

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 106

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is always a great pleasure to receive letters from members and since the October issue of the Circular Letter I have received correspondence from Myrtle James, Muriel Stormont, Sue Woodward, Helen and Jessie Brady, Eric and Lillian Moore, Harvey and Evelyn Linggood, Phil and Rene Parry, John Carter, Leo Dreifuss, and Harold Dawson. Also a change of address for Nigel and Sue Dawson.

I thank you all you your letters, for your support and encouragement, and the material you have sent for use in the Circular Letters. The personal details you have given of yourselves has helped me appreciate the family aspect of our fellowship, and not me only, but my brother Ray and my sister Eileen who share the work with me of producing the monthly Circular, for they also see your letters and are encouraged by them.

May I be permitted to indulge myself for a few moments and introduce myself and family a little more fully? Ray, Eileen and I are the family of Brother O.E.H.Gregory and Sister A.V.Gregory who retired to South Devon, England in 1960. Sister A.V.Gregory fell asleep in the Lord in 1982, and Brother O.E.H.Gregory just nine months latter in 1983. Sister Maud Warre was one of Brother O.E.H.Gregory's sisters and was married to Brother Harry Warre. Brother and Sister Warre held our views regarding the Atonement though remaining members of the Christadelphian Suffolk Street Meeting after leaving the Temperance Hall about 1911. Our grandfather, W.J.Gregory, was for some years a friend of Robert Roberts. On our mothers side of the family Sister A.V.Gregory was sister-in-law to F.C.Hadley, the younger son of J.J.Hadley, the author of two books - "An Introduction to the Apocalypse" and "The Nature and Sacrifice of Christ". It may perhaps seem from this that we were brought up surrounded by the 'clean-flesh' controversy. However, this was not the case for 'clean flesh' controversy was never discussed during our upbringing for such was the wisdom of our parents that we were encouraged to study scripture for ourselves, and common sense reasoning was encouraged and exercised in a spirit of patient love.

We would be pleased to hear from any members of their circumstances and history which I am sure would be of interest to all.

Some have expressed the desire to meet others of the Fellowship, and while it is not possible for those with infirmities to travel far, there are others able and willing to travel any reasonable distance to visit fellow members.

Thank you to those who have sent booklets. Several titles are new to me and all will now go into a 'Reference Library.' Unfortunately, no one has yet been able to send a copy of "Catachesis" by Dr Thomas, but I am still hoping.

I haven't received any news regarding the welfare of members and I trust and pray that no news is good news.

Ray and Eileen send their Kind Regards to all, as do I,

Sincerely your Brother, with Love, in the Master's Service, Russell Gregory.

Nothing is Impossible with God

We often read in the newspapers about jail escapes. There is no record, of jail escapes in the sense of the prisoner forcibly breaking out, recorded, in the Bible. But there are three instances in the book of Acts where prisoners escaped through God's intervention. Let us briefly look at them. The first one occurred when the high priest imprisoned the apostles because of their continued and determined preaching of the risen Jesus, against the prohibition from the authorities. But the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, and next morning, to everybody's consternation, there they were preaching the Gospel,

A little later Herod imprisoned Peter. New here every humanly possible precaution was taken to prevent escape. Peter was handcuffed and slept between two soldiers. And if that was not enough, there were keepers outside. But all is to no avail when God intervenes. The angel of the Lord just caused the chains with which he was bound to fall off, the prison gates opened of their own accord, and Peter was free. The third case, Paul and Silas were imprisoned, again all precautions against any attempted escape were taken. They were thrust into the inner prison, their feet fastened to stocks. But again, man's efforts of security were useless. This time an earthquake shook the prison, the doors flung open, - so much for man's attempt at security - the prisoners were free again.

Talking of man's claims of safety. We all know of the Titanic, a large boat claimed to be unsinkable. Yet on its very first voyage it collided with an iceberg, and we all know what happened. Our oldest brothers and sisters will probably remember a terrible air disaster which struck Germany early in May 1937. The Hindenburg, a huge airship, the largest ever built, and a feat of engineering one could be proud of, exploded just before it was about to land in America. The problem was this; to lift an airship off the ground and keep it up, we need to fill it with a gas lighter than air. The lightest gas is hydrogen, but unfortunately this is also highly explosive. So the next best choice is helium, a gas also lighter than air, though heavier than hydrogen. This is not explosive and is quite safe. However, Germany had no helium of its own, and to buy it abroad they had no foreign currency at the time. So they filled it with the highly dangerous hydrogen, but claimed to have taken every precaution against an explosion. Just as the Titanic was claimed to be unsinkable, so the Hindenburg was claimed to be unexplodable. Like the Titanic - well, it is just not wise for man to make such claims.

There also comes to mind the two instances when God rescued David from Saul when a deep sleep from God fell on Saul's bodyguard. Now from the human point of view this does not go to the credit of the guard. A watchman is not paid to go to sleep, if he does and somebody burgles the premises, or does some damage, he will soon lose his job. And we have not yet forgotten, I am sure, the terrible ferry disaster which was the consequence of some person responsible for seeing the doors being closed, going to sleep.

But God can use whatever means He wills to intervene in human affairs, natural means as sleep, as well as the more spectacular ones such as an angel bursting the prison doors open. And we must never forget that God intervenes in our lives in the most natural manner, if we allow ourselves to be guided by Him.

New the greatest “escape story”, if we can call it that, I have left to the last. A dead corpse put in a sealed grave, guards standing outside. They made sure (human security) and sealed the sepulchre with a stone. Matthew 28:66. And the body being guarded a dead one, remember! But when God’s time to raise Jesus came, not even death could hold Him in the grave. Truly nothing is impossible with God.

And when the Lord returns the grave will not hold those who have died in faith any more than it held the Lord Jesus, and those of us alive at that time will be changed to immortality in a moment. Meanwhile let us allow God, and trust Him, to govern our lives. This present age is not one of spectacular miracles. God nevertheless directs our lives through bringing about circumstances that will compel us to make decisions in a certain way. And if we abide faithful to the end of our probation, He will not fail us.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:51

Brother G.L.Dreifuss.

The Covenants Of Promise

Before we deal with our subject “The Covenants of Promise” mentioned in verse 12 of Ephesians chapter 2, let us take a general look at the whole chapter. Broadly, it is a survey of the plight of the world outside Jesus Christ and outside the covenants given to Israel; it proceeds to relate the saving action of the Lord. God showing, the rich mercy by which He extends His grace to the Gentiles. “By grace are ye saved” verse 5, and in verse 4, “for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins”, He then called us unto good works, not for justification but as a consequence of the new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 15 speaks of the enmity; it is a fact of human nature that any group, or individual who claim superior knowledge, or a superior position, or privileges causes envy, jealousy or even anger. The Jews boasted Abraham as their father implying that they had God on their side. This caused enmity to grow - first by Ishmael, then Esau, which, over the generations has spread to nearly fifty nations and related tribes in the Middle East, and then, with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ this animosity spread into the world of Christendom causing much hostility outside the true ecclesias. Its presence indicated a lack of understanding and humility on both sides, and has down the ages been responsible for much persecution.

The centre of discussion is in verse 14 - “He is our peace who hath made us both one.” The enmity between Jew and Gentile has been cancelled, the two being called together in one harmonious fellowship in Jesus Christ. Both Jew and Gentile have lost their ethnic and cultural identity and gain something much better – a place in the One Body of Christ, which is the ecclesia; the new race privileged to enjoy a degree of access to the Lord their God, which they could never have known in their previous state “having no hope and without God in the world.”

In verse 12 the Gentile position is shown in three ways:- first as outside the covenants of God, having no Messianic hope (in fact, the Jews saw the Gentiles as being brought into subjection to themselves in their hope of a Messiah); second, as one of deprivation in that they did not share in the privileges and advantages of belonging to the most favoured nation; third, by the saddest of all misfortunes, an ignorance of God which denied the hope that could only come from a knowledge of the Lord God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But now, with Christ’s coming, a new era had opened to them. See how the Gentile position changed with their inclusion in the New Covenant of Grace, once afar off, now brought nigh by the blood of Christ, which is His death.

This sacrifice of Jesus Christ transformed radically the state of both Jews and Gentiles and transformed their mutual relations, thereby making peace. By the redemption of both, the Jew specifically from under the law, the Gentile out of Adam into Christ, removed the middle wall of partition. It no longer separates. There is now one new man in the place of the two. One ecclesia, not two strangers of Jew and Gentile, One body, so making peace. “For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of

commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace: and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh,”

Making peace reminds us of His name ‘Prince of Peace.’ The word ‘shalom’ means much more than the absence of hostility, it denotes material well being, security and concord with overtones of spiritual well being as in its context as a quality of the Lord God, ‘The God of Peace.’ Verse 19, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being The Chief corner stone.”

One church. One foundation. The promise here is not second class status within the covenant community but a full fellowship as fellow citizens with the saints. A single entity, the household of God, members with equal rights and privileges.

This new ‘building’ has now taken over Israel’s vocation as God’s Holy Temple, with a new foundation, Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone. Architecturally it is understood the chief corner-stone is the datum, or fixed point or principle from which all other foundation stones take their positions. It governs the whole lie of the building. From it is measured all the dimensions, and it forms the basis of all calculations during construction, ensuring it is correctly built. Verse 21, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

Going back to verse 12, we now see what it was that had been withheld from the Gentiles, “The covenants of promise.” There is in the word promise, as we use it, an acceptance of the possibility of it not being fulfilled. A promise is usually given to assure to the best of our ability, our intention of doing something; not a guarantee of something being done, but it can be the expression of our sincere intention. In the Hebrew language there is not an equivalent word, the Hebrew term ‘*amer dabor*’ simply states that someone said or spoke some word with future references, so a promise is a word that goes forward into time. It reaches ahead of the speaker and its recipient, to make an appointment between them in the future. Of course, there are many instances in scripture when the word promise is not used, but the concept of promise is there. It is in all that God has said He will do.

The scriptures abound in references to the immutable will of the Lord God being fulfilled. Promise is the basis of all the proclamations of the Lord. Even the name sometimes rendered “I will be whom I will be” is a promise. Unlike men, all the Lord has promised He can and will perform. His word does not return unto Him void.

The Apostle Paul comments on Abraham’s faith in God’s word in Romans chapter 5, “Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded what He had promised He was able to perform.” The Lord God not only knows, but commands the future. Throughout the Old Testament there is a pattern of promise and fulfilment. Solomon referred to God’s promise to his father, David. In 1 Kings 8:15 “And Solomon said, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which spake with His mouth unto David my Father and hath with His hand fulfilled it.”

It was the experience of all the prophets that God could and would keep His promises. It was part of their credentials to be able to show fulfilment of His word, as seen for example, in Jeremiah 28:9 “When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him.”

When we use the word ‘covenant’ it is possible we may think of an agreement between two parties, perhaps looking for a shared responsibility or, at least, a degree of mutual benefit, but in the scriptures. God’s covenants are nearly all the action of a sovereign God bestowing on His people a measure of grace according to their need. The word is first used in Genesis 6:18 where God says to Noah, “With thee I establish my covenant, and thou shalt come into the ark, thou and thy sons, and thy “wife and thy son’s wives with thee.” In the previous verse we read “I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon all the earth to destroy all flesh wherein there is the breath of life.”

God had chosen Noah and his family, and He, in His purpose, provided for their need. Here we see a dispensation of Grace, not a reciprocal agreement. God provided. “What Noah had, to do was to act on God’s commandment, or invitation, to build, the ark and accept God’s instructions to bring into it the specified number of animals, but there was no conflict of interest; the covenant itself was unilateral.

After the flood had abated, the Lord made another covenant with Noah and his posterity. This we read of in Genesis 9:9-17, “And I, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my Covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said to Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I will establish between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

This shows more clearly than any other instance, the essential motive of a covenant. The thought of a bilateral agreement is wholly excluded, the keynote here is, “I, behold I am establishing my covenant with you and with your seed after you...” That is, that the Lord God conceived it, He established it, and it was to be universal, i.e. to embrace not only Noah, his family and his seed after him, but every living creature too. It was not subject to acceptance but was unconditional and everlasting. Here we see God as the Saviour of all men - and not for the first time!

The next covenant in Genesis is that made to Abraham. The same principles apply but there are new features as well. Three express promises are made: the possession of the land, the increase of his seed, and the promise that God would be a God to him and his seed after him, and, of course, we cannot leave out the promise made earlier to him that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

First the land: Genesis 15:18, “In the same day the lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates,” and in chapter 17 God confirms that His covenant will be through Sarah’s son Isaac, and not through Ishmael, This covenant with Abraham had the additional requirements of acceptance in a formal way. Verse 17, “This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee, every man-child among you shall be circumcised, and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.” In verse 14 we see that the uncircumcised would be excluded from the covenant and would be as a Gentile, estranged from the covenants of promise. Keeping the covenant in this way was a condition of continuing in God’s grace and the fulfilment of its promise. It had to be reciprocal for there to be any communion with their God. After all, it was a response to His grace by obedience.

The Mosaic covenant extended this principle much further. Here God looks to Israel for a bigger commitment from His redeemed people. He offers more blessings and shews how they may be obtained. God had chosen His people in love. He had adopted them to extend His love to them for the sake of Abraham and because He loved them. These covenants made under Moses were in pursuance and fulfilment of those made to Abraham. They did not conflict or contrast with the Abrahamic covenants. They contained the same principle of the sovereign dispensation of grace; the spiritual relationship which is at the centre of the covenants with Abraham is also at the centre of the Mosaic covenants, for God said, “I will take you to me for a people and I will be to you a God and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God.”

Since this covenant contemplated an intimate relationship with the Lord God as being His redeemed and adopted people, so God demands of obedience in governing and regulating this fellowship are to be seen as conditions of their continuing enjoyment of its privileges. The holiness demanded by the covenant fellowship is to be expressed in obedience to God’s commandments. Holiness was an essential aspect of covenant blessing; Israel had been redeemed to be a holy people, separated unto their God.

In the keeping of the covenant and in obeying God's voice, the covenant is seen to be dispensed, in operation and as constituting a sure relationship. What is dependant on obedience is the enjoyment of the blessings that the covenant brings and the promise of the people to obey was the only proper response to the grace which the covenant disclosed.

David, as God's chosen king over Israel enjoyed a renewal and confirmation of a covenant relationship on a more personal basis. In Psalm 89:3 & 4 God says, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn to David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." And in verse 27, "Also I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth." Here, too, we see the idea of the sovereign dispensation of grace. The security, the determinateness and immutability of the promise given. David's faithful response is seen in some of his last words. After his song of thanksgiving and after the recognition of a degree of failure, he could still say "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordained in all things, and. sure. For this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow."

Here, David sees the consummation of God's covenant with Him taken from the present into the future Messianic age, the age of the New Covenant. From the Psalms we know David understood that the covenants with him were principally Messianic, and they were further developed by the prophets. Isaiah wrote, in chapter 42, verse 6, "I, the Lord, give thee far a covenant of the people," and in this chapter we see that the servant of the Lord is given, given to be a covenant of the people and to be the embodiment of all the blessings of God. The richness of covenant grace is to be seen by the gift of God's only begotten Son; its security, its assurance and its provision all come from a God who provides all that man could possibly desire.

This is the covenant of the fullness of time; of the consummation of the ages. In Galatians 4:4 we read, "When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son," and in Hebrews 9:26, "But now once, in the end of the world (age) hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It is for this reason it is the everlasting covenant. It is everlasting because it cannot be displaced by any other more complete realisation of what covenant grace embodies. The giving of His Son and His Son's manifestation of His Father's sacrificial love are revealed in its final glory. In Hebrews 9 we see the New Covenant as referring to the grace secured, and the relationship established by the life which He gave on the cross. Verse 14:- "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance, for where a covenant is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator, for a covenant is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth."

In this quotation the writer uses the notation of a last will. This is an exceptional use of the term for covenant, but it is introduced at this point for the purpose of emphasising the definitive effectiveness of the death of our Lord in securing and ensuring the benefits of the covenant. There is no possibility of its failing to achieve its purpose in bringing the covenants of God to their ultimate purpose than there is in making void the provision of a last will and testament after the testator has died. This shows again that we have the most express witness to the fact that the New Covenant is to be understood as a unilateral disposition and totally foreign to the idea of a mutual contract.

From the time of Abraham the covenants are redemptive in content and purpose, but this does not mean that redemptive grace began with Abraham, for if we see the word covenant as an undertaking by the Lord, whereby He provides all our needs, "both materially and spiritually, we see also a redemptive covenant in the action He took with Adam and Eve when they tried and failed to provide a covering for sin by them selves. The Lord God immediately covered their sin to protect them from His just Law; He shed blood, or gave a life, albeit, that of an animal, to provide a covering of skins so that they could stand before Him in a covenant of atonement, for if they had not been covered they would have been put to death. God knew their need, so provided the means to enable them to continue before Him in faith. Obedience had failed, and they were wholly dependant on God's mercy and provision. It is here, for the first time, that "God was the Saviour of all men."

When the Lamb of God came, slain from the foundation of the world. He revealed to His disciples in that upper room, as He offered them the cup to drink saying “This is my blood of the New Covenant shed for the remission of sins”, a relationship established by the blood which He shed, the life of which He shed on the cross to purchase us, or redeem us, unto His Father; a relationship by redemption in which, as His sons and daughters, we can come before Him through our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins day by day,

At the centre, the very heart of all these covenants of grace and redemption was the promise “I will be your God and ye shall be my people” and the New Covenant brings this relationship to its highest level of achievement. Now we can take to ourselves, by faith, the word of our Lord, “He that believeth on me and Him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”

Throughout Israel’s history they were encouraged to have faith in their redemption by the Lord God. By being taken from among the Gentiles and separated unto their God by His covenants of grace, they were assured of a present state of redemption and favour which could, in the course of time, give them a hope of eternal life through faith, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, the prophets and many other devout and God-fearing Jews down the ages, who believed God would provide,

We are doubly blessed. Not only do we see all the covenants of promise made to the Fathers, we have seen the fulfilment of the New Covenant - the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and heard His words. We do not have the experience of hoping God will provide, for we have seen it come to pass. The covenant promises are largely fulfilled and we see why our Lord Jesus pleaded with His followers “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else “believe me for the very works sake.” We are told repeatedly that our present covenant relationship with our Lord God, through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, brings us before Him as His sons and daughters. This adoption, which we now enjoy, was given to us when we entered into this relationship through the waters of baptism. Our birth through those waters was when we accepted the covenant through His blood in the which He purchased us from sin and brought us to our Lord God as His sons and daughters to whom we have access for the forgiveness of sins through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, if only we will ask in faith, believing.

As we approach the last days we are surely aware of the many warnings given us by our Lord, Perhaps some of them are warnings given to Christendom in general, for most would claim to teach Him and do many mighty works in His name, but we must not be too complacent and point the finger without taking heed to what the Lord said, for many will appear to claim works as proof of fidelity, to whom Jesus will say “Depart from me, I never knew you” which is almost the same as saying ‘you do not know me’ and as we know “this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

Some believe that the messages given by our Lord to John while on the Isle of Patmos had a dual application; firstly for the seven churches in Asia, and secondly, as suggested by Dr Thomas, a prophetic application to seven ages, or stages, in the life history of the church. If this were the case then the words of counsel from our Lord would apply to us, but not to Christendom in general, for these ecclesias were where Jesus walked. His counsel then, was to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, that we might be rich. White raiment, that we might be clothed, and to anoint our eyes with eye salve that we might see.

Concerning the “Counsel of the Spirit” here are some words of Dr Thomas relating to the church at Laodicea, “Gold refined by fire is the symbol of a tried faith, this appears from the comparison in 1 Peter 1, where the faithful are said for a season to be in heaviness through manifold persecutions, that the trial of their faith, being more precious than of gold which perisheth though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus anointed. A tried faith comes forth of tribulation. The spirit therefore counselled them to buy a tried faith, which could only be purchased at the cost of much tribulation, which worketh patience and patience, experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed. To become subject to the tribulation they had only to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to buy a tried faith then, would be the fruit of zeal, and a change of mind, the cause of their justification, or investment with the white garments of righteousness. But to arrive at this

most desirable state it was necessary that the eyes of their understanding be anointed with the unction of the Spirit, that they might perceive what with all their piety they were perfectly blind to. The Spirit's eye-salve is the word of the testimony contained in the writings of the prophets and apostles."

Jesus said "Buy of me." The buying had to be from the Lord, and if we can see in His words a challenge to our faith surely it is to Him we must go. He said "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The outcome of this faith and perception enables us to overcome, from within and without, and it is to be hoped that through His covenanted grace we may sup with Him and He with us. Revelations 5:19, reads "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and sup with him and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

In conclusion, let us read some selected verses from Ephesians chapter 5: "Ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ, by the gospel, to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and power in heavenly places might "be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man:

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and Length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen,

Brother Ray Gregory. (Aug 1988)

"BORN AGAIN"

John 5:5

Many find difficulty in reconciling the plain statements of Scripture pointing to the fact that true believers have Eternal Life as a present possession, e.g. John 5:56, 5:24, 6:47, 17:5, 1 John 5:15, 5:11, 5:15, 5:20, and others which declare it to be a future attainment, this seeming inconsistency can be best comprehended by allowing the natural order of the birth process to enlighten us to that which is spiritual. In John 5:5 Jesus tells Nicodemus that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," this is usually taken to mean belief and baptism, but a closer look at the following verse "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" suggests literality of the latter as it is of the former, we do know that baptism in water (preceded by an understanding and belief of the Atonement) as well as a change of nature are necessary before any can inherit the Kingdom of God seeing that flesh and blood cannot do so, it would seem then that in verse 5 Jesus is speaking of a beginning and ending of a birth process and inasmuch as in the natural order we have no power to bring about our own begetting so it is in the spiritual order. James 1:18 reads "of His (God's) own will begat He us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures", Christ Himself became the First-fruit or, "First Born from the dead," Revelation 1:5, having first been "born of the flesh" (of Mary) though literally begotten by the Holy Spirit and so (the only begotten in that sense) of God, though He has many Spiritually begotten children. 1 Peter 1:5-5 and verse 25, the word here translated 'born' in the A.V is 'begotten' in the Greek - see Diaglott as in other references where conversion is alluded to, i.e. John 1:15

1 John 2:29, 5:9, 4:7, 5:1, 5:4, 5:18 whereas when actual birth is alluded to i.e. John 5:5-5, 5:7, 5:8, the word is properly translated born, the A.V. is misleading here as it is in some other Scriptures. The period of gestation in the natural order which is a tune of development of the new life as yet hidden in the womb but bringing hope and expectation that in the fullness of time a normal human being will come forth, so we may see a counterpart of that which is Spiritual if the Seed-Word re Christ be planted in "good ground" it will develop as we grow in grace and knowledge as comprehended in such expressions as "Christ in us as a hope of Glory; the hidden man of the heart", the "inward man", "We have the mind of Christ" i.e. a mind that understands Christ. "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith" etc.

Our probation is a time of trial and testing, chastisement for our good, but if we have the true faith and keep it to the end our Spirit birth is sure, and just as the unborn foetus in the womb is the child of its parents in the natural order, so believers are now children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The believer is now during this probationary period working out his own salvation by keeping faith in Him whatever opposition or trial he may have to face, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" who for the joy set before Him (of bringing many sons unto glory) endured the Cross despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of God as High Priest and mediator on behalf of the saints in the forgiveness of their sins repented of... to purify a people for Himself zealous of good works... those of proving our faith as exemplified in Abraham's offering up of Isaac (James 2:21-24), thus signifying his belief that God would provide Himself a Lamb, as Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad", and also the good works of loving ones neighbour as oneself as seen in James 2:1-20 the whole briefly comprehended in loving God first and neighbour as self, these works extending into the future as the Bride of Christ, an helpmeet, (or fit) for Him in His future work of government of the World.

It is evident as John records in chapter 12 verses 25 and 24, that Jesus could have been glorified without dying (just as those Saints will be who are alive at His coming) but He would have been 'alone' as Adam, the type, would have been without 'an help.' He therefore became that "grain of wheat" who willingly lay down His life in order to bring forth much fruit - the "many sons" to Eternal Life.

God had declared regarding Adam that "it was not good for man to dwell alone", the N.T. reveals him to be a type of Christ, so we can see and likeness between Christ's death and the "deep sleep" required for the creation of a bride for Adam, which must have caused some loss of blood from his side, for we read that God "closed up the flesh instead thereof", indicating that there was a literal severing of the flesh for the extraction of a rib, so with the antitype Christ "the second Adam," whose side was literally pierced and His life-blood shed to make it possible for His Spiritual Bride (the Church) to be formed.

But to return to John 3. In answer to Nicodemus' question "How can these things be?" I.e. in what way can man be born when he is old and "from above" etc.? Jesus predicted that it would be made possible through the Cross, revealing the incident in Numbers 21:9 of Moses "lifting up" the brass image of a serpent in the wilderness that the sinners of Israel may look thereon in faith and be healed and live as a "type of Himself bearing the Judgment due to Adam and his seed. He Himself being "Seed of the woman," Holy (from birth), harmless and undefiled, separate (by Spirit begetting) from sinners (in Adam), not being begotten by the will of the flesh but by the will of God. He was free-born and unblemished in every way until "lifted up" on the Cross where the Sin of the world was laid upon Him and He suffered the death (judicial) due to sinners "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace (with God) was upon Him, with His stripes we are healed..." Isaiah 55. How sad therefore it is to see this great act of self-sacrificing love explained in such terms as "a Renunciation of His body prone by nature to sin" and "He had to submit to a ceremonial condemnation of His nature"; "A cutting off of fleshly desires" etc.

Human nature was never condemned, but sin which is transgression of God's law. Compare the 'Image' of Numbers 21:9 with the 'Likeness' of Romans 8:3, "for what the law could not do in that it (the law) was weak through the flesh (being legally dead in Adamic bondage) God did, by sending His own Son, (flesh belonging to God) in the likeness of Sin's flesh (flesh belonging to Sin) - the slave owner and for or by an offering for sin condemned sin (while He was) in the flesh, Jesus came in flesh that He might taste death (judicial) for every man, thus rendering powerless the devil or Sin (personified as a slave owner) by Himself suffering the death due to sinners He set them free (Hebrews 2:14-18), Compare also with 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For He (God) hath made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin (or sin-offering) for us

that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” And if we are truly “In Christ” by belief and obedience, His righteousness is imputed to us as Adam’s sin was imputed to us when we learned by enlightenment of our own estranged position from God on account of being in Adam’s loins when he sinned. We must therefore, in the symbol of baptism, “die unto Sin”, which Christ did literally for us, rising from the water to a newness of life - a new creation of God, those ‘born out of water’ are pictured as newborn babes growing up into spiritual adulthood (in this life) but the Spirit Birth (incorruptibility) still awaits Christ’s coming for the Faithful, who will meet Him “in the air” those who sleep to “awake in His likeness” and the living “changed” in & moment “in the twinkling of an eye.”

Sister E.Linggood

In Everything Give Thanks

Dear brethren and sisters, as we daily go about our lives; we often forget that we are never alone. We rush to and fro accepting all the good things that come our way and complain about the things we do not like.

Do we forget, or do we not have time to give thanks for all things good or bad? Paul says “In everything give thanks.” Have we reached this level of achievement? We should, for Paul also says “be ye followers of me”. We read that he often hungered and was cold, suffered nakedness, weariness and imprisonment, yet he could say “wherefore thank we God without ceasing.” Would we be able to do the same?

Gratitude is not something we can give or leave off. We are either grateful or we are not, being that new person, bought with the precious blood of Christ, we can be nothing but grateful.

“IM EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS.” Have we comprehended the scope of these words? How easy it is, when the skies are blue and our hopes come true, but let our minds be clouded by some disturbance or grief, let some illness beset us, then are we still able to give thanks? Circumstances should have nothing to do with our being thankful. The world is full of people who appear to have everything, good health, big homes and cars, yet have little gratitude in their hearts. They are never truly happy or content.

But let us look again at Paul. Short of temporal goods, not in the best of health and yet as we read his epistles, can we sense any despair or dejection? Likewise, as we read the Psalms of David, which overflow with praise and thanksgiving to God, let us not forget that at the time he was writing some of them he was being sought after by King Saul, to put him to death. We have no fear as great as this, have we? Consider our Lord, He “endured the cross, despising the shame”, and why? “For the joy that was set before Him.” “WITH JOY”, could we face even a quick death, let alone a slow crucifixion.

Yet our Lord could give thanks in the darkest hour of His earthly life. How can we learn this virtue of constant gratitude? It can only come by implicit confidence in the word of God. Where we are told that there is no temptation can overtake us that is beyond our strength to endure. When we can believe this, we can be ever thankful.

Brethren and sisters, gone are the days when we were told it was impossible for us to overcome, that something within our flesh stopped us. In those days it was impossible to be truly grateful, because we were left fearful, but now, knowing that all things are possible to those who love God, we can press on to the mark of our high calling in Christ.

Let us then begin to practice gratitude in the little everyday things of life, God’s mercies are extended to us every day, should we not be thankful for rain and sun, for food and rest, health and strength, the list

goes on. Commonplace blessings are these, but what would life be without them? Let us learn to appreciate these, and then we can better thank God for that joy to come, even life eternal.

Brother Eric Moore.

Wrested Scripture Straightened Out and Re-set 2nd Corinthians 5:21

“For He hath made Him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

This passage of scripture is one of those which are so seriously wrested from their context and from their true sense, and made to support an idea that is very God-dishonouring. Let us therefore consider this passage, and let us do so in the following natural method, viz.-

1. The Vital Word
2. The Verse itself
3. The Chapter in which it occurs
4. Parallel Scripture elsewhere.

1. The Vital Word. The important word is, of course, that which in the Authorised Version has been translated as “sin” (Greek – *‘hamartia’*) According to the Greek Lexicons this word *‘hamartia’* may mean either “sin” or “sin-offering”, according to the sense required. It is found that when the Seventy Jewish Scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures into Greek, they used that word *‘hamartia’* to signify both “sin” and “sin-offering”. This explains much, for it was the Septuagint Translation which was in use in Paul’s day in Palestine.

Furthermore, we also find the same thing happens in the Hebrew, where several Hebrew words have each of those two separate meanings. And we must not forget that Paul, when writing to Corinth, was writing to an assembly whose leaders were Jews, and an assembly which would appear from Acts 18 to be mainly Jewish. Those Jews would not misunderstand Paul’s use of that word *‘hamartia.’*

Here, then are the Hebrew words mentioned, each of which has the two meanings:-

CHATAAH - rendered ‘sin’ seven times, as

“Oh! this people have sinned a great sin” - Exodus 52:51

- rendered ‘sin offering’ once

“burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required” “ Psalm 40:6

CHATTATH - rendered ‘sin’ 169 times, as

“pardon our iniquity and our sin” - Exodus 54:9

- rendered sin offering 116 times, as

“Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering?” - Leviticus 10:17

- rendered Punishment, etc. 7 times.

CHATA - rendered ‘sin’ 165 times, as

“In all this Job sinned not” - Job 1:22

rendered ‘offer for sin’ twice, as

“Slew it, and offered it for sin” - Leviticus 9:15

CHATAAH - rendered ‘sin’ twice, as

“forgiving iniquity... and sin” - Exodus 54:7

- rendered sin offering once,

“for a sin offering for all Israel” - Ezekiel 6:17

ASHAM - rendered ‘sin’ twice, as

“Fools make a mock at sin” - Proverbs 14:9

- rendered ‘sin offering’ once,

“Make His soul an offering for sin” - Isaiah 55:10

“ rendered ‘trespass’ 7 times, and rendered ‘trespass offering’ - 55 times.

ASHMAH - rendered ‘sin’ 4 times, and ‘trespass’ 11 times as,

“Amon trespassed more and more” – 2 Chronicles 55:25

- rendered trespass offering once,

“in the day of his trespass offering” - Leviticus 6:5

Consistently with this, the Diaglott thus renders the verse in question: “For Him who knew no sin. He made a sin-offering on our behalf.”

2. The Verse. When we examine the verse itself, we are confronted with this choice: either to abandon the Christadelphian idea or else to accept the doctrine of the personal pre-existence of Christ. For the actual Greek word is - according to the interlinear Diaglott (and no Greek Scholar will dispute the rendering here) - “Him not having known sin.” The Lord Jesus Christ was made ‘*hamartia*’ at a time when it could be said of Him that He had not known sin. If this was at His conception, then He evidently must have existed as a person before then. (And if one says here that at his conception it could have been said of Him that He had not known sin, well - the same could be said of every human being ever born).

The truth is clear and simple: The Lord Jesus Christ was made a sin offering for us at a time when it could be said of him that He had never sinned.

3. The Chapter. About what does Paul discourse in this chapter? Is it “sin-nature” or is it actual transgressions? Look at the verse itself: “who knew no sin” - what was that? “Sin-nature? Look at verse 19: “not imputing their transgressions unto them”. Was that their “sin-nature”? Look at verse 17: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” - is he “new” by having been released from his “sin-nature” (as they speak), or by having been released from past sins? Surely this.

So, in this chapter, Paul likewise contrasts righteousness with sin, as two opposites. But righteousness is not the opposite of “sin-nature” for according to Christadelphian belief Christ possessed both simultaneously,

4. Parallel Scripture. First we will take a parallel passage from Leviticus and then one from Isaiah.

Leviticus 6:26: “The priest that offereth it for sin (*chata*) shall eat it.” We have seen some of the occurrences of this word “*chata*”. Let us note here that while it is sometimes rendered as “offer for sin” it is 29 times rendered as “to make sin” and frequently rendered as “cause to sin”, as “made Israel sin” - 1 Kings 15:50.

Now supposing that the A.V. translators had have translated this passage (Lev 6:26) according to words only, apart from sense, we should have read in our Bibles: “The priest that maketh it sin shall eat it” and the translators would have made & precisely similar mistake to the one they made in 2 Corinthians 5:21. (N.B. “to be” are in italics)

It is the work of translators to give the sense, and not merely to translate according to dictionary equivalents, literally, without regard to sense or idiom.

The translation of both passages should be uniform:-

Leviticus 6:26 - The priest that offereth it for sin

2 Corinthians 5:21 - offered Him for sin, or wade Him a sin-offering,

When we look at Isaiah 55 we find there a phrase similar to the one under consideration. The English words vary, it is true, but we shall see that they do not vary in the original. "Make His soul an offering for sin". We know that "His soul" (which in Hebrew is *'nephesh'*) can alternatively be rendered as "HIM". And we have seen that here the phrase "offering for sin" is *'asham'*, which elsewhere is translated as "sin" (as in the example previously quoted). So that a variant translation of Isaiah 55:10 would be; "make Him sin", which are the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21.

But it is Isaiah 55 that gives the right translation, and 2 Corinthians 5:21 should "be made to conform to that method of translation, and not Isaiah made to conform to 2 Corinthians.

If there is any doubt concerning 2 Corinthians 5:21, as to whether it relates to Christ's birth or crucifixion, there can be no doubt concerning Isaiah 55. There it is undoubtedly the crucifixion that is referred to.

Again, take a three-fold cord:-

Isaiah 55: it pleased the Lord to... make his soul... an offering for sin for our transgressions... he had done... no violence... nor deceit

1 Peter 2:21: Christ... suffered... for us... who did no sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21: He hath made him... sin (offering) for us... who knew no sin.

In all these references the writers were referring to personal sins only, and they teach that Christ was free from such transgressions. There is no mention anywhere in the Scriptures of any atonement for "physical-sin-nature", and these three writers agree in showing that Christ was put to death as a sacrifice for something of which He was quite free Himself.

I submit that this method of comparing obscure scripture with plain scripture is the only safe and only correct method of attaining to an understanding of it.

In the mercy of God we who circulate these articles have been freed from a grave error which we tenaciously held for years (amazed now that we should have so firmly held to a doctrine which is nowhere found in the words of God). We therefore appeal to you, with confidence, to search the scriptures for yourselves concerning this.

A.H.Broughton

Extract from

THE TEMPLE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST

By Dr Edersheim

Chapter 12, The Paschal Feast and The Lord's Supper

Jewish tradition has this curious conceit: that the most important events in Israel's history were connected with the Paschal season. Thus it is said to have been on the Paschal night that, after his sacrifice, the 'horror of great darkness' fell upon Abraham when God revealed to him the future of his race. (Genesis 15) Similarly, it is supposed to have been at Passover time that the patriarch entertained his heavenly guests, that Sodom was destroyed and Lot escaped, and that the walls of Jericho fell before the Lord. More than that - the 'cake of barley bread,' seen in the dream, which led to the destruction of Midian's host had been prepared from the Omer, presented on the second day of the feast of unleavened bread; just as at a later period alike the captains of Sennacherib and the King of Assyria, who tarried at Nob, were overtaken by the hand of God at the Passover season. It was at the Paschal time also that the mysterious hand-writing

appeared on the wall to declare Babylon's doom, and again at the Passover that Esther and the Jews fasted, and that wicked Hainan perished. And so also in the last days it would be the Paschal night when the final judgements should come upon Edom, and the glorious deliverance of Israel take place. Hence to this day in every Jewish home, at a certain part of the Paschal service - just after the 'third cup', or the 'cup of blessing', has been drunk - the door is opened to admit Elijah the prophet as forerunner of the Messiah, while appropriate passages are at the same time read which foretell the destruction of all heathen nations. (Psalm 124:6, Psalm 9:25, Lamentations 5:66). It is a remarkable coincidence that, in instituting His own Supper, the Lord Jesus connected the symbols, not of judgement, but of His dying love, with this 'third cup.' But, in general, it may be interesting to know that no other service contains within the same space the like ardent aspirations after a return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple, nor so many allusions to the Messianic hope, as the liturgy for the night of the Passover now in use among the Jews.

If we could only believe that the prayers and ceremonies which it embodies were the same as those at the time of our Lord, we should have it in our power to picture in minutest detail all that took place when He instituted His own Supper. We should see the Master as He presided among the company of His disciples, know what prayers He uttered, and at what special parts of the service, and be able to reproduce the arrangement of the Paschal table around which they sat,

At present and for many centuries back the Paschal Supper has been thus set out: three large unleavened cakes, wrapped in the folds of a napkin, are placed on a salver, and on them the seven articles necessary for the 'Passover Supper' are ranged in this manner:

A roasted Egg	B		Roasted Shank-bone of Lamb (instead of the Paschal Lamb)
	i		
	t	H	
Charoseth (To represent Egyptian mortar)	t	e	Lettuce
	e	r	
	r	b	
		s	
Salt Water			Chervil and Parsley

But, unfortunately, the analogy does not hold good. As the present Passover liturgy contains comparatively very few relics from the New Testament times, so also the present arrangement of the Paschal table evidently dates from a time when sacrifices had ceased. On the other hand, however, by far the greater number of the usages observed in our own days are precisely the same as nineteen hundred years ago. A feeling, not of gratified curiosity, but of holy awe, comes over us, as thus we are able to pass back through those many centuries into the upper chamber where the Lord Jesus partook of that Passover which, with the loving desire of a Saviour's heart. He had desired to eat with His disciples. The leading incidents of the feast are all vividly before us - the handing of 'the sop dipped in the dish,' 'the breaking of bread,' 'the giving thanks,' 'the distributing of the cup,' and 'the concluding hymn.' Even the exact posture at the Supper is known to us. But the words associated with those sacred memories come with a strange sound when we find in Rabbinical writings the 'Passover lamb' designated as 'His body,' or when our special attention is called to the cup known as the 'cup of blessing, which we bless;' nay, when the very term for the Passover service itself, the '*Haggadah*,' which means 'showing forth,' is exactly the same as that used by the Apostle Paul in describing the service of the Lord's Supper!

Before proceeding further we may state that, according to Jewish ordinance, the Paschal lamb was roasted on a spit made of pomegranate wood, the spit passing right through from mouth to vent. Special care was to be taken that in roasting the lamb did not touch the oven, otherwise the part touched had to be out away. This can scarcely be regarded as an instance of Rabbinical punctiliousness. It was intended to carry out the idea that the lamb was to be undefiled by any contact with foreign matter, which might otherwise have adhered to it. For everything here was significant, and the slightest deviation would mar the harmony of the whole. If it had been said, that not a bone of the Paschal lamb was to be broken, that it was not to be 'sodden at all with water, but roast with fire - his head with his legs, and with the pertinences thereof,' and that none of it was to 'remain until the morning,' all that had not been eaten being burnt with fire - such ordinances had each a typical object. Of all other sacrifices, even the most holy, it alone was not to be 'sodden' because the flesh must remain pure, without the admixture even of water. Then, no bone of

the lamb was to be broken: it was to be served up entire - none of it was to be left over; and those who gathered around it were to form one family. All this was intended to express that it was to be a complete and unbroken sacrifice, on the ground of which there was complete and unbroken fellowship with the God who had passed by the blood-sprinkled doors, and with those who together formed but one family and one body. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16,17)

Such views and feelings, which, no doubt, all truly spiritual Israelites shared gave its meaning to the Paschal feast at which Jesus sat down with His disciples, and which He transformed into the Lord's Supper by linking it to His Person and Work. Every sacrifice, indeed, had prefigured His work; but none other could so suitably commemorate His death, nor yet the great deliverance connected with it, and the great union and fellowship flowing from it. For other reasons also it was specially suited to be typical of Christ. It was a sacrifice, and yet quite out of the order of all Levitical sacrifices. For it had been instituted and observed before Levitical sacrifices existed; before the Law was given; nay, before the Covenant was ratified by blood. (Exodus 24). In a sense, it may be said to have been the cause of all later sacrifices of the Law, and of the Covenant itself. Lastly, it belonged neither to one nor to another class of sacrifices; it was neither exactly a sin-offering nor a peace-offering, but combined them both. And yet in many respects it quite differed from them. In short, just as the priesthood of Christ was a real Old Testament priesthood, yet not after the order of Aaron, but after the earlier, prophetic, and royal order of Melchisedec, so the sacrifice also of Christ was a real Old Testament sacrifice, yet not after the order of Levitical sacrifices, but after that of the earlier prophetic Passover sacrifice, by which Israel had become a royal nation.

As the guest gathered around the Paschal table, they came no longer, as at the first celebration, with their 'loins girded, 'with shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hand - that is, as travellers waiting to take their departure. On the contrary, they were arrayed in their best festive garments, joyous and at rest, as became the children of a king. To express this idea the Rabbis also insisted that the Passover Supper - or at least part of it - must be eaten in that recumbent position with which we are familiar from the New Testament. 'For,' say they, 'they use this leaning posture, as free men do, in memorial of their freedom.' And, again, 'Because it is the manner of slaves to eat standing, therefore now they eat sitting and leaning, in order to show that they have been delivered from bondage into freedom.' And, finally: 'No, not the poorest in Israel may eat till he has sat down, leaning.' But, though it was deemed desirable to 'sit leaning' during the whole Supper, it was only absolutely enjoined while partaking of the bread and wine. This recumbent posture so far resembled that still common in the East, that the body rested on the feet. Hence, also, the penitent woman at the feast given by Simon is said to have 'stood at His feet, behind,' 'weeping.' (Luke 7:38). At the same time, the left elbow was placed on the table, and the head rested on the hand, sufficient room being of course left between each guest for the free movements of the right hand. This explains in what sense John 'was leaning on Jesus' bosom,' and afterwards 'lying on Jesus' breast,' when he bent back to speak to Him.

The use of wine in the Passover, though not mentioned in the Law, was strictly enjoined by tradition. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, it was intended to express Israel's joy on the Passover night, and even the poorest must have 'at least four cups, though he were to receive the money for it from the poor's box.' If he cannot otherwise obtain it, the Talmud adds, 'he must sell or pawn his coat or hire himself out for these four cups of wine.' The same authority variously accounts for the number four as either corresponding to the four words used about Israel's redemption (bringing out, delivering, redeeming, taking) or to the fourfold mention of the cup in connection with the chief butler's dream, or to the four cups of vengeance which God would in the future give the nations to drink, while four cups of consolation would be handed to Israel, as it is written: "The Lord is the portion of my cup," "My cup runneth over," "I will take the cup of salvation."

As detailed in the earliest Jewish record of ordinances - the Mishnah - the service of the Passover Supper was exceedingly simple. Indeed, the impression left on the mind is, that, while all the observances were fixed, the prayers, with some exceptions preserved to us, were free. Rabbi Gamaliel, the teacher of the Apostle Paul, said: 'Whoever does not explain three things in the Passover has not fulfilled the duty incumbent on him. These three things are: the Passover lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. The Passover lamb means that God passed over the blood-sprinkled place on the houses of our fathers in

Egypt; the unleavened bread means that our fathers were delivered out of Egypt (in haste); and the bitter herbs mean that the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our fathers in Egypt.' A few additional particulars are necessary to enable the reader to understand all the arrangements of the Passover Supper. From the time of the evening-sacrifice nothing was to be eaten till the Supper, so that all might come to it with relish. It is a moot point, whether at the time of Jesus Christ two, or, as at present, three, large cakes of unleavened bread were used in the service. The Mishnah mentions these five kinds as falling within the designation of 'bitter herbs' viz. lettuce, endive, succory (endive?), what is called '*Charchavina*' (beet?), and horehound (coriander?). The 'bitter herbs' seem to have been twice partaken of during the service, once dipped in salt water or vinegar, and a second time with *Charoseth*; a compound of dates, raisins, etc., and vinegar, though the Mishnah expressly declares that *Charoseth* was not obligatory. Red wine alone was to be used at the Passover Supper, and always mixed with water. Each of the four cups must contain at least the fourth of a quarter of an hin (the hin = 10 pints). Lastly, it was a principle that, after the meal, they had no *Aphikomen* (after-dish), an expression which may perhaps best be rendered by 'dessert.'

The Supper itself commenced by the head of 'the company' taking the first cup of wine in his hand, and 'giving thanks' over it in these words: 'Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, who hast created the fruit of the vine. Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the Universe, who hast chosen us from among all people, and exalted us from among all languages, and sanctified us with Thy commandments. And Thou hast given us, O Jehovah our God, in love, the solemn days for joy, and the festivals and appointed seasons for gladness; and this the day of the feast of unleavened bread, the season of our freedom, a holy convocation, the memorial of our departure from Egypt. For us hast Thou chosen; and us Thou hast sanctified from among all nations, and Thy holy festivals with joy and with gladness hast Thou caused us to inherit. Blessed art Thou, O Jehovah, who sanctifiest Israel and the appointed seasons. Blessed art Thou, Jehovah, King of the Universe, who hast preserved us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season.'

The first cup of wine was then drunk, and each washed his hands. It was evidently at this time that the Saviour in His self-humiliation proceeded also to wash the disciple's feet. Our Authorised Version wrongly translates John 15:2 by, 'and supper being ended,' instead of 'and when supper had come,' or 'was begun.' Similarly, it was, in all, probability, in reference to the first cup that Luke gives the following account: 'And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said. Take this, and divide it among yourselves' - the cup of blessing, which was the third, and formed part of the new institution of the Lord's Supper, being afterwards mentioned in verse 20. In washing their hands this customary prayer was repeated: 'Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and hast enjoined us concerning the washing of our hands.' Two different kinds of 'washing' were prescribed by tradition - 'dipping' and 'pouring.' At the Passover Supper the hands were to be 'dipped' in water.

These preliminaries ended, the Passover table was brought forward. The president of the feast first took of the herbs, dipped them in salt water, ate of them, and gave to the others.

Immediately after it, all the dishes were removed from the table (as it was thought so strange a proceeding would tend to excite the more curiosity), and then the second cup was filled. A very interesting ceremony now took place. It had been enjoined in the law that at each Passover Supper the father was to show his son the import of this festival. By way of carrying out this duty, the son (or else the youngest) was directed at this particular part of the service to make inquiry; and, if the child were too young or incapable, the father would do it for him.

The son asks: 'Why is this night distinguished from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread? On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs? On all other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed, or boiled, but on this night only roasted? On all other nights we dip (the herbs) only once, but on this night twice?' Thus far according to the earliest and most trustworthy tradition. It is added: 'Then the father instructs his child according to the capacity of his knowledge, beginning with our disgrace and ending with our glory, and expounding to him from, 'A Syrian, ready to perish, was my father, 'till he has explained all through, to the end of the whole section.' (Deut 26:5-11). In other words, the head of the house was to relate the whole national history, commencing with Terah, Abraham's father, and telling of his idolatry, and continuing, in due order, the story of Israel up to their deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the Law; and the more fully he explained it all, the better.

This done, the Passover dishes were brought back on the table. The president now took up in succession the dish with the Passover lamb, that with the bitter herbs, and that with the unleavened bread, and briefly explained the import of each; for according to Rabbi Gamaliel: 'From generation to generation every man is bound to look upon himself not otherwise than if he had himself come out of Egypt. For so it is written, "And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which Jehovah did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt." Therefore, continues the Mishnah, giving the very words of the prayer used, 'we are bound to thank, praise, laud, glorify, extol, honour, bless, exalt, and reverence Him, because He hath wrought for our fathers, and for us all these miracles. He brought us forth from bondage into freedom, from sorrow into joy, from mourning to a festival, from darkness to a great light, and from slavery to redemption. Therefore let us sing before Him: Hallelujah!' Then the first part of the 'Hallel' was sung, comprising Psalms 115 and 114, with this brief thanksgiving at the close: 'Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, King of the Universe, who hast redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt.' Upon this the second cup was drunk. Hands were now washed a second time, with the same prayer as before, and one of the two unleavened cakes broken and 'thanks given.'

Rabbinical authorities distinctly state that this thanksgiving was to follow, not to precede, the breaking of bread, because it was the bread of poverty, 'and the poor have not whole cakes, but broken pieces.' The distinction is important, as proving that since the Lord in instituting His Supper, according to the uniform testimony of the three Gospels and of the Apostle Paul, first gave thanks and then brake the bread ('having given thanks, He brake it'), it must have been at a later period of the service.

Pieces of the broken cake with 'bitter herbs' between them, and 'dipped' in the *Charoseth*, were next handed to each in the company. This, in all probability, was 'the sop' which, in answer to John's inquiry about the betrayer, the Lord 'gave' to Judas. The unleavened bread with the bitter herbs constituted, in reality, the beginning of the Passover Supper, to which the first part of the service had only served as a kind of introduction. But as Judas, after 'having received the sop, went immediately out,' he could not even have partaken of the Passover lamb, far less of the Lord's Supper. The solemn discourses of the Lord recorded by John (John 15:51 - 16:55) may therefore be regarded as His last 'table-talk' and the intercessory prayer that followed (John 17) as His 'grace after meat.'

The Passover Supper itself consisted of the unleavened bread with bitter herbs, of the so-called *Chagigah*, or festive offering (when brought), and, lastly, of the Passover lamb itself. After that nothing more was to be eaten, so that the flesh of the Passover Sacrifice might be the last meat partaken of. But since the cessation of the Passover Sacrifice the Jews conclude the Supper with a piece of unleavened cake, which they call the *Aphikomen*, or after-dish. Then having again washed hands, the third cup is filled, and grace after meat said. Now, it is very remarkable that our Lord seems so far to have anticipated the present Jewish practice that He brake the bread 'when He had given thanks, instead of adhering to the old injunction of not eating anything after the Passover lamb. And yet in so doing He only carried out the spirit of the Passover feast. For, as we have already explained, it was commemorative and typical. It commemorated an event which pointed to and merged in another event - even the offering of the better Lamb, and the better freedom connected with that sacrifice. Hence, after the night of His betrayal, the Passover lamb could have no further meaning, and it was right that the commemorative *Aphikomen* should take its place. The symbolical cord, if the figure may be allowed, had stretched to its goal - the offering up of the Lamb of God; and though again continued from that point onwards till His second coming yet it was, in a sense, as from a new beginning.

Immediately afterwards the third cup was drunk, a special blessing having been spoken over it. There cannot be any reasonable doubt that this was the cup which our Lord connected with His own Supper. It is called in Jewish writings, just as by the Apostle Paul, 'the cup of blessing' partly because it and the first cup required a special 'blessing,' and partly because it followed on the 'grace after meat.' Indeed, such importance attached to it, that the Talmud notes ten peculiarities, too minute indeed for our present consideration, but sufficient to show the special value set upon it. The service concluded with the fourth cup, over which the second portion of the 'Hallel' was sung, consisting of Psalms 115, 116, 117, and 118, the whole ending with the so-called 'blessing of the song' which comprised these two brief prayers: 'All Thy works shall praise Thee, Jehovah our God. And Thy saints, the righteous, who do Thy good pleasure, and all Thy people, the house of Israel, with joyous song let them praise and bless, and magnify, and

glorify, and exalt, and reverence, and sanctify, and ascribe the Kingdom to Thy name, O our King. For it is good to praise Thee, and pleasure to sing praises unto Thy name, for from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.'

'The breath of all that lives shall praise Thy name, Jehovah our God. And the spirit of all flesh shall continually glorify and exalt Thy memorial, O our King. For from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God, and besides Thee we have no King, Redeemer...'

In this manner was the Passover Supper celebrated by the Jews at the time when our Lord for the last time sat down to it with His disciples. So important is it to have a clear understanding of all that passed on that occasion, that, at the risk of some repetition, we shall now attempt to piece together the notices in the various Gospels, adding to them again those explanations which have just been given in detail. At the outset we may dismiss, as unworthy of serious discussion, the theory, either that our Lord had observed the Passover Supper at another than the regular time for it, or that John meant to intimate that He had partaken of it on the 15th instead of the 14th Nisan. To such hypotheses there is one conclusive answer, that, except on the evening of the 14th Nisan, no Passover lamb could have been offered in the Temple, and therefore no Passover Supper celebrated in Jerusalem. But abiding by the simple text of Scripture, we have the following narrative of events:- Early on the forenoon of the 14th of Nisan, the Lord Jesus having sent Peter and John before Him 'to prepare the Passover,' 'in the evening He cometh with the twelve' to the 'guest-chamber,' the 'large upper room furnished' for the Supper, although He seems to have intended 'after Supper' to spend the night outside the city. Hence Judas and the band from the chief priests do not seek for Him where He had eaten the Passover, but go at once to 'the garden into which He had entered, and His disciples;' for Judas 'knew the place,' and it was one to which 'Jesus oft times resorted with His disciples,' 'When the hour was come' for the commencement of the Passover Supper, Jesus 'sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him' all, as usual at the feast, 'leaning,' John on 'Jesus' bosom,' being placed next before Him, and Judas apparently next behind, while Simon Peter faced John, and was thus able to 'beckon unto him' when he wished inquiry to be made of the Lord. The disciples being thus ranged, the Lord Jesus 'took the cup and gave thanks, and said. Take this, and divide it among yourselves.' This was the first cup, over which the first prayer in the service was spoken. Next, as in duty bound, all washed their hands, only that the Lord here also gave meaning to the observance, when, expanding the service into Christian fellowship over His broken body, He 'riseth from Supper,' 'and began to wash the disciples feet.' It is thus we explain how this ministry, though calling forth Peter's resistance to the position which the Master took, did not evoke any question as to its singularity. As the service proceeded, the Lord mingled teaching for the present with the customary lessons of the past; for, as we have seen, considerable freedom was allowed, provided the instruction proper at the feast were given. The first part of the 'Hallel' had been sung, and in due order He had taken the 'bread of poverty' and the 'bitter herbs,' commemorative of the sorrow and the bitterness of Egypt, when 'He was troubled in spirit' about 'the root of bitterness' about to spring up among, and to trouble them, by which 'many would be defiled.' The general concern of the disciples as to which of their number should betray Him, found expression in the gesture of Peter. His friend John understood its meaning, and 'lying back on Jesus' breast,' he put the whispered question, to which the Lord replied by giving 'the sop' of unleavened bread with bitter herbs, 'when He had dipped' it, to Judas Iscariot.

'And after the sop Satan entered into him,' and he 'went out immediately.' It was an unusual time to leave the Passover table, for with 'the sop dipped' into the *Charoseth* the Passover Supper itself had only just begun. But then 'some of them thought' - perhaps without fully considering it in their excitement - that Judas who 'had the bag' and on whom, therefore, the care of such things devolved, had only gone to see after 'those things that they had need of against the feast,' or to 'give something to the poor' - applying some of the common stock of money in helping to provide 'peace-offerings' for the poor. This would have been quite in accordance with the spirit of the ordinance, while neither supposition necessarily involved a breach of the law, since it was permitted to prepare all needful provision for the feast, and of course also for the Sabbath, which in this instance followed it. For, as we have seen, the festive observance of the 15th of Nisan differed in this from the ordinary Sabbath-law, although there is evidence that even the latter was at that time by no means so strict as later Jewish tradition has made it. And then it was, after the regular Passover meal, that the Lord instituted His own Supper, for the first time using the '*Aphikomen*' 'when He had given thanks' (after meat), to symbolise His body, and the third cup, or 'cup of blessing which we bless' - being 'the cup after supper' - to symbolise His blood. 'And when they had sung an hymn' 'they went out into the mount of Olives.'

Then it was that the Lord's great heaviness and loneliness came upon Him; when all around seemed to give way, as if crushed under the terrible burden about to be lifted; when His disciples could not watch with Him even one hour; when in the agony of His soul 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground;' and when He 'prayed, saying; O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' But 'the cup which the Father' had given Him, He drank to the bitter dregs; and 'when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and, being made perfect. He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. Thus the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world - and indeed, 'slain from the foundation of the world' - was selected, ready, willing, and waiting. It only remained, that He should be actually offered up as 'the propitiation for our sins: and not ours only, but also for the whole world.'

Dr Edersheim