

The Nazarene Fellowship Circular Letter No. 108

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Editorial

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

Sister Eddie Howells of Yarrawonga, Australia, sends her Love to the Brethren and Sisters, via a letter written to Sister Audrey Bundy, and she, too, sends her Love and Best Wishes to all.

We hear that Brother Leo recently had 'flu, but now writes to say he is fully recovered. Also Brother Phil Parry has not been well since about the 17th December but tells us he is now on the mend. Brother Phil also sent a postcard which he had received from Audrey Miller, daughter of Brother David Phillips in which she writes "Dad appears to have become rather more lively and cheerful just lately. It is possible that he is now beginning to recover psychologically from the shock of my mother's death, his long hospitalisation, the operation and the entirely new life here. We hope he will continue to feel better. He has had some problem with his shoulder and a brief attack of Shingles, which the doctor treated immediately and cleared up - but nothing else serious this year to date. Soon he hopes to have a cataract removed from his left eye in an effort to retain some vision. It will not change things much because of the eye damage already sustained and his eye will still have to be partially sewn up, but we hope it will give enough vision to find his way around indoors. He himself decided it should be done and we hope it will not cause further complication, D.V."

Thank you for your card, Audrey. I am sure all our prayers are with you and your father at this time. I often think of Numbers 6: 22-27 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying. On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

In spite of our hardships we are wonderfully blessed through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We extend our Best Wishes to all our readers, with Sincere Love in the Master's Service.

Russell Gregory

Questions and Answers.

Last month we asked for an apt, succinct definition of devil, or The Devil.

We have received three answers:

A.) "Temptation is the devil. Or Adversary of all truth and righteousness. That is, of all that savourest not the things of God."

B.) "The Devil is the personification of Sin (as wisdom is personified as a woman in scripture) manifested in both individuals and groups of people, governments, etc., and of course, primarily of the first sin of Adam, which is typical of all sin, and was the Devil Christ destroyed in His death."

C.) "Self-will, or the will of man. Even Jesus said "not my will but Thine be done," for His will was adverse (Satan) to the will of His Father as seen in the Temptation in the wilderness. Also His rebuke to Peter, "Get thee behind me satan"

Correspondence:

Two of our Fellowship have written regarding Gog and Magog in Ezekiel and Revelation. Sister Audrey Bundy writes "Bro. Phil's letter gave me much food for thought and Bible searching. I am afraid I have to disagree with him regarding Gog and Magog. I believe there are two different episodes. In Ezekiel 38 Gog enters the Promised Land and plants his tabernacle between the seas and the glorious mountain - Daniel 11:45. He is already in possession when Christ returns to destroy the Gogian host and deliver the Jews and Jerusalem from captivity. This conflict takes place in Jerusalem and afterwards they are seven months burying the dead and cleansing the land.

The second conflict at Armageddon is at the end of the Millennium when the beast makes war with the Lamb and His saints and is destroyed by fire. Armageddon is approximately 50 miles from Jerusalem, so it seems fairly obvious that they are two different conflicts. Also the second one is a crusade of ten kings under a spiritual head. Christ, as King in Zion, demands unconditional surrender and is opposed by the ten kings and Papal head who set out to dethrone Him. As we know, they fail in their mission and Christ rules supreme until He hands over to His Father."

The second letter is from Sister Evelyn and Brother Harvey in which they write, "We do not see how the prophecy of Ezekiel 38 & 39 and that of Revelation 20:8-10 are one and the same event, and in fact, John does mention two events, the one in Revelation 19 from verse 11 to 21 with a similarity of language as that used in Ezekiel 39:17 - 23. This is to happen before the 1000 year reign - notice verse 22 "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward." Are we going to believe that Israel didn't know God until the end of Christ's reign on earth? We believe that the events in chapter 19 and 20 of Revelation will all come to pass in the order given, first, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, then His going forth with the saints to fight against those nations which oppose Him, as Psalm 2 and other scriptures describe, the destruction by fire of the beast and false prophet, then the restraining of sin and Christ's righteous reign, and it would seem, that when the 1000 years are expired, there will be a period of testing and the rebels will reveal themselves as described in verses 8-10 and the Devil (or, sin-power) that deceived them will be cast into the lake of fire "where the beast and the false prophet are." They had been destroyed the same way 1000 years previously - also, let it be noted that the destruction of this last uprising was by fire, whereas that described in Ezekiel was different, where fowls eat the flesh of the slain and bones are buried over a period of time. With the destruction by fire there would be no flesh to eat and nothing to bury, so it seems to us that they are undoubtedly two separate events."

Thank you for your letters. I am sure we all find this subject absorbing, and others will have their views, too. At the present time I am compiling an essay on the revelation from the many notes left by my father and hope to have this finished in about two months. It seems to me that there are two helpful and outstanding points to keep in mind. The one is the destruction of 6,000,000 Jews referred to in Revelation

8:12, and the second is that there are 3 Woes to befall mankind before the Kingdom is established. 3 Woes of far greater magnitude than the holocaust of 1939-1945.

Russell.

The Little Things - No Room for Boasting before God.

When we go through our daily Bible Readings, our minds concentrate on the big historic events, or on major prophecies. But I think we are apt to overlook the little things. So, today, let us have a look at the more trivial things. It is remarkable that many things related to the Kingdom of God, its forerunner as the Kingdom of Israel, as well as the future Kingdom, started little. Not unlike some industrious businessmen who started as hawkers going about with a handcart, plying their goods and developing into a large business with stores in every large town.

The human race itself started from one pair. The Jewish nation started with one family: Abraham and Sarah. And let us consider David and Solomon, two of the mightiest and greatest kings of history. David was the youngest of a large family. They thought of him as just an insignificant shepherd. Yet he was the one whom God chose, because he showed an attitude towards God that earned him the description of “a man after God’s own heart.” What is more, tracing David’s ancestry some four generations back, there was Salmon, the husband of the harlot Rahab, who hid Joshua’s spies and so found entrance into the nation of Israel, and hence the forerunner of the Kingdom of God, as well as the future Kingdom.

And what about Solomon? He was the son of Bathsheba, who, with David committed adultery. True, the child born as the consequence died, yet just as David was forgiven this grave sin, coupled with the murder of Uriah through the sword of the Ammonites, so it seems Bathsheba was pardoned and received into the family of Israel, just as was Rahab a few centuries earlier. It all goes to show that none of us have any right to boast before God.

And what about our Lord and Redeemer, Himself? His life started in a humble stable. In His youth the son of a modest carpenter, on His mother’s side, what we nowadays would call a working class family.

How right was Paul when he wrote, Romans 3:27, through divine inspiration, “Where is boasting, then? It is excluded.” And then he goes on “By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.”

In this last sentence lies the gist of it all: faith. And perhaps I should add, as we learn from other portions of the Bible, faith followed by true repentance from past sins. This is how Rahab found entrance into the nation of Israel and how David regained favour with God after his double sin of adultery and murder.

And how do we stand? We were born ignorant of God, His laws and His promises. Come to think of it, we are so few that it can nearly be called a miracle that the knowledge of the truth has come to us, that we are among the “called out” ones, and as we hope, also the chosen ones when God makes up His jewels. Most of us first learned of it either through our parents, or through talking to friends, or perhaps, by chance picking up, or having been given some literature. So we certainly have no reason of boasting before God, but we walk humbly and thankfully, and counting our redemption and the knowledge of it, as one of our great blessings. This knowledge of redemption and the future Kingdom has not come to us because we deserved it; we were born bondmen and bondwomen to sin, like everybody else. We just owe it to God’s mercy.

Let me finish with one concluding thought. How do we resent being blamed for something we have not done, or for some accident that was not our fault? Or how annoyed do we get for an accident, or

misfortune that happened to us through no fault on our part? But have we ever thought of this: how many blessings do we owe to God through no merit on our part? How often has God saved us out of danger that was caused by our own negligence, or carelessness, be it only at the heat of the moment? And do we always thank God when He saved us from a nasty situation that was our fault, and not the other fellows? So let us endeavour to walk worthy of our calling to the end of our probation.

Bro. Leo Dreifuss.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbad Him...”

In submitting to the baptism of John, who was His forerunner Jesus voluntarily surrendered Himself to what was a national requirement at the time, not because He needed washing, but because of His desire to fulfil to the uttermost the righteousness required of Him. The use of the plural in the Lord’s saying, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,” we would suggest referred to Himself and John the Baptist. The ‘others besides’ who flocked to John’s baptism were transgressors, and were baptised confessing their sins. Jesus had no sins to confess, nor any defilement to wash away. He was not in their position, and John/knowing this, might well express surprise that Jesus should come to him for such a purpose. If the Baptist had looked upon Jesus as a defiled one, needing to be washed, it is scarcely conceivable he could have addressed Him as he did. But some of our modern scribes consider themselves better informed on the point in question than our Lord’s forerunner, who was specially sent to prepare His way. However that may be, for our own part we are satisfied from the testimony that Jesus was not defiled, and that John could have held no such idea concerning Him. A theory which can resort to such an argument in order to support it must indeed be in desperate straits.

John’s baptism was the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,” and at the same time he made a public proclamation to the people, saying, “repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand;” or, more literally rendered, the words are, ‘repent, for the royal majesty of the Heavens has approached.’ “John verily baptised with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” (Acts 19:4) “That He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water.” (John 1:31). These are the words of Paul and John, and they define the nature and intention of the baptism then practised. From all this it is clear that John’s baptism had reference to repentance on account of personal transgressions and not to defilement inherited from Adam, and also that it was made the occasion of announcing to the nation of Israel that their long expected Messiah was then in their midst. The confession made by those who were baptised was a confession of sins actually committed, and not a confession of being under sentence of death for Adam’s sin. In submitting to it the sinless Jesus, who had nothing to confess, nor any defilement from which to be cleansed, rendered an act of obedience to an existing institution, and thereby typified His own death, burial and resurrection. The conclusion therefore is, that the baptism of Jesus did not prove Him to be physically unclean, any more than His circumcision proved Him to be unclean, but that both ceremonies were typical of events concerning Himself in the relationship He bore to the rest of mankind. The question is, ‘Was it not the existence of sin in the world which gave rise to such ceremonies?’ seems very unnecessary, and admits only one answer. Of course if sin had not entered into the world no expiatory offerings or sacrifices would have been required, and consequently no ceremonies enjoined which were in any way typical of them. But, admitting this, we entirely fail to see how it furnishes any proof that He who was destined to cleanse the world from sin must Himself be unclean in order to effect that object. In our judgement it proves the very opposite, and necessitates the coming of such a Redeemer as the Scriptures describe Jesus to be, that is to say, one who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.

It is asked, ‘If Jesus was in the same position as Adam before the fall, how is it He was not freed from all ceremonies which owed their origin to the existence of sin?’ In reply, we say, Jesus was not in all points in the same position as Adam before the fall, though He was equally required to develop obedience under trial. His nature was the same, but the circumstances under which He was placed were different, owing to the introduction of sin and death into the world. It is admitted that Jesus stood related to the law of sin and

death, but the question is, in what way? The relationship which He bore to it was not that of one who was under it either by inheritance or by actual transgression, but that of one who being Himself personally free from the condemnation of that law was able to redeem those who were involved in it both constitutionally as well as by actual offences. Had Jesus been born of the will of the flesh He would, like all the rest of mankind, have been under sentence of death and powerless to save, but being the only-begotten Son of God, after perfecting obedience under trial. He could, by the sacrifice of Himself, redeem the death stricken race of Adam. This then is the reason why Jesus was not freed from all ceremonies which owed their origin to the existence of sin.

Again, it has been asked, 'Why was washing necessary to the priests under the law?' Because they were transgressors of that law, and therefore required to be made ceremonially clean before they could minister before the Lord, or typify Him who was without spot and blameless. Such being the character and nature of Jesus, He did not need His flesh to be washed before being anointed as a priest, nor did His compliance with the ordinance of baptism furnish any evidence that His flesh was unclean on account of Adam's sin, as already explained.

In conclusion, we remark that it does not follow that because orthodox commentators are wrong on some points, as for instance 'the eternal sonship' of Christ, they are therefore untrustworthy on all and not to be regarded. However much they may be sneered at by those who deem themselves so much wiser than their fellows, orthodox commentators have by their knowledge of language and reasoning, shed a good deal of light on many parts of scripture, and the Bible student whose only object is truth will gladly avail himself of their researches and accept light from any quarter. But for the labours of such the probability is that to this day the English reader would be destitute of a copy of the Scriptures in the mother tongue.

Brother S.G.Hayes. (circa 1880)

SARAH

We know little of the early life of Sarah, but piecing together various hints from Genesis we picture the family of Terah in happy surroundings, living in Ur of the Chaldees, a city which the monuments tell us had reached a high level of civilization.

Terah had three sons who would be educated according to the custom of the period. The various guesses as to their relative ages need not concern us now. Trouble came into the home with the loss of his first wife, mother of the three boys, but we have no hint of the date. We know Terah married again, and when Abram was ten years old his little half-sister was born, and we know that between these two there sprang up a loving devotion which was to last well over a century, that is, throughout Sarah's lifetime.

On Sarah's side, as seen from the first time we meet her until the end, her genuine devotion to her husband was a shining example to all who knew her, and for generations still to come.

When Sarah was growing up another tragedy came into the family, Terah's son Haran, was taken from them, leaving a son (Lot) and two daughters, to mourn the loss of a father. Lot was taken into Terah's household, and we picture Sarah doing her best for the lad, so much so that later on, when one of life's great decisions had to be faced, he went out into a strange land with Abram and Sarah, rather than remain in the family home with Nahor.

One of Lot's sisters - Iscah - has been confused with Sarah, some commentators regarding it merely as two forms of spelling, but we remember Abram said distinctly "She is my sister, she is the daughter of my Father but not the daughter of my mother."

The other sister, Milcah, married her uncle Nahor, and from this union eventually sprang Rebekah.

Sarah was about 65 and Abram 75 years old when they left Haran for the journey to Canaan. It was the second time the home camp had been uprooted and Sarah, who was no longer young, might have been excused had she raised objections to travelling to an unknown country. But Abram had heard a Voice calling and Sarah would not oppose him, she would remain by his side whatever the future might have in store for them.

The place of these two in the Divine Plan was one of great privilege and responsibility. The first man, made in the image of God, had failed to maintain that image, his elder son was a murderer, but the younger son, Seth, began a line of God-fearing men lasting with more or less fidelity until Abram. Human nature did not attain the Divine ideal; therefore God intervened, selected a suitable couple and by a miracle founded a nation to be trained for His Service and to show forth His Glory. The strong faith and willing obedience of Abram were characteristics required in this nation. Sarah, the helpmeet, and later, the mother, had an important task to perform.

In Genesis 12:5 we find Abram and Sarah with Lot “and the souls they had gotten in Haran...”. Does this suggest that many were found willing to believe and worship Abram’s God, therefore preferring to travel with the party rather than remain among the idols in Haran? If this is so, Sarah would no doubt have a great deal to do with winning the loyalty of these nameless folk. The first lady in the camp, even if not herself a teacher, would set the example of giving a friendly reception to those who learned from Abram.

Eventually they came to Shechem and here was the promise renewed; no longer “A land that I will show thee” but “Unto thy seed will I give this land.” As an act of worship an altar was built, and in after days, when tents had been removed, this later remained a witness to the fact that here was a place which had been used for worship.

The next halt was near Bethel, and here again an altar was built, and this one served as a landmark to be visited later.

It would be a severe test of faith when food supplies in Canaan ran short and it became necessary to take refuge in Egypt. Why had God promised them a land which could not supply their needs? Their faith did not fail, rather was it strengthened to meet more severe tests which were to follow.

We learn here that Sarah, though growing old, was still beautiful, for Abram feared that Pharaoh would desire her and might even murder her husband in order to gratify his wish. It was therefore agreed that she should be known as Abram’s sister. It must have been alarming for Sarah to be separated from her husband and taken into Pharaoh’s palace among strangers. She who had been living a life of freedom in the open country, sheltered only by a tent, would find life within four walls rather restricted and uncomfortable. The Lord who had called these two for a special purpose was watching over them and allowed Pharaoh to do them no harm. He blessed them, and Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and gold.

Returning from Egypt, Abram first visited Bethel, with its altar and its memories of earlier communion with God; here, following a further act of worship, he was able to deal generously with Lot whose servants had disputed with Abram’s servants over the pastures and wells. Abram generously offered Lot a choice of land, promising to lead his own flocks in another direction.

The two families parted and the Devine promise was renewed, with additions. He was bidden to “walk through the land, in the length of it and in the breadth of it.” Did he take Sarah and the whole encampment for this journey? We are not told, but it would be quite likely, rather than divide his household.

Three times had Abram received a Devine promise:-

Genesis 12:7 “Unto thy seed will I give this land.”

Genesis 13:16 “I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth.”

Genesis 15:5 “Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them; so shall thy seed be.”

There were approximately eight years between the first and the last of these promises, yet nothing more had happened. Sarah, growing impatient, suggested Hagar as a substitute, in accordance with a custom of the times. Later, in a fit of jealousy, she treated her maid so unkindly that Hagar left home.

We must not judge Sarah too harshly for this, she was only human, and must have longed for a child of her own. Her faith was very sorely tried by the long delay, and a very natural reaction was envy of the more fortunate handmaid. The words of the Angel to Hagar show an understanding kindness, she was promised a numerous seed, and was bidden "Return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands." Hagar obeyed the Divine Messenger and stayed with Sarah until the time came when God bade Abraham send her away permanently.

In Genesis 17 we read the Lord made a solemn covenant; and Abram's name was changed to Abraham, meaning Father of a Multitude. The promise was clearly given: "I will make thee exceeding fruitful. I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

The name of Sarai was also changed, and a clear promise given that she should be a Mother of Nations. Abraham's natural rejoinder was a plea for Ishmael, but he was assured that the special blessings were for Sarah's son, and the boy's name was announced.

This interview seems to have been with Abraham alone. Later, the Lord appeared to him again with a special message for Sarah. Abraham's hospitality shows itself in the details he arranged for the comfort of his three visitors. He came to Sarah - "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal - make cakes upon the hearth." Servants would be at hand if required, but Sarah took responsibility of providing a meal worthy of the guests.

Sarah overheard the mention of her son, and we can understand the laughter the idea caused in both, not necessarily of doubt, for there was a humorous side to the prospect; a little child in their home seemed so far outside possibility; there was definitely joy, for a long-standing desire was to be fulfilled. Abraham had found God faithful and could not seriously doubt His word. Sarah, somewhat nervously, denied having laughed, feeling uncertain how the Messenger would treat her. Hebrews 11 tells us that Sarah was given this child because she judged Him faithful who had promised." The boy was called by a name meaning 'laughter', thus perpetuating the joy of his parents.

Sarah guarded her son so jealously that again she sent her maid away, this time permanently for "the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." We can almost hear the note of pride with which she spoke the words "my son".

Reading through the narrative in Genesis 22 we wonder if Sarah ever knew of the call to sacrifice Isaac. It would have been much harder for Abraham if he had to win her consent; it is possible she was not told of the command which so baffled her husband. Abraham still believed the Devine promise "In Isaac thy seed shall be called," and though he could not see how this would be accomplished he told the servants "I and the lad will go yonder and worship and come again to you." Hebrews 11:19 suggests the thought that the God who had given him Isaac could as easily raise him from the dead.

A ram was substituted, but not until Isaac had suffered himself to be bound and laid on the altar, a symbol of dedication to God.

In Galatians 4 Paul speaks of Hagar as a bondwoman, and her son as "born after the flesh." This he likens to the Sinai covenant, which covenant answereth to Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children. We, who by faith and belief in Jesus have become children of promise as Isaac was, have entered into the New Covenant and are children of the Jerusalem which is above and is free.

Safety, guidance and rich reward were promised by the Sinai covenant, but the people saw very differently. Thunder, lightning, the Voice of a trumpet, the smoking mountain and the warning to keep at a safe distance, all combined to alarm them, and they cried out in fear to Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear, let not God speak with us lest we die."

Successive generations set aside the law in favour of their own ideas, as Adam had done in Eden; blessings were forfeited until the people forgot the possibility of Divine rewards. The Rabbis added their interpretations and prohibitions till New Testament times and the law was hidden under such a mass of tradition that it became a burden.

With this in mind, Paul contrasts Ishmael, the son of bondage, with Isaac, the son of the free woman, and shows how Christ has made His servants free. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Hagar, the bondswoman, and her son belong to this life, the brightest spot being shown in the meaning of the boys name, "The man whom God hears." But Isaac, directly given by God, and in symbol, dedicated on the altar to God, represents those who are born from above, and whose lives are consecrated to the Lord who has redeemed them.

Sarah, the free woman and her son are used to show the liberty of the Gospel, whose adherents are no more servants, but sons. The Gospel is wider than nation or race, and all who will may come to the Saviour, with whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but all are one.

Ishmael goes down to history as Father of a great nation because he is Abram's son. God was with the lad and assured Hagar that her son should dwell in the midst of his brethren, even though his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him.

Isaac goes down to history as Father of the nation to whom God said "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine" and again "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen" "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth my praise." (Isaiah 43)

To-day we see Jews and Arabs still living near each other, with deep-rooted enmity separating their thoughts and habits. We know that neither will be able to overcome the other, for none but the Prince of Peace will be able to bring them together in harmony.

Sister Mona Dawes.

Parabolic Teaching

It has been said of Jesus, "Never man spake like this man." "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The Psalmist prophesied, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter dark sayings of old." Psalm 78;2. The importance which is attached to the fulfilment of this prophecy in the life of Jesus naturally leads us to believe that there is considerable profit both in the parables and in understanding why the Lord spoke in parables. Jesus has been considered by all students of the scriptures as the world's greatest teacher, and that fact still remains. It is not unusual therefore, that He should use the most simple and yet most convincing method of teaching; that of the parables.

The word parable comes from a term meaning to put one thing before, or beside another, with the idea of comparison. Possibly for this reason attempts have been made by those without any scriptural discernment, to group the parables with many other word pictures known as literature. However, a little careful study will quickly dispel such notions, for there is no profane teaching anywhere comparable to the words of the Lord Jesus. Even the so-called and much-lauded parables of Aristotle are not truly parables in the sense of the New Testament parables. For with the New Testament parables there is a unique characteristic; the stories themselves tell of incidents and customs well known to the world; to the worldly, or carnal minds, they remain simply stories, and their very simplicity is a stumbling block; but to the mind exercised by the spirit they immediately present a picture of the Kingdom of God. Thus it is possible to see how the 'fable' falls short of the 'parable'. While the fable may teach a moral truth which is very necessary

in the character of the child of the Kingdom, we are not immediately presented with the prospect of the Kingdom. Some of you may have read Aesop's fables at school. I remember one story of his; a dog was crossing a bridge over a stream with a bone in his mouth. Looking down into the stream he saw his reflection and believing it to be another dog with a bigger bone, drops his own bone in an effort to grab the larger one, and, of course, loses both. It is necessary, of course that we should not covet, but we are not introduced to the thought, "the Kingdom of God is like unto...." Furthermore, parables, although they may or may not relate to actual events, are always physically possible, (except of course, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which appears to fall into a separate category and to need special treatment.) Fables often must be only stories; because in them, in many cases, animals are endowed with reason and speech. The parable can easily be distinguished from the myth. The parable presents a story and the lesson emerges: the myth produces the lesson as part of the story.

In the Gospel records there is some crossing of the ideas of parable and proverb. This is probably because certain expressions, although not actually parables, nevertheless suggest a parable. For example, when Jesus says, "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal Thyself," it would be easy to construct a story involving such an idea, and when he says, "Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind", it is not difficult to appreciate the scene, with those blind men, with faltering steps, dragging one another into the ditch. This latter expression is described by Peter as a parable (Matthew 15:15).

In certain places (in John's gospel more than anywhere else) there are figures which we call Allegories, which, although they differ from parables, suggest parables to us, and have an equal power in proclaiming the Gospel. They will all be very familiar - "I am the True Vine," "The Good Shepherd," "The Door of the Sheepfold," etc. There is a very interesting parallel here between the Old and the New Testament teaching. John the Baptist uses an allegory when Jesus comes to be baptised. "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Isaiah translates the same idea into a parable in chapter 53.

Parables have been described as "earthly stories with heavenly meanings," and that simple expression has more than a grain of truth, for these parables putting forth the highest ideals of the Kingdom, are based on the simplest agricultural pursuits and local customs. The earliest of these - the seed group - speak to us of the Spirit Word; its production and preparation of citizens for the Kingdom. We know well the simple teaching of the parables of the Sower, the Mustard Seed, and the Wheat and the Tares; it is easy to imagine how these words appealed to the common people, into whose everyday life he was entering, in his preaching of the Gospel. As Christ's mission progressed, the teaching became more urgent, and preparedness for the coming Kingdom became the keynote. Well known marriage customs provided the basis for the potent instruction contained in the parable of the Ten Virgins.

So the teaching carries us even further forward by the emphasis on the election of the righteous and the rejection of the wicked. Notable among these is the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. It is necessary now, I think, to consider the reason (or we might say, reasons) for speaking in parables. All who have in any way assisted in the instruction of children know well the benefit to be obtained by putting their lesson in the form of a story for the story is so much easier to remember than direct words of command, and when the story is recalled, the lesson comes back with it. It is true also that the story gives so much more background and colour to the teaching than a mere recital of hard, cold facts. It might well be written that God is a Loving Father, ever ready to forgive even those who have once turned their backs on Him, and that He has little patience with those who are obsessed with their own self-righteousness. Those facts are true, but how little it tells of the real character of God, and how short it falls when compared to the homely and heart-searching teaching of our Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son.

But Christ was asked why He spoke in parables and His answer must be sought and understood. "Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they, seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias..." This quotation from Isaiah 6 is a sad reflection upon Israel at our Lord's first advent, and a powerful warning for the present day. It seems unthinkable that God, or Jesus representing God, to the chosen people, should wish to stop their ears or obscure their vision; but a little meditation will show how the blindness, deafness and stupidity came from themselves. There is a parallel between the teaching in parables and the glory of God which led the children of Israel out of Egypt. The people of God were led by a brightly shining light, but the same

phenomenon appeared to the godless Egyptians as a dark and harassing cloud. So with these parables; to the mind exercised after a Godly fashion, they are a bright and shining light showing forth vividly the road to the land of Promise, but to the worldly mind they are pointless, improbable and impracticable, in fact, their very simplicity dulls the appreciation of the wondrous ways of God.

So, in the days when Jesus taught these things, “the common people heard Him gladly” but the eyes and ears of the Pharisees, priests and principle Jews were dulled by their own conceit. “They answered Him “We be Abraham’s seed and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou. Ye shall be made free?” (John 8:33). They considered salvation to be a birthright inherited from their faithful father, Abraham. These parables made clear to those who approached the matter with the minds of children, that the Kingdom of God had to be sought with prayer and good works, with repentance and meekness. But their hearts were gross with pride of their descent from Abraham, their eyes were closed to their own sinfulness: their ears were too dull to hear the Gospel call to put off the old man with his deeds. (Colossians 3:9). We must remember, too, that, in Jewish minds, the Pharisees were the acme of Spiritual perfection. Therefore we condemn him because Christ has shown us his falseness; but as we consider our subject, let us remember our own failings. “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” We must therefore seek the Lord’s righteousness, or there is no further point of value to us. The stamp of authority is on the words of Jesus. The prophets, as we have already indicated, specified the very manner of His teaching, and it was fulfilled.

The exhortation, then, is that we open our hearts and receive with meekness the words of truth. If we put away conceit and seek knowledge and wisdom from the Word we shall, by study of the parables in humility, receive the lessons which Jesus intended to convey for our help and guidance. In this we must become as little children, and then we shall be truly associated with the statement of Jesus, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” (Luke 10:21).

Brother Phil Parry.

This is a copy of the letter sent by Brother Leo Dreifuss to Brother and Sister Taylor and Brother Hampton, introducing himself to them, following their baptism last year. His story speaks for itself lifting our hearts in thankfulness and praise to our Heavenly Father:-

“Loving Greetings in the Saviour’s Name.

Let me begin by introducing myself: I am Gustav Leopold Dreifuss (call me Leo), originally from Frankfurt in Western Germany, but I have been in this country since 1939, and I am 67 years of age now. I have been in this, the Nazarene fellowship, since 1948, and I can say that I am the odd one out in two respects: 1. I am a natural, as well as a spiritual Jew, the only natural Jew in this Fellowship. 2. I am one of the few members who was not a Christadelphian before.

Now I came to this country as a Jewish refugee from Germany. Shortly after, I was brought into the house of a childless middle aged couple who wanted a “child”, as they had none of their own, to care for. So I filled the gap, although at that time I was 20 years old, so not such a young child. This couple, now among the many who died in faith, were fervent Christadelphians. He was one of their speakers, and just before they left, among the arranging brethren. Now it was there where I learned a lot about Christadelphians teaching (I was briefly introduced to it before joining this couple). I attended many of their lectures, and I think we must all admit that we learned a lot from them. But I was never quite convinced. Then, about 1948, they came across some pamphlet by a Mr Broughton, according to which the bread used in the weekly memorial service must be unleavened. This is quite clear from the scripture record as clearly Christ partook of the last supper at the Passover feast. They reasoned from here that if unleavened bread represents the body of Christ, then He cannot have had sinful flesh. And so they discovered for themselves the doctrine of the nature and sacrifice of Christ, and the true teaching of

immortal resurrection. For a time they thought they were the only ones with these views. But they could no longer conscientiously meet with the Christadelphians, so they withdrew, or rather were withdrawn from when they made known their views. They started to meet on their own, until by chance, they came across some work by the late Ernest Brady (or Fred Pearce?), and so discovered that they were not alone with these views after all. Now where I came into it was this: they explained to me the difference between Christadelphian and our teaching and asked me for an independent opinion whom I thought were nearer the truth. I was highly impressed with our teaching. I found this the simplest and most logical I have ever heard on religion. I realised that we Jews were wrong in allowing the Messiah to be crucified, and so I was immersed. Fred and Lottie (These are the names of my “parents”) were re-baptised, and so was another couple, now dead. Whether they needed re-baptism is rather an open question. They said afterwards that if they had to do it over again they would not have been re-immersed. Of course for me it was necessary as mine was my first baptism.

We used to meet in our house. There were six of us, four former Christadelphians, myself a Jew, and another one not a Christadelphian, but a Baptist by denomination (though never baptised before joining us, as far as I know). They have all joined the many who have not yet received the promises, but sleep in faith. In 1979 my “father” died of a heart attack, to be followed by my “mother” in 1984. Since then, and to date, I meet with Albert and Ruth Woodhouse in Warrington, the nearest of our members, only half an hour’s car ride. As I have a car I go there on Sunday mornings.

Professionally I am a Mathematician. I first worked in the Telecommunications Industry, then as a lecturer in Mathematics and Computing at Wigan Technical College, from where I got early retirement end of 1980, partly to help mother who by then was on her own and because of her failing health needed somebody to help her, and partly because of Asthma, as the chalk dust and long talking was not good for my chest. After mother’s death in 1984 I lived on my own until quite recently when I had the opportunity to move to the residential care home where I am now. This is only a few hundreds yards from my former home so I did not have to move into a strange district. I was never married; the three of us were always a very happy family together.

After this introduction of myself let me welcome you into our fellowship. God has guided you as He has me. I can name several examples. I escaped the German concentration camp by the skin of my teeth, got into the home where I was taught the Truth, got my retirement just in time when Lottie, then on her own, needed somebody to help her, and last, this opportunity to move into a good retirement home where we are all well cared for. It looked that God had intended me to look after Lottie during her last few years. We were like mother and son, very close to one another.

Let us never forget that it was entirely in God’s mercy and not through any merit of our own, that we have been shown these things. You no doubt owe a lot to Phil. I don’t know how you came to meet him, or just how you came to these views. It is doubtful whether we ever shall meet in this life, we are all so far apart, so we have to cling to the hope of meeting in the Kingdom, and meanwhile endeavour to hold fast and be worthy unto the end of our probation.

When you have settled down perhaps you will be able to write to me and tell me a little about yourselves and how you first got to know these truths.

Meanwhile let me close with love, hoping to hear from you, from Leo, in the Hope of Israel.

P.S. I have just started a page, so I might as well fill it with something that may be of interest. Jewish male children (in some modern synagogues also girls) go through a confirmation ceremony on the Sabbath nearest to their 13th birthday. On that day they chant a passage from the five books of Moses, depending on which Sabbath their confirmation falls. Mine was Exodus chapter 19 verses 1 to 6. Note especially verse 4: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on Eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” I often think of the last part of this verse “and brought you unto myself.” This somehow seems to apply to me. God has guided me in many decisions I had to make, and I find that putting such things to God in prayer works.

And, finally, it is true we are badly scattered over the country. Phil lives a few hundred miles from here. But we did meet Phil and Rene just once/ at Easter 1966, at a gathering at Llandudno. We had a lovely weekend together. Phil, I remember, gave the exhortation.

Well, that finally is all. So once more, God be with you and keep you, Brother Leo Dreifuss

THE SONG OF ALL SONGS

The Song of Solomon has been neglected, misread, and has even had doubts cast upon it as to its suitability for a place in Holy Scripture. What a terrible pity: Why? Because with the help of our Father we are able to obtain from its pages a wonderful vision of the Lord of Glory, God's beloved Son, and His Bride, which is the church.

The author of "The Approaching End of the Age" writes, "Now scripture leaves us in no doubt as to the meaning of the symbolic bride, the Lamb's wife... The purpose of Christ's love, as regards His blood bought church, is that she should be one with Him for ever." Here, in the Song of Solomon, in vision, we see this blessed design accomplished, and the complete and sanctified church, clad in spotless robes of righteousness, brought to the marriage supper of the Lamb. I think it can be agreed that the New Jerusalem bride represents the true church of Christ. In order to make any spiritual sense of the words of this book, all interpretations of a carnal, sensual nature must be put aside; although Solomon is mentioned therein and he was evidently inspired to write it, it has nothing to do with his loves or marriages. Instead, it is purely concerned with the spiritual progress of the bride of Christ... from the beginning of her search to find her Lord, to the great day of the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the beginning of the book she is just becoming aware of the high calling of God and seeking further enlightenment. In the first chapter, verse eight, she is directed to the shepherd's tents, the shepherds' being the expounders of the Word, (as in 1 Peter 5:2, "Tend the flock of God... making yourselves ensamples to the flock"). We, the components of the bride, are likewise helped forward by our brethren, past and present, and most of all, by the Bridegroom Himself, that great Shepherd of the sheep who said, "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me; a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:5 & 27.)

The rest of chapter one is a delightful picture of the flowers and plants of the Holy Land. Their fragrance was used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil as we read in Exodus 30. This fragrance the Bridegroom ascribes to His bride who is adorned in the white robe of His righteousness. (It is interesting to note that the henna flower of the vineyards of Ein Gedi still flourish there in the Jordan Valley). From verse eleven of chapter two we have a vivid picture of spring in Israel as it would have been in the land in the days of Solomon before the ground was cursed. Leviticus 26:20, "Your land shall not yield her increase neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruit." Isaiah 27:6 foretells the removal of this curse and of a time when it will again bring forth its fruits as in the days of old. (Numbers 13:23). From plants the picture changes to trees. There is one special tree under which the bride rests. She relaxes under its boughs, beneath the grateful shade and is refreshed by its fruits, which could symbolically represent the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, etc. After this she is led to the banqueting house and the "Banner over her" is love. God's love, which can never fail, and which keeps her till the great day of the marriage feast of the Lamb. We are reminded of Psalm 121:5 "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand", and Psalm 63:7, "In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

It is purest love, the love of God, which flows through this Song, but three times in its course there is a warning of a false love which deceived the unwary. This love is earthly, sensual, devilish, though it beguiles many by a deceitful resemblance to the true. Three times is this warning given, and the number three in the scriptures signifies completion, so it should not be ignored. At the end of chapter two and the beginning of the third, the bride laments that she cannot see the Bridegroom's countenance, or hear his voice. He is beyond the mountains of "Bether", which also means "separation", also, in the New English Bible it says "the hills where cinnamon grows." In chapter five the bride fails to open her door to Him when He knocks at night. She is far too comfortable, and unwilling to rise and put on her coat and soil her

feet. When she realises her mistake it is too late. She opens the door but He has gone. So with us, if we fail Him when He calls on us to serve Him in some unexpected way. It may be a long time before He will call us again. It may be never. “Be ye also ready, for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh.” (Luke 12:40). “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man open the door I will come in and sup with him.” (Revelation 3:20). Such failures on the part of the bride are like the little foxes of chapter two, verse 15, the little sins which so easily spoil our personal vineyards. But in spite of this the bride can say, with faith in the Everlasting Father’s amazing kindness and forgiveness, “My beloved is mine and I am His.”

While seeking to find Him once more she is persecuted by the watchmen of the town who hit and wound her and take away her cloak, no doubt to humiliate her. But immediately there follows a rapturous vision of the Bridegroom, the “altogether lovely” only begotten Son of the Father, “full of grace and truth”. (John 1:14). This represents the unlovely plant of persecution which can bring forth a marvellous fruit; for all things work together for good to those who love God. This is the joyful prospect which should cheer us as we contend with the cares and fears of this earthly life. Paul, whose life in Christ was one of constant suffering, could say “I am filled with comfort, I overflow with joy in all our affliction.” (2 Corinthians 7:4). Nehemiah also, at the time of the repairing of the Temple, told the people not to mourn or weep, for, said he, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Chapter seven of the Song of Solomon has puzzled many readers, but if we go to the Revelation given to John, it presents no difficulty. Revelation 21:2 reads, “And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” This city, which is also the bride, is now being built here on earth, stone by stone, we ourselves being the stones. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:16, “Ye are the Temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

“I am my beloved’s, says the bride, and His desire is towards me.” Yes, indeed, His great desire is to present us faultless before His Father’s throne, with exceeding joy. (Jude 24). So may we look beyond the mountains of separation to the Great Day of the coming back to earth of Jesus, the Messiah; for when that day breaks the shadows will flee away and “God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Revelation 21:4.

Selected.

“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.”

2 Chronicles 16:9.