated belong to a few and represent the extreme position. The moderate and general position will be a less developed reflection of at least some of the ideas, And because of the tolerant mood today, they will gradually gain support.

These matters must have an effect on our preaching. Because the full gospel and its unpopular truths is not being zealously maintained amongst us, neither will the full gospel be preached enthusiastically. Our preaching cannot have the force it should have, and we cannot expect the blessing of God upon it.

Jesus Christ the King

Can we find an overall definition of what is going wrong? We think so. What is happening is a narrowing down of attention to the gospels and the epistles; just as do the churches. This means that we are preaching Jesus as a saviour- as do the churches; and neglecting Jesus as KING. Jesus according to the true gospel is KING OF ISRAEL, and also KING OF ALL NATIONS. To understand Jesus as King of Israel we must understand and believe in the Old Testament; to understand Jesus as King of the whole world we must understand both the Old Testament and the book of Revelation.

In our beginning to neglect Jesus as the King, we are falling back to the attitude of the churches towards the word of God, neglecting the Old Testament and book of Revelation. Experience shows that these parts of the Bible contain features that men dislike or reject. And amongst ourselves, as new generations arise with less wholehearted devotion to the whole word of God, it may not be surprising that a similar attitude should appear.

Unpopular truths: selection, righteousness, judgment.

Why should we not all continue to rejoice in the whole Truth and present it enthusiastically? First, we note that a drift from the Truth of the gospel is the pattern of all history. After a revival of knowledge only a few generations pass before apostasy begins to show. And the reason for this is expressed in two scriptures;

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Is. 55 8,9.

"The carnal mind (margin 'the minding of the flesh') is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8.7.

In the light of such declarations of God, one must expect a falling away from his Truth.

But in more detailed terms, why does the natural mind dislike the purpose of God? In the context of our present consideration, why do religious people shut their eyes to God's purpose unfolded in the Old Testament? and why are some of the brethren doing likewise? There are quite a number of reasons.

1. DIVINE SELECTION: The gospel as unfolded in the Old Testament involves selection. God has chosen one nation, and no other; though he calls out from other nations individuals for salvation. The human mind rebels against this. In our time especially, when the rights and dignity of every man is to the fore, men will not accept the fact that God has not offered equal opportunity to all through the ages of history.
2. RIGHTEOUSNESS: The true gospel involves the government of the world according to the Laws of God; laws that will direct the daily lives of everyone. These divine standards are seen in the life of Jesus, not only in his holiness and uprightness, but in his rejection of human values, and the things held good by men.

"That which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God", Luke 16.15.

While men and women, especially those with some religious interest, approve of righteousness in general, they look at the matter differently when it is something to intrude into every part of daily life. The idea that Jesus should return with power to demolish the existing institutions of government, of church, and of social life, and rule instead according to the laws of God given through Moses to Israel, has no attraction.

This dislike is increased by the concept that the nation of Israel is to be the light source of this righteousness, that they are to be the holy nation, a nation of priests to the rest of the world. (Ex.19.16). As Isaiah prophesies:

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name". Is.62.1,2.

This Kingdom of God in Israel, as the basis of enlightening the world, only increases men's resentment against what they conceive as unmerited favouritism on the part of God.

3. JUDGMENT: Thirdly, a gospel that teaches Jesus as King of a restored nation of Israel, governing the rest of the world from Jerusalem, draws attention to the character of things under the original nation of Israel as the kingdom of God. From man's point of view God is severe- According to God's law adultery, homosexual conduct, worship of another God, means death (Lev.20.10, Lev.20.13, Deut.ch.13). Transgression against one's fellows invokes the rule of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", etc.. And on a wider scale, dealing with the wrong-doing of nations, God's severity in human eyes is frightening: "Slay utterly men, women and children" (Deut.20. 16-18) was the

requirement against those who inhabited the land of Palestine, and were sunk in depravity. In response to these things most people are bold enough to openly say that they do not want to have anything to do with the vindictive, angry God of the Old Testament; and as to the idea that Jesus will return to act in a similar way, they reject it as a slander on the name of Jesus.

So there is ample explanation as to why the churches shut their ears to the Old Testament part of the Word, and why there are some amongst us whose sympathies are going in the same direction. Moreover, because such an attitude is normal for the natural mind, we ought to admit that some thoughts in the direction we have been describing are not unlikely for any one of us.

Now in as far as the ecclesia is not wholly committed to the full gospel of Jesus as the coming King of Israel and the world, to this extent it is not equipped to preach. Conviction and whole-hearted acceptance of God's ways and God's purpose, must be the key to enthusiastic preaching, and the blessing of God on this work.

It is the whole-hearted acceptance of the Old Testament as of equal standing with the New that we are here concerned with. No brother will say directly that the God of the Old Testament is an inferior God, a different God, or that He can be accused of favouritism: it is basic to our position as a distinct community that we admit the consistency of the Old with the New Testament. But though we may give assent with our lips, we may have no enthusiasm in our hearts for the ideas. And if this is so, we shall not spend time on such matters, nor speak about them, or make them part of our preaching. We shall not justify the God of the Old Testament to our neighbours. Rather we will endeavour to change the meaning of scripture to suit our own ideas, - saying that Old Testament prophecies about the nation of Israel have to be spiritualised, and treated as allegories for instance; and we shall be tolerant to those who propound such ideas. In general we shall find ourselves ignoring a large part of the Old Testament writings.

Some may say this is making too much of our differences: we all really believe the same things and differences are only a matter of emphasis. In as far as this is so, it is nothing to be complacent about. Changed emphasis in due course will result in changed beliefs. Gibbon the historian describes the change of emphasis by which the belief of the kingdom on earth was gradually lost during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. In the 1st and 2nd centuries "it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers But when the edifice of the church was almost complete the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign on earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism". (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ch. 14). So today, over a few

generations, quite alarming changes of view become generally accepted.

The remedy

Today there is enthusiasm for preaching in many ecclesias: but if only a partial gospel is being preached, this cannot be acceptable to God. The remedy is a change of heart with regard to God's word. There must be a daily meditation on the Old as much as the New Testament writings, in humility and faith, ready to learn the plain meaning, as a child would do. Our mind has to be changed and brought into conformity with the mind of God, and this can only happen by continual contact with the Word in its detail, believing it all true and right, instead of looking critically by the standard of our own conception of things.

If we do this, we shall become so impressed with the power, wisdom and holiness of God, that we wholeheartedly accept what he required of Israel- when they conquered the seven nations inhabiting the land "slay man, woman and child"- was right, and in harmony with all the other attributes of God emphasised in the New Testament. We shall for instance ponder such a chapter as Numbers 31 where, after such a wholesale destruction carried out by Israel, we read:

"And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man to us. We have brought therefore an oblation for the LORD,... to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD". vv.49-50.

We must bow to the fact that as not one Israelite had been hurt in the battles, the providence of God was involved, and the situation was under the care of God. Again, we shall not criticise the Law of Moses as harsh and unchristlike, but take note of David's frequent references in his psalms to God's laws being perfect, and altogether good; and we shall with David, glory in His judgments and works of old:

"The works of the LORD are great, sought out of a // them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion...He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of his hands are verity and judgment: a // his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." Ps.111.2-8.

It is Jeremiah, the prophet of dreadful judgments on Israel who also reminds us of the "lovingkindness" of God: there is no difference between the God of the Old and the New Testament. God says through Jeremiah:

"let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness (RSV 'steadfast love'), judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD." Jer. 9.24.

'Understanding and knowing' God's lovingkindness could only come about by meditation in these Old Testament records.

We shall also note, by our careful reading, that the Law did maintain the same personal moral standards as Jesus did. In the original statutes and judgments given at Sinai, the Law said:

"If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under a burden, and wouldest forbear to help, thou shalt surely help him". Ex. 23.4-5.

And just as we appreciate the spirit here, we shall also come to recognise the properness of the civil law, in its aim to preserve a righteous society, declaring the principle emphatically stated at the end of Deuteronomy, ch.19:

"And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. And those that remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

A right spirit within us will accept Moses' dictum without reservation:

"What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deut. 4.8.

And to complete the whole matter, we shall by our constant study, appreciate that the rule of Christ will be similar to the picture we receive from these Old Testament writings. Although his first coming was in meekness and not exercising judgment, he will return as ruler for God, to rule and judge in the same way as God has done in the past.

"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea". Is.11.4,9.

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the

rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies...The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." Ps.110.1.5.

When over the years our minds have become attuned to the ways of God, and we have given up thinking as men think, we shall find ourselves wanting this rule of God that men reject; wanting it because we love righteousness as God loves righteousness, and we see in this coming severe rule of Christ the only effective restraint for man's evil ways. The national regeneration of the nation of Israel as the coming light of the world is seen as a plan of wonderful wisdom and glory and blessing. The believer loves these things and echoes the words of the Psalmist:

"Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof". Ps.102.13-14.

Like Abraham of old, they look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, they are persuaded of them, and embrace them, and confess that they are but pilgrims and sojourners on the earth. Heb.11.10,13.

Our preaching will only be effective when we get back to this Abrahamic understanding of God's purpose, and do so with understanding and love. Enthusiasm for the Hope of Israel will then be a banner held up for men to see. We might ponder the appropriateness of the title Bro.Thomas took for his book that sets out the true gospel - "Elpis Israel" (i.e. The Hope of Israel).

Preaching Jesus as King of all nations.

Just as our understanding of the gospel is incomplete without the Old Testament picture of Jesus as King of the Nation of Israel, so it is incomplete without the wider picture of Jesus as King of the whole world. The prophets declare that all nations shall come and worship before him:

"At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem". Jer. 3.17.

"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee O Lord and shall glorify thy name." Ps.86.9.

Paul brings this into perspective when he quotes Isaiah 45.23, and relates it to Jesus:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil.2.9-11.*

The book of Revelation shows us how this comes about. The Revelation gives us facts of how Jesus becomes the King of all nations; it tells us how he has been controlling the nations for centuries preparing the way for his universal rule; it gives great detail of the situation when he returns, and gives an insight into the hostility of men and rulers to the will of God. This is all part of what we call "the Truth". The book of Revelation is as much part of the word of God as all the other inspired books that make up the Bible. To read it regularly and not understand it is unprofitable; not to read it is to despise the word of God. This does not mean that someone desiring to be baptised must understand the detail of the book of Revelation. As in all fields of education, one passes from the simple to the more complex and difficult: so in spiritual things. But it is essential that we progress in our understanding of the divine Will. We have to pass from babes in Christ to the full stature of the man in Christ Jesus. So much in the book of Revelation are themes taking their meaning from previous scriptural matters, that understanding the book of Revelation naturally takes its place as we progress in our studies. It must be the object of all who love God's word to attain to a fair understanding of this last message; especially so when we remember the insistence of this by God himself in the opening words,

"Blessed is he that readeth... and they that keep those things which are written therein".

We ought to read the Revelation with the same love and concern as we do the gospels. It is a message of our Lord and Master to his brethren: it is his last message; it is a message about himself.

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass", ch.1.1.

Here is a book about the revealing or apocalypse of Jesus; how he is to be 'revealed' in the earth; the long process of history by which he will ultimately be seen by all as the great king. As the Revelation draws to a conclusion he is seen in chapter 19: "He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written King of Kings, and Lord of Lords", ch.19.16. This is the "apocalypse" of Jesus. If we are interested in Jesus, we must be interested in his 'apocalypse' in this earth. All our hopes rest on this. It is a great mistake to think we need not bother about what is written here.

The book of Revelation is probably of more importance to us than to any previous generation. We are living in the period when all its promises and warnings reach their climax. It may surprise some to realise two thirds of the Revelation – fourteen out of its twenty two chapters – deal with the time of his return and the setting up of the kingdom. We live in this time, and the Revelation is in

a special sense OUR book – given specially for us.

This thought that the Revelation is a book specially for us leads one to express gratitude that at the END the vision has spoken to take the words from Daniel. We are not in darkness as to the meaning of this book of symbol. After Brother Thomas in the good hand of God had understood the Hope of Israel as the gospel for the Gentiles, he was led on to a piecing together, and an explanation, of this book. With his help we can not only look back and marvel at so much history condensed into brief symbol that has already been fulfilled; but we have a key to present events, and God's view of man's present behaviour; and from our vantage point near the end of history, we can see the outline of the startling events that lie ahead. So we can be assured and enthusiastic about his imminent return.

We do not expect preaching from the platform to expound the book of Revelation. Nevertheless an understanding of the book materially affects the character of our preaching. In particular, those attuned to the book of Revelation will know that the God of judgment of the Old Testament is unchanged in the book of Revelation, and they will be warning people of the approaching day of judgment at the hands of Jesus, returned in power to establish the righteous throne of the God of Israel. A reference in our preaching to Jesus Christ as the great warrior-King in chapter 19 is quite appropriate.

Many of our stalwart speakers of an earlier generation made various references to the last message of Jesus in their public addresses. But whether we do this or not, an understanding of the book by the speaker is part of his equipment to be a preacher.

For a brief insight into the Revelation there is the third section of *Elpis Israel*. A full explanation is given in the three volumes of *Eureka*, and simpler presentations in "Thirteen Lectures on the Apocalypse", and "Apocalypse and History". All these books are still in print, and although a few pages are out of date because of the application of symbols to events in the last century that we now see belong to a later date, the exposition is, in principle, still valid. It is a sad feature of our times that an understanding of this book, intended to encourage us in our watching, is today made more difficult, because of the confusion that has been brought about by new (rather revived old) theories put forward by prominent brethren, that distract from a right understanding of the book.

A misunderstanding regarding the apostles' preaching.

Acts chapter 8, describes the eunuch's confession to Philip: "*I believe with all my heart that Jesus is the Son of God*", and his baptism thereupon. Acts chapter 16, describes the jailor at Philippi attending to Paul's wounds, and after listening to his preaching, he and all his house were baptised straightway – all during the same

night. From such scripture it is popularly believed that a simple acceptance of Jesus as saviour is the necessary preliminary for baptism. Where, it is asked, is there the evidence of a lengthy instruction about the kingdom of God, as set out in the Law and the prophets? This is the sort of question some brethren are now asking.

There are two parts to the answer to this question. The first is that God does not repeat in the New Testament records what He has fully covered in the Old Testament; He expects us to make use of the Old Testament record. The second is that there is ample evidence that the apostles did preach from the Law and the prophets about the Kingdom of God. This resting on the Law and the prophets was the essence of Paul's defence on several occasions. He said to Agrippa:

"Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses say should come".

To the Jews at Rome:

"He testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning to evening". Acts 28.23.

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him". 28.31.

Such scriptures as these have been used for generations to justify Christadelphian preaching of the kingdom of God from the Law and prophets.

What then of the eunuch and the jailor? Of the eunuch it is apparent from the record that he already knew the Law and the prophets. He was a regular reader of the Bible. He so appreciated God's work in Israel that he had come to worship at Jerusalem. He only needed instruction that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and saviour. As to the jailor, we should note that Paul had been preaching "many days" in Philippi (v.18), and therefore we may conclude that the jailor had already heard, though without a proper understanding, about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

We must always keep in mind that the Law, the psalms and the prophets were the only scriptures in the days of the apostles. If James said: *"Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls"* (James 1.21); if Peter said *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby (1 Peter 2.2);* if Paul said to Timothy: *"From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3.14)*—they were all referring to what we call "the Old Testament". This surely

is sufficient to urge us to pay the same attention to what is there written.

CHAPTER TWO

PREACHING AS A WITNESS

The example of Jesus

It is necessary to distinguish two aspects to preaching; what may be regarded as two sides of the same coin. There is on the one hand the bringing of men and women to repentance and the way of salvation; there is on the other hand the defending of the honour of our God, the God of the Bible, the God of righteousness, the God of Israel. Jesus himself illustrates these two sides of preaching. To those who genuinely followed him he gave the gracious words of life everlasting; but he denounced the leaders of the people as whited sepulchres, and deceivers of the people. On one occasion he was stirred to anger by the way men made merchandise out of God's arrangements for worship. Jesus himself testifies to the character of his preaching. John in his seventh chapter records:

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him....Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil". John 7.1, 6-7.

Jesus spoke these words after nearly two and a half years preaching. The gospel records do not tell us much about his testifying of the evil of the Jewish world during this part of his ministry, but such is Jesus' own summary. Their growing hatred was partly envy and partly their smarting under his "uncharitable" words. Obviously the Pharisees, scribes and rulers did not like being told that their works were evil, but this did not deter Jesus. He was faithful to his Father and jealous for his honour. In the last week before his crucifixion his denunciation was terrible-read Matthew chapter 23. This was appropriate to the circumstances, and this is important. We must learn when the circumstances call for gracious words, and when they call for true witness on behalf of God.

The same two sides are found constantly in the attitude of the prophets to Israel. They showed the mercy and good promises of God, calling people to repentance; they so often denounced the unfaithful and selfish ways of the shepherds of Israel. What they said was in harmony with the character of God revealed to Moses: on the one hand

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth",

and on the other:

"for the LORD whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God".

Again, a reading of the Acts of the Apostles shows just the same two sides: the offer of salvation to the repentant, the charge against the rulers of "wicked hands", "betrayers and murderers".

Witness against "principalities and powers"

Paul called upon all believers to take part in this witness. In the last chapter of his letter to the Ephesian brethren, he presents the believer as a soldier equipped with both defensive armour, and also with a sword for attack:

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the world rulers of this present darkness". Ch.6. 10-12 RSV.

In this warfare the feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the breastplate is righteousness, the shield is faith, the helmet is salvation, and the sword is the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And as in the other circumstances we have looked at, the warfare is against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the present darkness. Paul describes himself as such a warrior to the Corinthian brethren:

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." 2 Cor.10.3,6.

Such a warfare seems strangely absent today. No one would say we are contending with principalities and the powers of darkness in the forceful way described by Paul. Our strength and courage generated by faith, are at a low ebb. Attacking an enemy with the sword of the spirit has little approval. It was different with our brethren of a previous generation. In the last century the brethren were willing to show their hostility to the institutions of the world around us, as the early literature of the Christadelphians shows. This is illustrated by two early pamphlets that were in print up to the 2nd world war: "Who are the Christadelphians?", and, "The sect everywhere spoken against". The first half of "Who are the Christadelphians?" is a reprint of a letter of Bro. Thomas to a bi-weekly paper The Rock, and the second half is a dialogue headed "Contending for the Faith, Jude 3". The introductory note reads: "The following is given as a sample of the arguments by which Christ-

adephians have been converted, and by which, in turn, they seek to convert others from the 'error of their ways'. It is the substance of a correspondence that actually took place. 'A' is the well-meaning adversary -compare Paul's case, Acts 22.19-20, 1Tim.1.13 - and 'C' is the Christadelphian writer." An extract from page 2 of this dialogue is as follows:

A - The peculiar views of the Christadelphians on which they lay so much stress, they are of course at liberty to believe; but why do they question everyone's faith who does not see eye to eye with them? In all their printed documents there is an intolerable tone of hostility and uncharitableness towards those of a different faith from their own.

C - You mistake the tone of the printed documents. It is a tone of hostility, doubtless, but not in a personal sense. It is hostility to unscriptural doctrines and principles as we conceive. We have no enmity to persons, but great enmity to principles and systems which we believe to be subversive of the truth which God has revealed to man for his salvation. Surely you would not object to this, if that belief is well founded?

Such boldness is disapproved by many today. But if we check ourselves against the pattern of the Master, and the other illustrations we have given, it is apparent which of the two attitudes is the correct one. It would be better for us if it could be said of us, as of our Master, that we are hated. But people will not hate us through our keeping silence.

Insufficient love of God

There may be some who are ready to witness against the world because they are naturally of a combative spirit; but this is not what God wants. Very few brethren are of such a spirit; most are quiet and peaceloving, and need to be stirred up and convinced of the necessity, before being willing to face the unpleasantness of witness. Our lack of willingness is probably a lack of sufficient love of God. We love God according as we know Him, and we know him to the extent that we ponder his word. We need a greater appreciation of God's ways: his wisdom, his power, his holiness, and his demands of his creatures. Then when we see the disregard men show, in the realms of science, religion, and government; when we are faced with the scorn and godlessness of men's conversation, we shall be stirred to stand up for the honour of our God. How can we keep silent when he who is our Father and friend is ignored, scorned, dishonoured, misrepresented, on every hand? Suppose it was our earthly father or friend who were so treated, should we say nothing? Surely we would speak up on their behalf. Why do we not do so on behalf of God? We need to purify our hearts, cleanse them from worldly affections, get nearer to God and his ways, so that we can

"Love the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul and strength"; then we should be more outspoken against the leaders of science, religion, and government, and the ways of the world in general. We remember how Jesus' feelings were aroused for the honour of his Father:

"Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up". John 2.16-17.

Although we have not the authority of Jesus, we should cultivate his spirit. It is both love of our neighbour and love of God to expose the deceit and falsehoods perpetuated by the leaders of the nation. This is letting the light of the truth shine, so that darkness may be dispelled, and men turn from their trust in human guides, and stand fast on their own understanding of the Word of God.

The value of opposing error

There are those who propose that stating positive truths - "the good news" - is all that is necessary. It would be pleasant if this were so. But this does not correspond either with the word of God or with experience of life. If like John the Baptist, and like the disciples sent forth by Jesus, we call men to repentance- ("And they went forth and preached that men should repent", Mark 6.13)- we must make clear what they should repent from and what they should turn to. What is wrong must be understood before one wishes to do right.

So when we today witness for God our words are directed to those things that are false in the philosophies and ways of men. We bring the light of God's Truth from His word to bear on contemporary matters: on the theory of Evolution denying the God of creation; on Church doctrines of everliving souls, Jesus the ever existing God the Son, and the fancies of reward in heaven; on the laws of the land that condone immorality; on education systems that do not bring God into the life of the child, etc. This witnessing is right and necessary in several ways. In the first place it is, as we have said, loving our neighbour. If we desire to bring him into the Truth of God and the hope of salvation, it is necessary to make him see that his existing ideas are false and useless. People will not turn to truth while they remain attached to the ideas they have grown up with. Religion in people's minds is not just so many "facts", it is a system of interlocking parts, with social and emotional features, and conviction and trust in this is not easily broken. A clear exposure of error and of the false character of church and political systems is essential. To use an analogy, if we want to erect a new building on a site we must first clear away the derelict building that is on the site. So it is with the buildings men erect in their minds. We must of course be careful how we set about this

clearing away of the old and useless. In things that belong to the heart and the mind, one cannot take the line of smashing away at the wrong, and after that presenting the right. No. A balanced presentation is important. In the figure of the building site, the architect must be there with the plan of the new building, to show how much better it will be than the existing one, and as the old is demolished he encourages with the picture of the new.

There is another usefulness in dealing with error: it is the way to gain attention and genuine interest. A positive statement about the promises of God and His purpose in the earth may be listened to as an interesting opinion, but usually has no further effect upon the listener. Not until one contrasts human views with divine views, and insists that both cannot be true, is real interest aroused. In the first place it is probably resentment that is aroused, but this one should regard as a barrier that has to be surmounted. The right type of mind will be stirred to action and investigation. This is the selective power of the Word. God's call is for suitable people. We must do our part with courage and persistence, if we wish to be of real use to men, and receive commendation from God. If we were more challenging in our public lectures today, we almost certainly would be more effective.

To those who do not like the idea of directly dealing with error, it may be pointed out that in all fields of learning, correcting error is an important part of learning. This starts at the earliest age: when the child is learning to count, it is the number missed out that has to be emphasised. And for the student, it is the wrong answers that need attention. Throughout life, much of our learning is learning by our mistakes.

If in ordinary learning getting to grips with that which is wrong is a proper rule, how much more so in the case of teaching the Truth of God. In the things of God men have a natural bias to the wrong. Men readily accept wrong things as right, as for instance in the widespread acceptance of Evolution. Paul tells us that

"The carnal mind (Greek- the thinking of the flesh) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be". Rom.8.7.

This means that men do not naturally think in harmony with God's thoughts. Men's ideas of law, education, religion, social behaviour, etc., have been worked out over the centuries by "the thinking of the flesh", and they are to the liking of his mind and affections. God's laws, purpose, promises and way of life appear strange and unattractive. So if we would plant the truth in someone's mind, we have to give attention to his natural inclinations and conceptions. The false must be dealt with before the true can be accepted.

The Bible itself puts quite an emphasis on wrong things as well as right things. How frequent is the instruction "Thou shalt not", thus high-lighting that which is wrong or evil. Eight out of the Ten Commandments are such negatives. The Roman Catholics have to tamper with the word of God, to remove one of the Ten Commandments in order to worship images.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

The very first commandment from God in the Bible is a check on wrong-doing:

"Thou shalt not eat of it".

Jesus endorses the importance of "negatives" when telling the young man what to do to gain eternal life, - four out of the seven commands contain 'thou shalt not'.

The conclusion must be that we ought not to trust in our own judgment as to how we preach, but that we learn carefully from God's word what He would have us do. Dealing with error is not unprofitable, but is an essential part of preaching.

Every age has its peculiar witness

Our witness for God has to be appropriate to our contemporary situation, as well as maintaining the standards of God that do not change from one generation to another. Consideration of the word of God shows that the kind of witness special to a particular age has been laid down by God. John the Baptist's task was to announce the coming of the King and to call the nation to repentance:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven (Emphatic Diaglott- 'Royal Majesty of the Heavens') is at hand". Matt.3.3. He warned of the coming judgment: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire". V.10.

The preaching of Jesus and his disciples goes a step beyond this and declares, the King is here:

"Nor shall they say, 'Behold here, or there' for behold the Kingdom of God ('God's Royal Majesty') is among you", Luke 7.21.

Jesus declared those fearful judgments about to come upon the nation:

"For these be the days of vengeance that all things that are written may be fulfilled;... for there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath upon this people". Luke 21.22,23.

The distinctive preaching of the apostles after the resurrection was in giving a final warning to the nation that the end was near, and offering an escape to all who joined themselves to Jesus Christ. They were commissioned to a very precise witness by Jesus, as recorded in John 16.8-11:

"But if I depart, I will send him (the Holy Spirit) unto you. And when he is come; he will reprove the (Jewish) world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged".

The 'prince of this world' was the rulership of Israel which was about to crucify Jesus. When we read the Acts of the apostles we see the apostles making this witness before the nation, and particularly before the High Priest and Sanhedrin, and many miracles established their authority. To those who felt convicted of sin, there was righteousness available through the name of Jesus Christ; but to the unrepentant leadership of the nation there was the wrath of God. This they understood:

"Behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us". Acts.5.28.

Again, the apostle Paul had his special commission and witness. He had to project the light of the gospel into Gentile darkness, still presenting the two sides of the coin, hope of salvation and "wrath to come". So Paul says in writing to the Thessalonians:

"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come". 1 Thess.1.9,10.

There was wrath to come, not only upon the Jewish nation, but upon the Roman world for its wickedness. Paul refers to this in his letters to the Ephesian and the Colossian believers:

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be named among you, as becometh saints; ...Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience". Eph.5.3,6.

Our peculiar witness

We might expect that there should be a peculiar witness for our times, as there has been in the past. We are at the end of the Gentile times, as John Baptist and the apostles were at the end of the Mosaic times. They proclaimed the matters concerning the first

coming of Israel's king and a day of judgment; our situation is similar and we are called to proclaim the return of Israel's king with power, and another day of judgment. Ours is as solemn and challenging a message as their's - the wickedness is so great that an end of the present order is decreed: save yourselves from this generation.

God has put on record the state of things in our time and detail of the dreadful time of trouble ahead in the outpouring of the final 'wrath of God', - see Revelation chapters 15 and 16. But before turning to the scriptures for our instructions, let us make an assessment of the world around us, so that we may the better appreciate the instructions.

Britain today

Although this detailed assessment is limited to Britain, it is representative of conditions in other English speaking countries where the brethren and sisters live. The overall picture is an appalling decline in so many spheres, from the standards of the last century. Basically the Bible has been thrown overboard, and the predictable consequences have followed.

In the last century the Bible was respected and parts at least were read by many people, including those in responsible government and by the queen. It could be said for this country that the Bible was accepted nationally, it was included in the education of children in the schools, its basic Ten Commandments were recognised as God's standard and imposed moral restraint; its 'christian principles' brought a degree of honest dealing, co-operation and fair play (though in the new industrial centres there was greed and oppression). Britain was still the bulwark of Protestantism which insists that the Bible alone is sufficient for salvation. Early in the century there were various non-conformist movements by people dissatisfied with the Established Church, seeking a better understanding of the Word of God and getting nearer to primitive christianity. Bickersteith in his book on prophecy in 1839 lists more than twentyeight books written between 1800 and 1839 on the second coming of Christ. The high water mark of national interest in the the Bible was probably about the middle of the century, when Bro. Thomas set forth the true gospel.

But other forces were gathering strength during the nineteenth century. There was the spirit of unbelief of the scientific mind, expressing itself in the theory of human Evolution; there was the Higher Criticism of the Bible centred in Germany, looking at the text minutely, and pulling it to pieces; there was thirdly the steady progress of Roman Catholicism. This progress was possible because of the growing spirit of tolerance in this country, in response to the spirit of the French Revolution in France, and public opinion yielded step by step to the pressures of the scheming Catholic

church. All these forces were undermining the authority of the Bible.

It was at the turn of the century that the Church of England began publicly to express its scepticism about the full inspiration of the Bible. This spirit of unbelief, increased by the pressures of the theory of Evolution, has worked through the 20th century to destroy the authority of the Bible, and man's responsibility to the Creator. The Bible is now largely regarded as a book of myth, morals, and history, with hardly any greater authority than books of human origin. The great extension of higher education, the coming of the scientific age with a multiplicity of inventions and industrial developments, the increased personal possessions of most men and women, has bred a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency in people, and a disinterest in the idea of a Creator. So the masses of people have been ready to follow the lead given them by the Church and Science'.

The three destructive forces we identified in the last century continuing to develop in the present century have produced three classes of people. First we see today a class of people still claiming to be 'christian', who have listened to Higher Criticism, and now largely ignore the Bible. They have replaced its teaching by a gospel of their own making, - a kind of atheistic christianity which is almost entirely concerned with human needs, and the well-being and betterment of society(1). Their philosophy is a kind of Humanism, and its viewpoint is such that it can adapt itself to the permissive society of today, and such blasphemy as 'Jesus Christ Superstar'. (2)

Many of the church leaders are in this movement. Those who are more conservative and frown on the permissive society, nevertheless concern themselves with man's needs and the social life of the community, with little attention to man's responsibility to God.

Secondly, there is a big proportion of men and women who would say they have no religion; human Evolution could be said to be their religion. They accept Evolution without any good reason; they believe it because they want to do so; it rids them of responsibility to a higher power. How perverse human nature is, for God has left them without excuse. With the diligence of many thousands of scientific workers, the wonders of nature are being revealed in a continuous stream of almost unbelievable 'miracle'. There is such precision, such intricacy in nature, such startling interdependence of one plant or creature on another, that all cries out that there

Footnote

1. See "Never before in the history of the Church" B. Schlink.
2. See "Jesus Christ Superstar, or Saviour and Lord". J.A. Coleman.

must be a Master mind. (3) Yet with all this increase in knowledge; with lack of evidence for genuine major evolution growing more apparent as the years go by; with so many observations that contradict the evolutionary explanation, – still the theory holds almost universal sway. How blind, how godless is the natural mind. If Paul could write in the first century:

“For the invisible things of him from the creation are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse . . .”
(Rom. 1.20).

How much less are men without excuse today. And the description of society Paul gives at the end of Romans, chapter one, repeats itself today. The effect of evolutionary teaching is to produce a generation that has no fear of God, no gratitude, and no moral standards. We see a rising generation that express themselves in envy, greed and violence. When seen in mass action they are an alarming power; they are the spirit of anarchy. “Loving their neighbour” has little place in their philosophy, still less honouring God.

And the third destructive force is that of Roman Catholicism. Its progress has been rapid as the Bible’s power has waned. Men have been intoxicated by Babylon’s cup. Men are easily attracted to Rome’s ritual, superstition and mysticism. Man was constituted at creation with moral faculties so that he should be able to fear, worship and obey the Creator, and these innate qualities seek scope in a desire to worship, a desire for emotional experiences, a desire for some insurance against the fear of the unknown, such as death. Roman Catholicism meets these needs; it has been evolved over many centuries – its roots are in the apostacy of the original Babylon – and it provides just these elements that the natural mind accepts. It also gives satisfaction by its convenient doctrine of confession and absolution, providing an easy ridding of the conscience of guilt, that sin may continue. It is also pleasing to many people to rest on the authority of the Church so that they do not have to concern themselves with discerning right and wrong.

In the short space of half a century Roman Catholicism in Great Britain has progressed from a membership measured in thousands at the turn of the century to a claimed four and a half million today. This progress has been possible, as we have said, because Church leaders and the public have turned from the Bible. Rome’s evil doctrines of the priest’s transformation of the wafer into the real Christ, of Mary the queen of heaven as the better intercessor than Jesus; of the worship of Mary; of the confession of sins and absolution by priests; of the system of penance with its vast money

Footnote

(3) See “Evolution the unproven hypothesis” T. W. Carron;
“The finger of God”. D. A. B. Owen. (out of print)

making, and the ridiculous claim of the Pope to speak infallibly – all these things no longer strike horror in the heart of the Englishman. Why not? Because he no longer reads the word of God. And with her usual subtlety, as the Protestants have lessened their interest in the Bible, Rome has given her apparent support to the Bible, thus disarming the opposition of conservative Protestant elements, and winning general approval.

There are other factors that have contributed to the rapid progress and changed image of Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church has always operated as a political power, and this has been so in Britain. She has obtained an astonishing grip on the life of the community. Catholics hold high positions in the BBC, they are editors of newspapers, they control much of the film making. So they are able to mould public opinion in favour of Catholic interests, and to create a favourable image of the Church. Journalism, bookpublishing, education, the judiciary, are all regions of special attention and growing control by Catholics. Also all Catholics are instructed to be active in local government, in trade union committees, in guilds and employers' federations. The activities of all these loyal Catholics in so many fields of social and political life are all under the guidance of the Catholic hierarchy, and its ultimate control from the Vatican (4). The extent of this national progress is probably shown in Britain joining the Common Market. Despite a national instinct bred through centuries to be isolated from Europe, making the people generally unwilling to take such a step, propaganda has carried the day. For the time being Britain makes herself part of that beast, full of the names of blasphemy and ridden by the harlot. Rome's intoxicating wine has destroyed faith and wise judgment. And Britain must suffer for her apostasy.

The progress of these three evil forces – the Higher Criticism of the Bible text, the philosophy of human Evolution, and the Roman Catholic religion – has brought Britain to darkness and disgrace. It may seem strange that apparently opposite systems such as Evolution and Roman Catholicism should progress side by side. But human nature easily swings from anarchy to religious experience. If ideas of Evolution find response in the more animal qualities of man, Roman Catholicism calls forth his depraved but not extinguished moral qualities. In any case, there is not the antagonism between Roman Catholicism and Evolution that there might seem to be. Rome is skilled at making use of other forces than her own, even those which are opposing forces. She has seen in Higher Criticism and Evolution allies in destroying the Bible. The Higher

Footnote

(4) See Catholic Truth Society booklets listed at the end

(5) See The Vatican versus Mankind A.Pigott.

Critics in this country have generally had leanings towards Rome showing that they have her support. The BBC under the influence of Roman Catholics have resolutely refused any voice for Creation ideas over the radio. Likewise in school books creation ideas seem completely banned, and Evolution reigns supreme. It is to Rome's advantage that a generation grows up with no interest or faith in the Bible.

All three forces have in common that they are demoralising; they produce wickedness. There is abundant historical – and contemporary – evidence that Roman Catholicism is a demoralising influence (5). So is the teaching of Evolution, and so is the Humanism that has replaced Bible teaching in the churches. It has always been, that when a nation leaves the Bible, its alternative philosophies degrade the nation. It is plain to see that Britain has become morally wicked. Instead of a minority following dishonesty, immorality, and pleasure, these things have become a national characteristic, with the label “the permissive society”. The extent of this corruption may be measured by the fact that in recent years the Government of this country, the highest authority in the land, has passed immoral laws. Parliament has made laws of the land that are a denial of God's laws: laws concerning easy divorce, abortion, permission for homosexual behaviour; laws encouraging gambling, sport and entertainment, and allowing television, cinema, and theatre presentations without hardly any censorship; laws that have brought about the destruction of the country's “sabbath day”. The pattern of other ages begins to repeat itself:

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually....The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence”. Gen.6.5,11.

In varying degrees this is the state of the civilised world today, and Britain is moving rapidly on this downward slope.

When we reflect on the present state of the British world we are constrained to ask: What does God think of all this as He looks down from heaven? Yet perhaps the more important question is: What do you, reader, think of it? We ask ourselves: Are we knowledgeable in His word, and sufficiently in love with the things of God to feel as He does? Do we hate iniquity as well as love righteousness? (Ps.45.7) It is an urgent matter that we should take God's revelation to enlighten us, and to stir our hearts to speak boldly as his true witnesses.

The Bible's instruction about our time.

This assessment of the British world will indicate what should be the nature of our witness today. In one form or another the witness is always against the apostacy from God's Way. In the days of the apostles it was Israel's national apostacy in rejecting their king

and saviour, and their godlessness likened to the days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah; today it is the not dissimilar rejection of the true Jesus Christ by Christendom, and a similar godlessness. The very first apostacy was described as

"All flesh had corrupted God's way upon earth" Gen. 6.12.

In this situation faithful Noah is set forth by Peter as

"a preacher of righteousness" Peter 2.5.

In declaring God's righteousness in such circumstances, Noah must have explained the "rightness" of the coming catastrophe; and that must have involved getting down to the detail of their corruption of God's Way. We might well ask ourselves, Are we today doing the same as Noah and the apostles?

So thinking again of the two sides of our coin, the gospel we preach remains the same from generation to generation - a call to come out from the world of sin and partake in divine sonship and angelic protection, with hope of inheriting the Kingdom with Jesus; but the background to our preaching, that is, our witness, is modified to be appropriate to our own situation. The Bible's instruction for our time we shall find in the book of the Revelation, especially chapters 16-18.

The book of the Revelation and Evolution.

The spirit of our time is manifest in the wide acceptance of human Evolution: it is the mocking voice of man, saying there is no Creator. The Revelation foresees this state of things at the end. In chapter 14 there is the preaching of a gospel when Jesus has returned. And it is a gospel that challenges the present attitude of men. The preaching is stated in these words:

"Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters". 14.7.

Here is the assertion of the Father of Jesus as the Creator; and there is impending judgment on those who will not respond. Now, if we hope to be amongst those preaching that gospel, ought we not to be in line with that position now? That which Christ and his saints will be doing soon is surely guidance for us to be doing now.

The vials of the wrath of God.

Our guidance regarding the present comes particularly from the section on the Vials. This record answers the question: What does God think about the world today. The vials stretch from the beginning of the last century to the present time, and on into the future in the 7th vial when human governments are overthrown by Christ. The arena of activity is Europe (the beast), the Middle East (the drying up of the river Euphrates), and to a degree, the whole world

(the going forth from the beast, dragon, and false prophet of the froglike spirits to the 'whole habitable').

The emphasis throughout the vials is divine judgment: it is a period subject to the wrath of God. The opening of chapter 15 reads:

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

and chapter 16 begins:

"Go your ways and pour out the vials of wrath of God upon the earth".

The language in chapter 16 is graphic: rivers becoming blood, men scorched with great heat, men gnawing their tongues with pain. When it comes to the climax of the 7th vial, Babylon receives "the fierceness of his wrath". Jesus is in charge of these events (Rev. 5.5; 6.1) - the same Jesus Christ that is revealed in the gospels. Do we tell men that the wars and calamities of the past and present centuries are controlled by Jesus?

Why should there be such wrath of God upon men? It is because of the character of the Catholic system of Europe which they support, a system getting worse as the centuries go by. Right back at the time of the second woe, the evil and unrepentant character of Catholicism, in the East as well as the West, is thus described in symbolic language:

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts". Rev.9.20,21.

And in more recent times, in the last century, there was the same wicked and unrepentant behaviour:

"And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory... and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds". Rev.16.9,11.

In the final hour of judgment the great harlot system is unrepentant, and carries responsibility for all her past wickedness; in figure it is said to be

"drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", Rev.17.6.

Do these words stir us? We are not considering an academic exposition of scripture. These matters are the facts of life for today,

from God's point of view. We are looking at a system that strongly influences Western Europe, and will do so increasingly. And Britain has chosen to join this Europe, and allows this politico-religious system to permeate Britain. And so the wrath of God is upon this country at present. We, the servants of God and Jesus Christ (Rev. 1.1) are the only people who know God's view of what most people regard as a respectable religious system. Ours is the responsibility to witness for God, and the truth.

The characteristics of the papal system.

The scripture does not give us this broad condemnation only, but it gives a detailed description of the character of the papal system. The 17th chapter gives this ugly description.

In its religious aspect it is:

1. a harlot, gaudily decked, riding on a beast,
2. the beast is full of names of blasphemy,
3. the harlot has wine or teaching that intoxicates the world,
4. the wine is called '*filthiness of fornication*',
5. it is a system of vast wealth, power, pleasure and lust
(ch.18)

We will examine the first feature only; she is a harlot. This means Roman Catholicism is the true religion become apostate, and therefore comes under responsibility before God, as did Israel of old. The use of the word harlot here has to be understood by its earlier use by the prophets. The long chapters Ezekiel chapter 16, and chapter 23, give God's indictment against Israel. The virgin daughter of Zion had become apostate, and was unfaithful to her God - and therefore was subject to his wrath. So with Europe as a harlot today, as a harlot she is declared unfaithful, inferring she is responsible to God. It is because of this that we are required to witness. If they were barbarous without any contact with God's word, it would be different. But they themselves claim to be the people of Christ, all is done in his name; the Pope claims to be Christ's representative on earth, and uses this position as a cloak while intoxicating the people so that its officers may "wax rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (6)

So for us in the 20th century, as throughout the centuries, the call of the Apocalypse is:

"the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy", Rev.19.10

Britain for the present has made herself part of the beast full of names of blasphemy, and we must have courage to maintain the testimony or witness of Jesus.

Footnote

- (6) See "The Vatican Billions". A.Manhattan - a most remarkable book and history of the Catholic Church.

The papacy, of course, is not only a religious system; even today it has considerable political power. In past centuries men trembled at its tyrannical power when it existed as, in symbol, "the image of the beast". Its power is described thus:

"that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.... And that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name". Rev. 13.15,17.

In the near future it again rises for a brief period to great political power. At the end of the 17th chapter the woman is said to be

"that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth"

and in chapter 18

"she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow". 18.7.

The papacy will be the chief element stirring up the people of Europe in their opposition to Jesus Christ. Daniel in his earlier presentation of the papal system highlights this. When Jesus Christ comes as the Ancient of Days, and the judgment of the nations takes place, Dan. 7.9-12, Daniel says:

"I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake."

This is the little horn with eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, and a look more stout than his fellows—the very graphic picture of the papacy supported by imperial power. She has spoken 'great words' against the God of the Bible in the past, and she will do so again when Jesus Christ returns. Paul also prophesied of the final clash between this terrible system and Jesus Christ on his return. He describes the system as:

"The man of sin, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as a God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is a God." (2 Thess. 3.3,4)

It operates with all power and signs and lying wonders (verse 10). And at the end:

"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his wrath, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (verse 8).

So let us not be deceived. This system is with us today, and it will continue in power and influence. It is getting an increasing grip on this country in which we live, and through the ecumenical movement is bringing about the surrender of the Church of England. True to Biblical description, it is skilled in deception, and makes such an appearance that it is generally well received. Many brethren are

ignorant of, or blinded to, her true character; possibly they are intoxicated by her wine without realising it. God has given us such detail of this system that if we are ignorant of it we shall be without excuse when we stand before the Master. What God has written is not difficult to understand; what is probably lacking is our desire to study. And if we do not study His word we shall never see things as God does. We shall never learn to hate what God hates. We might check our standing in this matter by the words in Revelation, ch.18:

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her". Rev.18.20.

The 'heaven' that rejoices over the papal system is made up of the redeemed. If they rejoice at her overthrow, it means they appreciate her evil God-dishonouring character. Are we in a frame of mind to be part of the 'heaven' and to rejoice at her overthrow?

The outlook of the preacher.

Preaching the word is as much the work of the individual brother and sister as of the brother on the platform. What we say depends on our outlook. If we are attuned to the things that have been discussed, we shall present the "two sides of the coin", the wrath and judgment of God on the one hand, and the mercy and goodness to the repentant on the other. The book of Revelation in its detail will rarely be used in such preaching because of the difficulty of conveying the sense from the symbols. But this does not lessen the need for the mature preacher to understand them. This understanding will colour what he says; it will give him an outlook that will show itself in what he says; it will give him conviction to say it. Hence the faithful preacher, whether privately or publicly, is also a student of the Revelation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE WITNESS OF OUR BEHAVIOUR

Godliness

In the ultimate it is the wicked behaviour of men and women that calls forth the wrath of God. So Paul says in Ephesians, chapter 5, and he uses this to fortify his exhortation that the believer must be an example of righteousness. He describes our position in chapter 4.

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; And be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness". Eph.4.17-24.

Our behaviour is part of our witness. Walking in uprightness is itself a witness before the world; it is a living declaration of what is right in God's sight, and a continuing condemnation of the world's wickedness. The witness of our words and of our actions must agree. If we are bold in our witness for God in what we say, this should urge us to greater care in our walk, that we do not appear inconsistent.

Separation.

Not only is there the witness of our moral behaviour, there is also the witness that comes from our separation. For it is an unchanging principle throughout the scripture that the children of God distinctly separate themselves from those around, not participating in the multitude of schemes and organisations that make up the world. We are not to make marriage associations, business partnerships, or become cooperators in the citizenship of this world, even though men invite us to help in the betterment of this world. Perhaps most difficult is our separation socially, from groups for art, music, 'hobbies, entertainment, philosophy, etc.

The present ecumenical movement between the various denominations of Christendom finds its chief common ground in social

work, and invitation to participate may beguile us. But the redeemed with the Lamb on Mount Zion are said to be "not defiled with women"; they have not associated with the mother of harlots or her daughters.

The world has many faces, many attractions, but the guiding principle is that friendship with the world places us as enemies of God. James 4.4. If we are wise we will recognise there is no intermediate position. If we do not take care, we shall find ourselves trying to justify that deceptive formula of "serving God and mammon". It is again the book of Revelation that states so sharply the black and white separation of the believer from the world. There is the Holy City community, and those without; or the bride adorned for her husband and the unbelieving. There is nothing in between.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Rev.22.14-15.

Such is the symbolic description of the two classes of people when Jesus returns to set up his kingdom.

Separation from the world only comes when we appreciate God's view of things, and this needs patient and humble study of his word; for

"God's ways are not our ways, nor are his thoughts our thoughts." Isa.55.8.

Separation is an essential part of our witness, and provides a basis for our preaching. For people will demand an explanation of our separation, and we must be

"ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." 1 Peter 3.15.

Many factors account for the lessening of our separation from the world in recent times. As in other ages there is a gradual drift back to the world because of the decreasing power of the word upon us. But there is one factor peculiar to our present time. We have a considerable proportion of brethren and sisters who are children of brethren and sisters, and were brought up "in the Truth", and finished their education at a University, They already knew the Truth when they went to the University, and they then received in their minds that stamp that a University life is intended to give in the impressionable years of youth. Higher education and the environ that goes with it unconsciously develops a respect for men and human learning, and the young mind blends together divine and human points of view. It becomes increasingly difficult to appreciate the

need for separation. And this often remains as a permanent blindness throughout life.

Courage

Faithful living and speaking needs courage. We may be helped in this by the examples left on record for us. We are, in the words of Paul to the Hebrews,

"encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses".

Not only have we the Old Testament worthies who like Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt", we have Paul, and Peter, and the other apostles, followed by the witnesses for Jesus throughout the past 19 centuries. These all had the motto set before them:

"To him that overcometh will I give ..."

the reward. As a class they are described at the end of chapter 12 of the Revelation:

"And the dragon was wrath with the women, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony (witness) of Jesus", Rev.12.17.

They were witnesses: they did not sit in silence; they testified. If they had remained silent there would not have been the wrath of the dragon against them. Bro. Thomas in Eureka, vol. 3 ch X11, sections 28 & 29 gleans from history the records of the brave noble witness of the Paulicans, the Waldenses, the Petrobrugians, the Hugenots, and associated with these people there would be the saints providing the light of God's truth- the remnants of the woman's seed that have the testimony of Jesus. Their witness was against the same apostate christian system that continues to this day. Shall we feel ashamed when we see them at the Judgment Seat, and they reproach us for our feeble or non-existent witness today?

CHAPTER FOUR

PREACHING TO THE BRETHREN, OR PREACHING TO THE WORLD?

There are brethren and sisters who are in sympathy with the fuller understanding of God's word advocated in this booklet who say that their "preaching" is directed to their brethren and sisters rather than to the world. Many brethren and sisters who have started on the way of life, and are responsible to the Master, are failing to grow in knowledge and faith (Eph.4.13); and therefore, as we love our brethren and sisters and their eternal wellbeing, we should endeavour to lead them into this fulness of the gospel.

We agree with this. It is something Paul agreed with, and gave instructions to Timothy:

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth." 2 Tim.4.1-4.

So Paul exhorts Timothy, with the thought of the judgment seat in mind, to be diligent in preaching the truth to the brethren, knowing that there would be a drift back to fables. And if this was necessary in Paul's day, it is surely necessary today.

Knowledge leads to action.

But while agreeing that we must "preach" these things in the first place to our brethren and sisters, this does not alter the properness of all of us preaching and witnessing to those without. Let us suppose for a moment that we were successful in bringing about a reform in our community, or even in an ecclesia, and practically all took hold of the full knowledge and appreciation of the Old Testament and the Revelation, what would we expect them to do? Sit still in the appreciation of the knowledge of God? Would not knowledge, properly appreciated, lead to action? It would surely lead to a powerful witness before the world. God has had a witness in all the past ages, and it will not be to our credit if there is not a witness at the end when Jesus comes.

So clearly this booklet is addressed to the brethren and sisters, pointing out what our witness should be, together with the kind of understanding that will lead us to such a witness. The understanding and the acting are interdependent. The booklet is saying what our actions- our witness should be, and pointing to the changed outlook

necessary before such action can take place. It aims therefore to stir up the brethren both to right knowledge and right action.

"Go ye into all the world": a commission to the apostles.

Earlier in the booklet we have made it clear that "preaching" involves more than making known good news. There are two sides to the coin, one side the declaring of the righteousness of God in the midst of wickedness; and the other side showing the goodness of God to those who seek Him. This means that those who desire to "go campaigning" will need to reach a much fuller understanding of God's will than is usual today before they are equipped to face the world. Moreover, the present concept of 'campaigning' does not appear to be in harmony with the scripture. It is good to give help to a small ecclesia in its witness, but it is a different idea to think we have the task of going into every town or village of Great Britain, or into every country of the world. The basis for this idea is a wrong construction of the words at the end of Matthew and Mark's gospel records. Matthew records:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age". Matt. 28.19,20 (RSV).

And Mark records:

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.... And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" Mark.16.15.

We have given the RSV for Matthew because this draws attention to the meaning of the word "world" in the AV, namely "age". Jesus here was giving instructions to the eleven (Matt.28.16) to carry out a work at that time, a time limited to the end of the age. The "end of the age" occurs several times in the gospels and the epistles, and refers to the ending of the Mosaic times. Jesus had already given a definition of this in response to the questions of his disciples as recorded in Matthew ch.24.24:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world (habitable) for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come".

The next verses deal with the invasion of Judea by the Romans, so the end of the world or age is the end of the Jewish world. When writing to the Colossian believers Paul says that this commission of Jesus to preach to all nations had been carried out.

"Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel; which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature (all creation)

*which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.
Col.1.23.*

Not every creature had actually heard, but in the words of Jesus' original description, a witness had been made unto all nations.

So here was a specific commission, to a limited number of people and the commission had been carried out before the end of the age. Does this justify us in thinking we should go out into all the world and preach? We need not be uncertain. Paul took care to instruct the brethren and sisters in the various Gentile ecclesias he established. Did he tell them to go forth into the Roman world, as missionaries? The answer is, No. This should be sufficient guidance for us. God had extensively prepared the ground for the great work of the apostles, and the work proved a great and rapid 'success'. No such preparing of the world has been done in our time, and God has not instructed us to go forth. The great preaching to the world will take place when Jesus returns, and the saints, like the apostles of old, will go forth with the Holy Spirit power to make known to all people the will of God. (Rev.14.6,7.) But Paul did expect the believers to witness where they lived- He told the Philippians

"To stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." ch.1.27;

and in ch.2 they were

"to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the word of life".

At all times

"the spirit and the bride say Come".

Paul gives many instructions to Timothy on how he should look after the Ephesian ecclesia, but he does not tell him to send out missionaries.

The work of the ecclesia today, as it has been through the centuries, is to illuminate the darkness around, and continue the witness for the God of Israel in the presence of the apostacy. In a phrase from the book of Revelation, they are "the tabernacle of witness". As Britain gets further away from the Word of God, so as with the prophets of old, and Jesus with the scribes and Pharisees, there should be an increasing emphasis on the coming judgment of God. This is more appropriate now than in the last century, when there was a greater fear of God, and a response to His salvation.

Stedfastness in the individual and the ecclesia

If in a few places an ecclesia gains knowledge and strength for a bolder witness, it must not expect much response today. This is very disheartening for the young ones, and calls for faith and endurance. Our time is like Jeremiah's; after a response in the time of Josiah, he was faced with hardness of heart, blindness of

eyes, and a determination to serve the Gods around them. In our time a harvest has been reaped in the last century and the first half of this century. It was a harvest for which God had made preparations over a long time. Now like Jeremiah in his latter years, we must continue to the end without giving up. God has always persisted to the end in his warning and inviting.

Though this booklet will very rarely arouse enthusiasm in an ecclesia, yet it will have meaning to individual brethren and sisters. And 'preaching' is very much the work of the individual. Ecclesial effort is a great support to individual effort, but is not essential. Each of us, as we develop an outlook more attuned to that of God, will speak to others as we have opportunity in words that are coloured by that outlook. Nor should we despair of our ecclesia, for by patient effort we may for example bring about an improvement in the public address titles to something more distinctive and challenging; or perhaps arrange a witness address relevant to some local happening. Witness addresses are not appropriate all the time. First principles must be the main teaching set forth appropriately to the style of audience. But always making a clear distinction between the world and the ecclesia, those within the covenant and those not. In earlier times even the choice of hymns on a Sunday evening was considered important, and many of our hymns conveying the covenant relationship to our Heavenly Father were regarded as unsuitable. The great need today is to seek to restore the tone of an ecclesia to its distinctive position in the world: a company of people "called out" for the Name, scripturally known as saints-"Holy ones"- the representatives of the true God in an apostate world that is now reaching the limit of God's forbearance; a people prepared to participate in the new age of righteousness. Their guiding principles are simple, first they love the Lord their God, and secondly they love their neighbour.

BOOK LIST

The several books listed in the text are normally in stock at the address given on the inside back cover. Please write for a descriptive list of books, etc., that have been selected for profitable reading. These include:

Reprints of early Christadelphian writings.

Books and pamphlets against the theory of Evolution.

Books and pamphlets dealing with the past and present of the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican, including translations of recent official Vatican documents.

Charts and illustrations on rice paper for fixing in your Bible (from Australia).