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## How Important the Begetting

(Convention Address)

BY way of preamble, one could consider the Greek source of the New Testament words “born” and “begotten”. There is a Greek word “TIKTO” meaning to produce from seed as a mother, a plant, the earth etc. It is translated as “born” on three occasions but more frequently as “bring forth”, “be delivered”, etc. Most uses of the English “born”, or “begotten” etc., come from the Greek “GENNAO” or related words. Together they are rendered “beget” or similar about 55 times and “born” etc., about 44 times.

The primary meanings of “GENNAO” from Bagster’s Greek-English Lexicon are “spoken of men, to beget, generate; of women, to bring forth, bear, give birth to.” Strong gives the meaning of “GENNAO” as “to procreate (properly of the father but by extension of the mother); figuratively to regenerate.” In English, the word “beget” is associated with the father’s part in procreation, whilst “bear” and “born” apply more correctly to the mother’s part. Accordingly, whenever the New Testament refers to the new life created by God “beget” must be the appropriate rendering of the Greek “GENNAO.”

Our subject is God’s miraculous response to the believer’s consecration. Because this action of God brings about a new creature the Greek “GENNAO” is used. Since it is the Father’s work, “begotten of God” is preferred to “born of God.”

The relationship which results from God’s begetting is very reasonably spoken of as “sonship.” Unfortunately English does not have a convenient word to include both genders so “sonship” is really used as an abbreviation for the relationship of sons and daughters.

The English word “convert” could well apply to a new creature coming out of the old. However, the Greek rendered as “convert” in the New Testament seems more to apply to the change of direction or turning again towards God which is seen rather as preparatory to

consecration. Reconciliation is another word appropriate to describe preparation for justification. It is very important to distinguish between both the preparation and the justification by faith on the one hand, and the sonship resulting from consecration on the other.

John 1:12 makes clear that receiving Jesus is only preparatory to sonship. It states that by receiving Jesus believers are given the power, or right, or privilege to become the sons of God. Obviously actually becoming sons of God must come after being given merely the opportunity. Surely this privilege is exercised by a believer consecrating himself to God. Since the sonship must come from God, it is fitting to describe God’s begetting of the new creature as God’s response to the believer’s consecration. See John 1:11, 12.

What I have said should not be seen to make the receiving of Jesus of minor importance. It is important; it is essential. There is no other Name; there is no other way.

In the same way as justification is not possible until after: CONVICTION—the realisation that one is dead in sins, a sinner with no hope in himself; REPENTANCE—the sincere desire to be free from sin and guilt; FAITH—in the ransom sacrifice of Christ as paying the penalty of ones personal condemnation; ACCEPTANCE—of the free gift of that sacrifice as ones own; ones only hope. So also sonship is not possible until after justification and after that the exercise of the power or right or privilege received when one receives Christ as ones personal Saviour.

We use the word “consecration” to refer to the exercise of that power. The word is not important. The action is the operative thing. However described, the believer must

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Subscriptions to “Peoples Paper”—\$1.00—are now due for 1981. In view of the high postage cost of \$1.32 per annum (\$1.68 overseas), this postage expense is covered by the Tract Fund (which is supported by the brethren generally) to enable all who desire the “Peoples Paper” to receive it regularly.

make a personal commitment or dedication to God for ever. Rom. 12:1 seems to be the best text to describe this commitment, and reads—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Probably, since it is written to those called saints, in Rom. 1:7, this text really refers more to the carrying out of ones consecration—more to the continual yielding than to the original presentation.

Perhaps we can turn to the 6th chapter of Romans. The Greek word rendered "present" in Rom. 12:1 is the same word as that translated as "yield" in Rom. 6:13, 16 and 19. Romans 6 is also the one which sets out, so well, what happens in the believer's consecration and God's response to it. We see the baptism by immersion as a testimony or witness to that which has already taken place in the heart. In verse 4, after immersion into Christ, the believer is said to walk in newness of life. In verse 11 the English word "reckon" falls short of the Greek. Strong gives the meaning as "to take an inventory." So then, when we take stock of ourselves, we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In 2 Cor. 5:17 Paul describes the newness of life as a new creature. This verse reads—"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The mission or duty entrusted to that new creature is epitomised in verse 20 of the same chapter—"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in God's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

We could profitably spend much time considering just how important the begetting is. Firstly, it is of God, the Creator and Supreme Ruler of the Universe. To ponder the immensity of this fact starts us towards attaching proper value to the begetting. Next, it is part of God's dealing with the Church. This must attach to it the regard we have for all the provision God has made for building us up in our Most Holy Faith.

Each begetting is singular and personal. No man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him. This is a private thing between God and the believer. So, also, is the consecration a happening of great importance as it is personal and exclusive. How much more individual and personal is the phenomenal advent of God's begetting spirit to bless with newness of life.

The belief that the begetting can only happen once multiplies its value. Generally, one could say that that which is scarce is appreciated more than that which is plentiful. This is accentuated when there can only ever be one of anything. I believe that the believer's begetting is singular in this way. One could hardly imagine a second new creature being begot-

ten in a believer, either to live side by side with an earlier new creature or to replace one which has been neglected. For each individual, the miracle of begetting is quite unique. All these things which I have mentioned are important, yet they indicate a magnitude similar to some other aspects of Christian experience. The ransom and prayer are examples.

The feature of the begetting which I think makes it superlative is perhaps best stated in words attributed to one Olshausen, a German theologian—"That which is begotten carries within itself the nature of that which begat it." This is more than creation of a new life. This is more than the fact that a new creature resulting from the begetting is an embryo spirit being. Certainly the parallel is there, to the begetting of an earthly child by an earthly father. New life is begun but that is not all: **THAT WHICH IS BEGOTTEN CARRIES WITHIN ITSELF THE NATURE OF THAT WHICH BEGAT IT."**

The importance of the begetting is not only the beginning of the new creature. It is not only the family relationship to God, it is not only the manifestation of God's love. It is the creation of an embryo spirit being carrying **WITHIN ITSELF** the nature of that which begat it. That means the nature of the Most High, the originator of all things, the source of all love, wisdom, justice and power.

So important is that embryo spirit being that God made extraordinary provision for its nurture; God did provide the abiding or indwelling holy spirit. Indeed, we are blessed with the presence of both God and our Lord Jesus Christ, as stated by Jesus—"If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"—John 14:23. It seems to me that this residing is completely different to the begetting function.

In Tit. 3:5, I believe that Paul is drawing attention to the two separate roles of the holy spirit. Could there be any better way to cleanse than to regenerate, to start a new creature? The new creature must be clean firstly because it has no past, and then because it is begotten of God. Tit. 3:5 reads—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy spirit." At school we were thrilled to start a new page, to cover all the smudges and blots that were past. How clean is beginning again? However, the words "renewing of the holy spirit" describe a continuing function. Separate from the momentary regeneration, the holy spirit abides or indwells to nourish and lead. "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God"—Rom. 8:14. It is the continuing residence of God's holy spirit as distinct from its begetting function which makes the believer the temple of the living God.

Understood this way, we would see that God's response to the consecration of the believer includes two distinct actions by the holy spirit. The begetting of the new creature, the embryo spirit being, is a single momentary action but with a result which goes on from the ages unto the ages. This is the action which gives sonship. Included in sonship is the family relationship to the Father, to His Son as the first born among many brethren and to all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Surely such family relationship simply follows from the family being begotten of the same Father. Separate from that momentary action is the entry of the holy spirit to take up its abode in the believer. The latter affords God's continuing care over the fragile new creature, the leading necessary for the sons of God to follow, the continual presence of the Most High.

We cherish the hope in 2 Pet. 1:4 that by great and precious promises we might be partakers of the divine nature. The previous verse 2 Pet. 1:3—states that the source is divine power and the means by which the great and precious promises came to those of like precious faith was the gift of all things which pertain to life and godliness. These in turn were by or through the glorious virtue of Christ. It is noted, here, that the all things which pertain to life and godliness had already been given. Quoting 2 Pet. 1:3, 4—"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Because both the begetting of the new creature and the abiding presence of God's spirit to nourish must be seen to pertain to life and godliness it is reasonable to accept that they were part of the **all things** previously given to Peter's original readers. Returning to the partaking of Verse 4, since that which is begotten carries within itself the nature of that which begat it, it follows that all who have been begotten already have **taken part** of the divine nature. Perhaps there is a play on words here. Some might see "partaking" to mean taking the whole rather than merely a part. Nevertheless the point is to emphasize that in the begetting, part of the divine nature is imparted.

1 John 3:2 makes clear that the part of the divine nature given is not all that there is. This verse reads—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." If there was nothing more, it would already appear what we shall be—that would be just as the new creature now is.

There is another point to be taken from 1 John 3:2. We use the words "beget" and "embryo" because the closest our language or even our thoughts can come to the reality is pictured by association with human procreation. However, because there is no mother figure, it is hardly apt to continue the picture to birth except to say that whilst in this earthen vessel the new creature is underdeveloped or embryo. What we should observe is that even in the embryo state we are still sons of God. It is consistent with our language picture. More important, the Scripture says so—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God."

Looking to the hereafter, Rom. 8:17, 18 gives an assurance that the unknown of the future will be blessing. These verses read—"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The present is but a foretaste to bind the ties of the glory which is to follow when the earthen vessel is forsaken and the spirit being is mature. Yet, combining all ages, the most important moment in the existence of each child of God must be the moment of begetting.

In conclusion, we might just consider the begetting in relation to the time before the merit of Christ's sacrifice became efficacious. There may well be some similarity between the continuing abiding of God's holy spirit with the believer and the spirit of the Lord coming upon Gideon, David, Simeon and others. However, I do not think that there could have been anything before Christ's sacrifice which could have been in any way similar to the begetting again from above of new creatures. No wonder the prophets and angels were keen to know more about this remarkable glory. We know this from 1 Pet. 1:10-12, which reads—"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the spirit which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the holy spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

### Adelaide Easter Convention

The brethren of the Adelaide Class extend a cordial invitation to all friends able to attend the Easter Convention to be held (D.V.) on April 17th, 18th and 19th, at the M.U. Hall (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide. Further information from the Class Secretary—Mr. F. M. Grinstead, 1 Wendy Avenue, Valley View, South Australia, 5093.

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## *The Witness Work*

**T**HE work of witnessing to the glad tidings of the Kingdom is a very great privilege for all who have been blessed with the understanding of God's Plan for the salvation of humanity from sin and death through the sacrifice of Christ. Not many of mankind are favored with a clear knowledge of the Gospel, despite the fact that we are living in a time of greatly increased knowledge in the world generally. When the invention of broadcasting became well established earlier this century, we were favored in being able to take up this form of presenting the Lord's message of the Kingdom here in Australia, being assisted in this work in the early stages particularly, by our brethren in U.S.A.

In 1942 we were encouraged to investigate the possibility of engaging radio stations in this country by the foresight of the late Brother Main of Adelaide, who also contributed financially to enable this work to be commenced early in 1943 through 3GL Geelong. Tape recorders had not then been invented, but for some years 16 inch discs served quite well to present the messages over the air. Our session being allotted 10 a.m., on Sunday mornings, was an ideal time to reach a great number of people with the Lord's message of truth. We are thankful to the Lord that this privilege of service continued until nearly two years ago on Sunday mornings. "Frank and Ernest" became well known over this period, and the response over the telephone and through the mail was most encouraging. As a result quite a number of friends rejoiced fully in the truths of the Bible, some of whom still attend Class with us here in Melbourne.

Over the years since early 1943, extension of the broadcasts has been carried into all Australian States. In Sydney and Brisbane in particular many earnest people were found over the years when we were granted time on Sunday mornings, some of whom still rejoice fully in the truth. The capital city radio stations in Sydney and Brisbane were the first to transfer our sessions to Sunday nights, when results from our messages greatly decreased. Country stations were also engaged, in all 20 radio stations have carried the "Frank and Ernest" broadcasts throughout Australia in the 38 years this witness has been possible. We are grate-

ful to the Lord that many thousands of people have heard this witness, and the Lord has given the increase in the hearts of quite a number, although comparatively few, but just what we expect, as was the case with our Lord's own ministry, when the perfect Preacher with the perfect message to Israel was accepted only by the few. This feature of God's Plan is not generally understood, when, during this Gospel Age, few find the "narrow way" to life—Matt. 7:14. But the general witness is necessary to find the few, whom the Lord our God shall call for the heavenly kingdom—Acts 2:39.

When we were informed, nearly two years ago, that the management of 3GL Geelong was transferring all Sunday morning religious broadcasts to Sunday nights, and we were allotted the late time of 11.05 p.m., we appealed for an earlier time. The Lord's overruling has been sought in this matter, and as we well know, He could arrange this quite easily had it been His will. As an earlier time is not available our contract with 3GL has not been renewed for this year 1981, the last broadcast being given on 28th December. To all our radio friends who have appreciated the spoken word over the air, we advise that literature is available for their own and general use in the Lord's service.

In more recent times extensive advertising in suitable magazines has been undertaken, offering free booklets on topical subjects, and the response has been very encouraging. This witness work is being very well supported, and so will continue as seems good, as far as funds permit. We ask the Lord to bless all sincere people who are prompted to seek an understanding of His Word, and what the future holds for themselves and for all mankind.

## *Liberty and Restraint in Christ*

(Gal. 5:1; 1 Cor. 8:9; 1 Pet. 2:16.)

(Convention Address)

**T**HE text in Galatians many of us are very fond of quoting, but far too often we use it in a wider sense than is justified. The liberty the apostle was referring to was liberty from the Law—that was the bondage from which the Jewish Christians had been freed, and in which they were exhorted not again to become entangled. We should be careful not to misquote the text. Nevertheless, there is a principle embodied in the text which can be extended to other avenues of the Christian life.

It was a tremendous deliverance for the Jew to be freed from the burdensome yoke of the Law, but in that early stage of the Church's history it was by no means easy to maintain the deliverance afforded them. When people are trained in a belief from childhood, it is not easy to relinquish it, and it must have been most difficult to cut free from a religious system which for so long had enjoyed the benediction

of God—"You only have I known of all the families of the earth"—Amos 3:2.

The deliverance the believing Jew found in Christ, was in those early times under great pressure, and there was great need of the apostle's exhortation for them to "stand fast" in their deliverance, and not become entangled again in the bondage of the Law.

When, after a time, the gospel message was widened to take in the Gentile, it became a great deliverance for the believing Gentile also—deliverance from the world and its spirit. As the Jew found it difficult to maintain his separateness from the Law bondage, so the Gentile found it difficult to overcome the world and its spirit, and to maintain his stance of separateness—1 Pet. 4:3, 4. In both cases customs were engrained and difficult from which to get free, and from which to keep free.

The Apostle Paul's own life, as we have it recorded, was an evidence of just how difficult it was to get free from the Law's bondage. His experiences no doubt stood him in good stead, not only to assist in freeing the Jew from the Law and helping him to maintain his stand, but also in aiding the Gentile to cut adrift from his idol worship and keep free therefrom. Paul knew what it was to have enemies spying out his liberty—Gal. 2:4. The N.E.B. translation refers to them as "sham Christians" trying to bring back true Christians into bondage, of whom Paul said—"not for one moment did I yield to their dictation." Philips, in his translation, refers to these as those—"attempting to tie us up with rules and regulations. We did not give those men an inch, for the truth of the gospel... was at stake." Similarly Gal. 5:13 warns—Be careful you do not assume a liberty that merely becomes opportunity for you to cultivate your lower nature.

Then Peter, in 2 Pet. 2:19, warns again that corrupters of truth would arise dangling the catch cry of liberty before their unsuspecting victims. We offer you liberty they say—yet if they knew it, they themselves are bound by corrupt influences that were leading them to depravity.

We find those thoughts helpful to us now, as the end of the Gospel Age approaches. We find the nominal church systems to have degenerated into mere profession and hypocrisy, so that a position arises similar to that at the end of the Jewish Age. Just as the nominal Jew saw himself as the rightful recipient of God's favors, so nominal Christendom considers likewise. The Jew failed to recognize God's onward step in sending His Son at the first advent, and refused to acknowledge decadence into merely outward profession; so also the professing Gospel Age church, drifting into apostacy, refuses to acknowledge her decadence, and that she has become Babylon by the time of the second presence of the Lord.

What a battle it proves for true Christians in both situations to maintain true liberty in Christ—first, in the beginning of the Gospel Age, for them to cut adrift from the shackles of the Jewish Law and hold fast to Christ; then later in the end of the Gospel Age, for them to forsake Babylon and hold fast to Christ.

Ever since the Church, the Body of Christ, commenced its development it has proven extremely difficult for its members to hold fast to its Head. Factions formed around men and their theologies seem to attract the majority, rather than simple adherence to the provided Word of God given for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

The closer adherence to the Word of God—not merely reading or hearing it, but obeying it in word and deed—the richer is the inflow of the holy spirit of God into the heart and mind, and the humbler and more sincere the recipient becomes and a better representative of the Lord and Master. By contrast, the more allegiance given to leaders the greater the spirit of pride and division creeps in—I am of Paul, I am of Peter—and the spirit of Jesus, seems to become tarnished.

It is not good to become self opinionated to the extent that we demand others to think and do as we do, nor to the extent that we cannot give consideration to another's point of view. A nice thought is brought out by an anonymous writer. He says—"All Truth is calm. The more of Truth, the more of calm. Its calmness is its power. It is the error that is born of strife by rage and pride." How true we find that. We have no need to rage to present or uphold truth. Generally it is those trying to impress and uphold error who rage and storm.

The appreciation of God's character, as revealed to us by Christ, is even of more importance than detailed knowledge of doctrine and prophecy. Let us give due heed to the Word that is profitable for doctrine and the understanding of God's purposes through ages and dispensations, but seek **above all things** to find and maintain the closest personal acquaintance with our Saviour Himself. To know in the words of the poet—

"Lord, let me talk with Thee of all I do,  
All that I care for, all that I wish for, too;  
Lord, let me prove Thy sympathy, Thy power,  
Thy loving oversight from hour to hour!  
When I need counsel, let me ask of Thee,  
Whatever my perplexity may be.

"Whither I go, do Thou Thyself decide,  
And choose the friends and servants by my side;  
The books I read, I would submit to Thee,  
Let them refresh, instruct and solace me.  
I would converse with Thee from day to day,  
With heart intent on what Thou hast to say;  
And through my pilgrim walk, whate'er befall,  
Consult with Thee, O Lord, about it all!"

It is not good to selfishly and confidently pursue a course without regard for the welfare of

others. We should be truly and devoutly thankful that we know the truth expressed in 1 Cor. 8:6—please read. But in this position there is something else we need to remember, as expressed in the next verse—“Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge.” We need to endeavour to sum up the position of all with whom we have to do, in other words—take heed that the liberty you enjoy does not react harmfully upon others who do not enjoy your favored position—please read 1 Cor. 8:9.

Even when we are combating what we are fully assured is false doctrine, we are apt to be too forceful, and leave behind a poor impression—the servant of the Lord must not strive. Words can be gentle and still convey firm truth. Knowledge of truth may allow us to go places and do things with a clear conscience ourselves; but there may well be times when we should consider how others would view our conduct and be persuaded that to refrain would be in their best interests.

Another avenue where we should exercise good care is in the presentation of unclear doctrines or teachings. In Christ Jesus we all enjoy a wonderful liberty to do our own research and thinking into the things of God's Word; but we may need reminding that we are not at liberty to sound out far and wide all the things that we think we see in the Bible. Truths of God's Word harmonize—it is only when we can harmonize them that we should declare them with firmness. If we have thoughts upon a subject that seem reasonable, yet there is a Scripture that is still uncertain and possibly tends to annul or cancel out our viewpoint, it seems a wise procedure to rest the matter and wait for more understanding, rather than to spread our thinking from the housetops.

I have used further 1 Pet. 2:16 in relation to our subject—“As free, and not using your liberty, for a cloke of maliciousness.” It seems from what I can learn from the concordance and translators that “for a cloke of maliciousness” does not convey the real thought of the Greek text. It would seem to be better expressed—“not using liberty as a covering for wrongdoing or speaking.” In meditating upon this verse in relation to our subject, it seems to teach that the liberty we enjoy in Christ does not permit us, or make us free, to always do as we like or to speak or express what we like. We certainly have liberty to think for ourselves and to weigh out matters that are not clear to us, or opinions of others that conflict with ours; but we should do all this well, before we take the liberty of publicly declaring ourselves on any matter.

Phil. 1:10 is a very interesting text; it seems clear that the Authorized Version translation does not convey the full meaning. The word “approve” has the thought of “try or test.” And the word “excellent” has the thought of “things that differ.” One commentator (Vines) ex-

presses thoughts that the passage means—“approving the excellent, after distinguishing and discerning things that differ.” I think it would be a good idea to write that explanation in the margin of our Bibles. There would be less conflict among the Lord's people, if we all followed such advice. By all means give plenty attention to distinguishing and discerning what is true and what is not true of the things presented to us. What we can prove to be “excellent”, to that let us adhere and share with others. What we are assured is not excellent let us discard. If something it seems should not be discarded altogether, yet is not clear enough to fully approve, let us learn to rest it until more light is shed upon it, instead of raising questions on a large scale by broadcasting the doubtful presentation far and wide.

With these thoughts in our minds the words of the Apostle James 1:25, 26 seem appropriate—“Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty (realizes that the law of liberty in Christ Jesus does not commission us to rashly say and do things), and continueth therein (it is not a liberty or a restraint of a moment, but we should always exercise it), he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue . . . this man's religion is vain.” Liberty in Christ is not liberty to speak everything that comes to our mind—if a thing is uncertain it is very necessary to learn to bridle our tongues.

A brother spoke to me after a Convention recently saying that he hoped he had not said anything that might not have been strictly in line with truth. He said, I try very hard always not to do so, because I have been caught many times in the past, and to my sorrow afterwards. With such an attitude such a brother must surely be in the way of—“this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

May God give us all wisdom to know when the liberty we have in Christ commissions us to speak out, and when to hold our tongue. “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth”—James 3:13, 14.

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### Passover Memorial 1981

The anniversary of the Memorial of Christ's death falls this year on the evening of Friday, 17th April. It is the privilege of the Lord's people to observe this memorial at this season “in remembrance of Christ.”

### Memorial Services

MELBOURNE—Sunday, 12th April, at 6.30 p.m., at Auxiliary Room, Kew City Buildings, Charles Street, Kew.

ADELAIDE—Sunday, 12th April, at 6.15 p.m., at M.U. Hall (2nd Floor), 16 Franklin Street, Adelaide.

## Convention News

THE 1980 Christmas Convention conducted by the Melbourne Class once again proved to be a very profitable and spiritually refreshing occasion for all able to attend. Grateful thanks to our loving Heavenly Father is expressed for His blessings bestowed throughout the four-day gatherings. The attendance was very good each day, as brethren were gladly welcomed from each of our six Australian States. Also our Australian Polish brethren were well in attendance, and assisted helpfully to make the assemblies profitable.

The Convention sessions consisted of two helpful Bible studies, 15 addresses by the brethren, Fellowship and Testimony Meetings, a Baptism Service, Hymn Session and general informal fellowship all contributing to a most profitable time of refreshing.

Following the appropriate and helpful address of welcome, a Bible study was conducted on the verses in Titus 3:3-7. This passage served very well to impress upon us how favored we are to have been invited into God's family from our former worldly life, as described in verse 3. We were certainly in an undone condition before "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward us appeared"—verse 4. There was nothing in ourselves to merit any favors on God's part toward us. Indeed it was "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but **according to his mercy** he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy spirit." Much we saw was implied by "the washing of regeneration"—"the washing of water by the word"—Eph. 5:26—the cleansing effect in both mind and heart by obeying the Word of God, when once the blood of Christ was accepted as cleansing from all sin—1 John 1:7.

The "renewing of the holy spirit" was seen to refer not only to the initial quickening of the spirit after full consecration to God on the basis of faith in the merit of Christ, but also the daily bestowment of God's spirit—"which he shed on us abundantly (richly) through Jesus Christ our Lord"—verse 6. The happy condition described in verse 7 of "being justified by his grace" impressed again the great favor of the Lord, that we should ultimately be made "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ"—"according to the hope of eternal life"—as we prove faithful unto death by His grace and strength.

The second Bible study in Luke 12:31-38, being on the important words of Jesus also proved most helpful. In the context we saw how necessary it is for followers of the Master to "take no anxious thought for your life"—verses 22-30. Full faith and confidence in God's abiding care of those whom He is calling out of the world to be His sons for the heavenly kingdom is essential throughout the earthly pilgrimage.

To "seek the kingdom of God", knowing "it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" is a wonderful incentive to all members of the "little flock"—verses 31, 32. In thus seeking the kingdom, all else must be considered very secondary; sacrifice of earthly treasures must be gladly undertaken—"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"—verses 33, 34. Only if the heart is fully yielded to the Lord could one expect to have the support and blessing of the Lord along the pilgrim way.

From verses 35-38, it was seen that our Lord's lesson called for complete dedication and alertness in His service on the part of His followers from His day onward. "Let your loins be girded about (ready for service) and your lights burning"—to reflect the light of the gospel to those who have ears to hear. "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." It was seen that Jesus was here using a parable concerning a lord or nobleman, and the alertness required of his servants when their master returned from the wedding, to illustrate the watchfulness required of all Christians throughout the Gospel Age, to serve their Lord at any moment or opportunity. From verse 41 we read that Peter asked—"Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" This was a guide to us in our study respecting verse 36. In verses 37, 38 it was seen that the lesson of the parable was carried forward towards the end of the Gospel Age, and the watchfulness required on the part of God's people to be worthy to receive the harvest truths during the presence of our Lord when He would "gird himself and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them." The important lesson of verse 38 was well impressed by Jesus' words in Mark 13:35-37—"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

The subjects chosen by the brethren for their addresses were varied and helpful, being as follows—"The Sure Word of Prophecy"; "Where Your Treasure Is"; "I am the True Vine"; "The Wings of a Dove"; "How Important the Begetting"; "High Calling and Invitation of God"; "The Days of Visitation"; "The Sword of the Spirit"; "David—A Man After God's Own Heart"; "Liberty and Restraint in Christ"; "Our Safety in the Last Days"; "Everlasting Life" and "Confident of This Very Thing."

On the afternoon of the third day of Convention a Baptism Service was conducted at which two of our dear visiting brethren symbolized their consecration to God. This brother and sister had been rejoicing in the Lord and

His truth for some time, and it was fitting that they followed Jesus' example when He symbolized His consecration in the River Jordan. We saw that John the Baptist, to whom Jesus came, did not expect the perfect Saviour to come to him for baptism, seeing his immersion was for remission of sins only, for Israel. John was not baptizing for Christians at all, and Jesus did not take his baptism, but was symbolizing His death, He having presented His perfect human life to the Father previously. So with our brethren, they symbolized their consecration to God, they were baptized into Christ's death previously when they presented their lives to God, and the water immersion pictured what had already taken place in their hearts. We rejoice that our two brethren have been invited into God's family of sons, and by His grace they now walk in newness of life in hope of the heavenly reward.

Many kindly messages with greetings, Christian love and assurance of prayers on our behalf were received and appreciated from Classes and brethren throughout Australia and from overseas. To all these dear friends who remembered us in this thoughtful way, and to brethren everywhere, the message from the Convention with Christian love from all assembled is expressed in Luke 12:31, 32.

Thankfulness to the Lord for all His blessings past and present were expressed by various brethren at the Praise and Testimony Meetings. Much enjoyed also was the Hymns We Love session at which the personally selected hymns were sung to the Lord's praise. The usual labor of the Sisters in providing refreshments each day was also greatly appreciated, this being gladly undertaken as to the Lord.

The Love Feast at which everyone present bids each other farewell was the closing feature of the Convention. The familiar hymns—"Blest be the tie that binds" and "God Be With You"—were heartily sung, and the closing prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for all His mercies and requesting His guidance and blessing upon all His people in every place, concluded a very profitable Melbourne Convention.

## Extracts from Correspondence

My Dear Brethren—Enclosed is \$—— for a subscription to "Peoples Paper" for my niece. She is very much interested in the Truth and I'm sure she would enjoy your wonderful little "Paper." So please send her the "Peoples Paper" for a year, also renew my subscription. I thank you so much for sending me the "Paper" and booklets.

These are terrible times in which we are living, but I remember the verse—"The Lord will never leave, nor forsake us."—which is very reassuring to me. I thank you again for all you do. May the dear Lord bless you all there in Australia... Christian love.

Dear Brother—Hearty Greetings for the Festive Season, with added peace, joy and the Lord's rich blessing in your labour of love for His name's sake. Thank you for the public lecture tape—"God's Best is Yet to Come." I have

sent it to Brother—— so he can take some copies. It's good to have a public lecture tape to play for friends not acquainted with the truth. I also enjoyed it very much.

During 1980 I've been reading the 6 Volumes, and feel they are more in keeping with our times than when written. We are surely living in a whirlwind of revolution and in the storm of anarchy and trouble, the earth being corrupt and filled with violence—"the salt is being removed" as it were. The Dec.-Jan "Paper" with booklets has just come to hand; many thanks again.

Dear Brother—Loving greetings in the Lord! Thank you very much for the mailings received thus far and please continue sending them. Also would appreciate you sending the "Peoples Paper" to this elderly sister for one year——. Please use the enclosed where need be. May God grant you many blessings while the holidays are here and may He bless and guide you all through the coming year. Warmest Christian love.

Dear Sir—Kindly send me a copy of your free booklet—"The Lord is My Shepherd." My only son aged 21 years died in a motor cycle accident on 20th October, and for his funeral service I had chosen Psalm 23. I would like to read and understand this Psalm much better. Thank you. Yours faithfully.

Dear Sir—I here enclose money for the "Peoples Paper." Also as I am a hospital visitor to the sick, and any who would like a visit, I would like the booklets you advertise—"The Lord is My Shepherd"; "The Greatest of These is Love"; "Earth's New Ruler—Humanity's Only Hope"; "The Mystery of Christ"; "The Christian's Joy"; "God's Best is Yet to Come." Please send me as many as would be covered by money enclosed.

Dear Brother—I like to thank you for having sent me all this past year the "Peoples Paper" and all the other extra booklets. As usual they have been most welcome for they speak the truth and their messages are divinely inspired. For this I pray God to bless you and to reward you with eternal life.

I am enclosing a cheque for \$—— for my subscription for 1981, also please send me one more copy of each—"Where are the Dead?" and "Resurrection, Versus Immortality of the Soul." As the festive season is at the door I take this opportunity to send you and all the Class in Melbourne my greetings of love for Christmas and a prosperous new year. Yours in Christ.

### "Armageddon—Then Peace on Earth"

A booklet bearing the above title has been printed, and a copy is being supplied to all friends receiving this issue of "Peoples Paper." Extra copies are available supplied through the General Tract Fund to all who can use them to advantage.

### "The Ten Camels"

A supply of these helpful well-known Bible Stories for children is in stock. Of 144 pages with 4 illustrations, price \$1.00, plus postage 50c.

God is most intimately related to His people. They are His temple. He dwells in them. Therefore they are bound to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Their being God's temple, His presence in them, and His regarding them as His people, depends upon their separation from the world.

Charles Hodge.