

THESE SEVENTY YEARS

by
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**KILMARNOCK
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PROLOGUE.

Let me make it clear that this book is in no way a biography of William Gilmore. Such a biography would require to come from more mature and experienced hands than mine.

It is typical of our esteemed brother when a need presents itself that he is on the spot to assist in meeting that need. You will agree, I am sure, that in the swiftly changing arena in which we live we need to be reminded of the old days when stability was more often the rule than the exception. Who was more fitted to remind us of those times than "Willie" Gilmore, as he is affectionately known amongst us. For seventy three years he has served the Lord in this Island and elsewhere.

In Sept. 1953, he responded to the call which the need presented, and delivered in Oldpark Gospel Hall, Belfast, a series of addresses on "The Beginnings of Belfast Assemblies". These addresses were recorded in shorthand notes by our sister Miss Russell, of the above assembly, to whom much thanks is due for the efficient way in which she carried out her task. It was the general opinion that these notes should be put into book form, for the benefit of many throughout the world who had not the privilege to hear our brother on the occasion.

It is therefore with a deep sense of my inability, to do so, that I put this book into your hands and trust that in meditation thereon each of us will be brought to the place where God can work with us and through us as he did in days, not so long ago.

Malachi 3. 16.

Hedley G. Murphy.

PREFACE.

It is cause for thanksgiving that our esteemed brother Mr. Gilmore has been spared so long to the Churches of God, and that he is able in advanced years to record some of his early experiences and his impressions of the beginnings of assembly life and activity in Belfast, together with some brief outline instructions for the maintenance of a scriptural and effective testimony. He rightly reminds us in this record that the work began at Pentecost, and one has only to be present at the great Easter gatherings in Belfast to realise that God the Holy Spirit, Who gathered together those thousands at Jerusalem so long ago, continues His blessed work until this day. We shall never forget the first impressions of an Easter Conference in Belfast; looking out on a sea of faces and listening to their song of praise,

“We all shall give Him glory,
For glory is His due.”

Here were thousands of saints with nothing but The Word to unite them, and it seemed but a foretaste of that wonderful scene in Revelation 5, where they sing a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God a Kingdom of priests: and we shall reign over the earth.”

In this fast-changing and materialistic age, there is the ever present danger of modern conditions tending to becloud the past, and causing the rising generation to forget the sacrifice and labour upon which their inheritance has been built. This is especially true of assembly life, since it is now seldom known for anyone to pay the price exacted on many of our fathers for their faithfulness to God and obedience to His Word. Alas, in such conditions of ease it is often true that truth is lightly held. In every age our omniscient God would anticipate these tendencies, and such

PREFACE

exhortations as are found in Deut. 32. 7 and Heb. 13. 7 are intended to impress upon succeeding generations their indebtedness to the faithful men who honoured God by lives of devotion and sacrifice; men to whom the words of Wisdom did not come in vain, "Buy the truth and sell it not." May it ever be ours to remember, obey and salute, those raised of God to guide and care for "the flock," and in turn to feel our responsibility Godward, in maintaining inviolate those precious principles of His Word for which they lived and laboured.

We are happy to commend this little book, the reading and retaining of which, we trust, will advance the expression of that unity so dear to the Master when He prayed for His own, "That they all may be one; as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." John 17. 21.

William Irvine,
Kilmarnock, 1954.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLY.

I HAVE marked a number of Scriptures which I want to read on the subject announced and I may just make a few remarks on each passage as we read it.

Matthew 28. 18-20. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I want you to notice four ALLS:—

All power

All nations

All things

and "I am with you ALL the days."

Now, these are four great "Alls" in connection with the Lord's Work; verse 19 is really the foundation of the gospel testimony. "All power,"—it doesn't mean force or strength in the sense in which we sometimes use that word. "All power" in this verse means All Authority. All authority in connection with the work of the gospel, with the beginning of the New Testament Church testimony. All authority is in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It was never committed to man and we ought to be thankful for that. Christ Himself is the authority—our authority for preaching the gospel. Sometimes people want to know what authority (what they are pleased to call or miscall), laymen have for preaching at the street corner. What is your authority? Our authority is there. God has given us this book. It contains our marching orders for our whole life of service, whatever He calls upon us to do, and with a

text like that for a foundation there is no reason why we should feel faint-hearted. We know the Lord is with us: we know we have His authority.

In Acts 1 we have another word.

“But ye shall receive **power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”

But the word there is not for authority, it means force, power. It is the Greek word *Dunamis*. From it we get our word “dynamite”, and dynamite as you know is a great explosive. It is wonderful that God should give us that word at the beginning of the book of Acts, for all through this book the servants of God were working in the power of the Holy Ghost. All other powers were against them: the Religious power, the Political power, and the Military power. There was one power for them—the power of God, the power of the Holy Ghost. The book of the Acts is a great book and I would like everybody to read it and read it often. It is the inspired history of the first thirty years of the trials and triumphs of the gospel and it is not finished. You notice it ends, but it doesn’t finish. There is no benediction or doxology or anything at the close, and the reason is because it won’t be finished until the last convert has been brought in, till the Church is complete, and today you and I are helping to add another chapter to the Acts of the Apostles. “Teach all nations.” That is really the last sign that has been given before the Lord comes. There are some who want us to believe that so many things are to take place before the Lord comes. There is no sign yet to be fulfilled for there is not a nation under heaven that has not heard the gospel.

Missionaries have gone out and from every nation on earth souls have been brought to the Lord. So the Lord may come any time, any day, any hour.

Verses 36-38. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye

have crucified both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

What I want to point out is, that God has made a great deal of the truth of Believer's Baptism. Some people think it is of no importance or of so little importance that they have pushed it out altogether and put in an imitation of their own. What is called "Household Baptism" and what is sometimes called "Infant Baptism". There is really no scripture for any of these. They are man's invention and have been used to push out the true teaching of the scriptures on baptism. Some are a little puzzled about baptism in this chapter because we have a reference to repenting. We must remember that the early preaching here in this chapter was all to Jews and it was really these Jews that had heard the gospel and were saved that raised the question "What shall we do?" They wondered what they could do, seeing they had been opposing the Lord Jesus Christ, persecuting Him and helping others to persecute Him. Now that we are saved what shall we do next? "Repent and be Baptized." That is what they were told to do. The Baptism was public; it was the public way of showing their repentance, their change of heart, their change of attitude. That is really what Baptism means yet. That we publicly take sides with Christ.

Verse 41. "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized."

What was the Apostles doctrine? There are some who tell us that Baptism and Breaking of Bread is the Apostles' doctrine. It certainly is not. The Apostles' doctrine is what the Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached and what He taught His disciples and His Apostles. He preached the gospel and it is very interesting to note the marvellous con-

verts that He had, not only in numbers but the wonderful people that were led to the Lord and these are intended to be examples to us to encourage us. The early disciples and apostles sought to imitate the Lord in that way. And He baptized and John baptized, this is what we call Believer's Baptism.

I want you to get hold of this that Believer's Baptism is not the unimportant or non-essential matter that some try to make out. We are told that a great preacher or Bible teacher who spoke at a certain Holiness Convention not long ago said he had dropped out of baptism. "It was not of any importance," and he now believed in "Household Baptism".

A Presbyterian Minister who read one of my books found this sentence in it "Infant Baptism is the devil's imitation of God's reality." I met him one day and he said to me, "You know that is an awful statement to make. You know I baptise infants." I said, "You don't, you sprinkle them and that is not New Testament Baptism", but he replied "I have a perfectly good conscience about it." I said "Your conscience will not be enlightened so that you will be at ease about it." He then said to me "I think when you publish your second edition of that book you should leave that sentence out." I said "I certainly will not, it stands as a statement of my belief that Infant Baptism is the devil's imitation of God's reality."

Then we have another class who come along and say, "After all a few drops of water will not do the baby any harm", but the baptismal regeneration that is taught afterwards is where the danger comes in and this sends more souls to Hell than the public house. Does that startle you? There are more souls damned through false doctrine than through the drink traffic. The children don't know anything about it at the time, but they are told later that they have been baptised and that introduced them into the Church. There is nothing of that here. Baptism is by immersion and the whole thing is very simple. We have a Bible testimony

in chapter 8 where we are told about two people, Philip and the Eunuch, going down into the water, and then coming up out of the water.

In chapter 9 we have the story of Saul's conversion. He heard the voice of the risen Lord speaking to him and he immediately wanted to know what the Lord wanted him to do. He was baptised by Ananias. There are two men named Ananias in the book of Acts, the good one and the bad one, and it is good to remember this.

You don't need anybody dressed in clerical style to baptise a Christian. Any of God's servants can do it, for they have the authority to do it, and the Apostle Paul (the greatest missionary the world ever saw) was baptised by (what the people would call in these days) a layman.

Now that he was baptised he came to the Assembly in Jerusalem and he applied for fellowship.

Chapter 9. 26-27. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to Him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."

You see they came perilously near closing out the best gift God's church ever had. They belonged to the "Narrow Gaugers" and they were afraid. We have some of them still. They spend more time in studying how to keep Christians out than how to get them in. They were like that here, that is, they could not think that this persecuting, murdering man could be saved, until Barnabas commended him, and that is all that any Assembly ought to want to know. They should want to know, "Is the man really saved?" "Is his life straight and his doctrine sound?" and when they get to know these things he should be received of course; but we have not always a Barnabas, and so it is good to have a letter. I believe in letters of commendation if he is

coming from another Assembly.

Chapter 11, verse 19. "Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews only."

These were disciples that were scattered in connection with the death of Stephen—they were the ordinary disciples, not apostles, the ordinary believers of the time and they went out to preach and testify the Gospel, because their hearts were full of it. Now that is the kind of preaching we want still.

Verse 26. ". . . And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

We have so many people telling us that that was a nick-name. I don't believe it was. A clergyman talking to me one day spoke of the "Plymouth Brethren." I said "Of course there are no such people—that is a nick-name." "Well," he said, "I am a Methodist minister and the Methodists were called by that nick-name." I said "Yes, but the Methodists very foolishly accepted the nick-name and you have accepted it, but the people called "Plymouth Brethren" never have accepted it and never will, because we have no authority for recognising that." If people call us that we can't help it.

The Greek word translated "Called" means "to be divinely called". It occurs only eight times and each time it means to be called by a Divine call. Of course I know the name was given and perhaps used by those people in Antioch. Well, God sometimes sends His greatest blessings to His people by unsaved people. God can make the devil carry a message for Him, and here we have the disciples, the believers, who were called Christians first in Antioch. God has owned this name and recognised it, because you remember how it was referred to in Peter's epistle that "if

any suffer as a Christian let him glorify God in this name". God has owned it.

Now there are many ways of suffering. Sometimes Christians suffer but not for Christ's sake, not because they are really Christians. A Christian may suffer for his own foolishness in saying things he should not say and doing things he should not do. But if a man suffers because he is a Christian "let him glorify God". Very often there are those who try to make things difficult for the Christian. I will give you a case in point. I know a young man who went to Australia and did his best to get a job. This young man was trained for the Bank and though he tried several Banks he was told "You cannot get into the Banks here unless you are a Freemason". He tried various other places but was told "You cannot expect to get a job here unless you are a Roman Catholic", and this man, though well educated, had to take what we call, a working man's job on a farm.

Now this story is very interesting for another reason. It shows the centre of authority was changed from Jerusalem to Antioch. Jerusalem was the place of authority where the Church was, but now the centre of authority is changed to Antioch, and it was there we have the beginnings of missionary effort, as we find in Chapter 13.

Chapter 20, verse 7. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."

This is a very important verse because it shows that the breaking of bread was continued and it was continued on the "first day of the week". Of course anybody knows that it means the first day of every week. Not once a month or once in six months. This is man's invention too.

Referring to a conversation I had one day with a clergyman. Talking about this very thing he said "You couldn't prove that it was the first day of every week". I said "I

could, and you believe that, for when you stand up to announce the collection in your church you do that on the first day of every week. You quote the verse from 1 Corinthians 16. 2, "lay by him in store," and you use that as an argument to your congregation that they ought to give generously, because it is the first day of the week, but when it comes to the breaking of bread it is not the first day of the week at all". "Well", he said, "I never thought of that." I advised him to try a change next Sunday and announce the Breaking of Bread for the first day of the week and no collection for six months and you will find that the church will be delighted with the change.

I was taught these things in the early days by the Gospel Preachers that I had the privilege of being brought up amongst and my creed has never changed. My belief is just the same now as it was then. I hope, of course, that I have learned something more since then, but I never have given anything up.

We are living in dangerous times—mass movements, and revivals on the mass-production scale like where they build the motor cars in Ford's place. Mass production and they are mass producing revivals and converts. Well, we are not capable of judging how much reality may be mixed up in all that, but it is always better to take God's way, and we'll find we shall be happier when life's journey comes to its close.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY DAYS AND BELFAST BEGINNINGS.

Reading Matthew 28. 18.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in Earth."

I AM going to tell you a few stories about other days.

Some people think that when we talk about old times we are living in them again. Well, we still have a wonderful interest in the present for all that. I think we have scripture enough to prove that we should remember the days of old and the goodness of God to the generations that are gone and we are going, God and His Word remain the same—Unchanged and Unchangeable.

Now I have marked a few points that I want to talk about. The First meetings I had in Belfast were in 1890. I was twenty three then and I am eighty six now. There were only three assemblies in the city at that time. Those first meetings were in a tent on the Newtownards Road, Mr. Walbran was with me. He was one of the old preachers. In this there was a fulfilment of a prophecy made ten years earlier. For I was saved at his meetings when I was thirteen years old. I was convicted of sin not through his preaching at first but one night when he came down from the platform and caught me by the hair (and I had some then to catch) and he said, "Look here, you have behaved so badly you have distracted the people and you have upset me so that I could not preach. You must never come back to these meetings." I immediately realised how I had sinned against God and against His Word and Work so I made a humble apology which he accepted. There was a good old man standing by who said to him "I think you had better forgive him for the two of you might be preach-

ing together yet." So ten years later these meetings were the fulfilment of that prophecy. There was a young woman attended those meetings whose name was Martha Porter, Loughbrickland. She was convicted of sin and converted to God during those meetings. Later she married Mr. John Blair, who himself was a faithful gospel preacher. Two years ago she was on her death-bed in California and she wrote to me a very kind letter and enclosed a few dollars to help the Lord's work. She told me "I am lying here, can sleep but very little, and I am thinking every night of those early meetings and I thank God for them." Well now our labour was not in vain in that case. Indeed she herself led many to the Saviour.

BAPTISED AND RECEIVED INTO FELLOWSHIP.

I was baptised in the sea at Ballyholme, Bangor. I never like to forget that. It was from a sick bed I went in a snow storm on the 10th January, 1883. My neighbours all said, "That silly fellow will never come back alive", but you see I did, I am alive yet and very much alive sometimes. The doctors had told me that I would only live three months and that is why I wanted to get baptised at once. My conscience was not at rest because I knew the truth of baptism and had not obeyed it. So I was prepared to have it done even if it did kill me. I'm glad to say it gave me such a shock I didn't need to go back to bed. I was cured. Baptism is a truth which we ought to keep in the front and very much so.

The good brethren in Newtownards did not see their way clear to receive me into fellowship. Some thought I was too young and asked me to take a back-seat for a "little while". The "little while" lasted two years. Others thought I was too light-hearted. "Well", I said, "is there any sin in being happy." They said "you were seen following the brass band." I said, "I was not, my employer sent me to serve accounts and the band happened to be in the street. I didn't see any reason why I should leave the street

because the band was there. When I was coming back the band decided to come back too." Then they saw their mistake, I'm glad they did. Of course the brethren at present in Newtownwards had nothing to do with that. I was received into that assembly seventy years ago.

EARLY ASSEMBLIES.

The first three assemblies which I referred to were **Old Lodge Road, Sandy Row and Victoria Rooms.**

Before these assemblies were formed Bible readings were held in No. 8 Christopher Street and in King Street. There was one thing about Old Lodge Hall which was a little bit amusing to me, the seven overseers were all named Sam. I don't remember them all now, there was Sam Heany, Sam Nesbitt, Sam McCracken, Sam McCullough and Sam Miller.

Sandy Row Hall leads me to think of Mr. R. M. Henry. He is the man who started what is now Apsley Street Hall. Mr. Henry was a fully qualified minister, as they are called. He was an "M.A." At a meeting of ministers he asked the clergy present if they could produce a command in the Bible for infant baptism or give an example of it being done anywhere in the scriptures as he had never been able to find it. They refused to debate with him, so he withdrew from that ministry and published a very good little book called "The Form of the House". After this he became a Baptist Pastor and on leaving this he published another booklet called "Why I left the Baptists". Mr. Henry then took a few Christians like-minded with him and held the first meetings in a room in the Ulster Hall. As the meetings grew he applied for Sandy Row Orange Hall. After being there for some time he got the hall in Apsley Street. From then till now that assembly has gone on well in the things of God.

The meeting in the Victoria Rooms commenced in the Abercorn Rooms, Queens Square. These were meetings held by Mr. James Campbell. The Victoria Rooms were after-

wards taken over by the Eglinton and Winton Hotel. It was in these rooms that I first attended the Easter Meetings. We had four hundred present and I was just up from the country and thought it was a great crowd but now we have four thousand on an Easter Monday. Some don't understand me when I talk of being seventy three years at the Easter Meetings, but I attended these meetings before I was in fellowship in Newtownards. The brethren then moved to Victoria Hall.

Mr. James Campbell's preaching partner was Mr. Wm. Matthews. In my judgment they were two of the greatest preachers in that time. On Campbell's last visit to this country I came with him and Andrew Fraser on the top of a tram car from what is now Ballyhackamore to Victoria Hall. I said to Campbell, "I think Victoria Hall is not so strict now as when you started it", he said, "No, but you should never run from an assembly when difficulties arise, that is not the way to help; so long as the assembly is open for the truth of God let us embrace the opportunity. Time enough to cease when they won't receive the message." I don't think any assembly in this city has reached that stage yet.

Let me mention a remarkable thing about the preaching of Campbell. I have never known him to speak without sinners being aroused, convicted of sin, and converted to God. He had a tent at Donegall Pass in 1874, that was the year of Moody's meetings. Many were brought into Apsley Hall meeting. There was an incident about Campbell's movements that some did not quite understand. He had meetings at Knockbreda and they were so successful that the Presbyterian Minister invited him to preach in the church, which he did. He preached the gospel faithfully and then gave a stirring address on baptism and separation to God. The next Sunday he was noticed out. It was said concerning him "He was a man who would have made you afraid of sin if he looked at you." I think that is true. He had a wonderful testimony. I once gave an address in Aps-

ley Hall on "The Life of James Campbell". The place was packed. There never was a man so much used of God in this country. He started about forty assemblies here. The memory of Campbell and Matthews is sweet to this day. Now don't you think the young people should hear these things, I think they should.

There was a place in East Belfast called Campbell's Row, about six houses together. Some local brethren started a gospel work in one of the houses and a few people were converted. Amongst those responsible for the work was Mr. Kane of Larne. Another worker was William Jamison, the man who formed the acrostic from John, ch. 3, v. 16. on the front of the Gospel Hymn Book. In later days he was ill for a long time and I visited him often and spoke at his funeral in the Knock grave-yard ever so many years ago. Mr. Jamison lived in a place called Henryville off the Woodstock Road. In the Henryville grounds he had a baptistry made out of a lake and many were baptised there including Mr. W. H. McLaughlin.

After the meetings in Campbell's Row the brethren took the Mountpottinger Orange Hall and had meetings there. David Rea was the preacher. I need not tell you who David Rea was. From these meetings in the early days the assemblies grew. They grew out of Gospel work and they should do that still. It is not good to have assemblies made up of people from other assemblies. Spurgeon called that "Fishing from the basket instead of from the sea." The meeting in Mountpottinger Orange Hall moved to Mourne Street. There were some good elders there: Martin Shaw, chartered accountant, Charles Ritchie, a builder, Johnny Jordan and James Hodge. The meeting continued to grow and is known now as Albertbridge Road Hall. Capt. Hill will tell you that they carry on in the old lines in which they started. There is no reason why they should change. We are living in times of change and we hear a great deal about "Catering for the Young People" and having sing-songs on Saturday evenings instead of the ministry of God's word. I was

young myself and there never was any catering for me except the Bible Readings. I was also limited to a very small library of books. All I had was the writings of John Ritchie, Kilmarnock, and John Bunyan. I always carry a copy of "Pilgrim's Progress" about with me. You can still get the pocket edition with 120 pictures.

I was fond of John Ritchie, and he manifested a love for me too. I remember years before I saw him I longed to see and hear him. He was supposed to be very narrow but he was not so narrow as he was called. His last visit to Belfast was to Victoria Hall and I had tea with him. He said to me "I wish you would come and open the gospel meeting tomorrow evening in Victoria Hall for me", and I did.

MATCHETT STREET HALL.

I remember another meeting which was held in the Orange Hall in King Street. It developed into Matchett Street Assembly. I was with Mr. Agnew the day he went to search for a piece of ground to put the wooden Hall on. It is on that piece of ground the present hall still stands. A good while after that I had twelve weeks meetings in a tent in Tennant Street. I wish I could do that now, but I could not. The meetings were crowded out. My most noted hearer in those meetings was

BILLY SPENCE.

He was just a short time saved and afterwards he told me "Those meetings put me on my feet." As you know Billy had only one theme—himself and Mary Ann. Often I heard him telling the story of his conversion at the corner of Agnes Street and he always ended up by saying "If you don't believe me "axe" Mary Ann." Bill's and Mary Ann's bodies sleep in the Old Shankhill graveyard. The week that Billy died brought a great loss to Belfast. In the same week came the Home-call of

BILLY HUTTON.

I was at his funeral and there was the biggest turnout I have ever seen since the Prince of Wales was here. From the Custom House steps to Dundonald cemetery the streets were lined and people carried Gospel banners along the way. Billy Hutton led many to the Saviour. He belonged to the Iron Mission Hall.

CHAPTER III.

LATER ASSEMBLIES.

Reading Psalm 44. 1.

"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old."

This Psalm reminds us of many wonderful things that God did as recorded in the historical books of the Old Testament and of course we are reminded of the wonders God wrought for His people in bringing them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea and across the Jordan and helping them to overcome the many obstacles in the land that God had promised them.

God wants us to remember these things and to remember and thank Him for what we ourselves have seen and what those who have gone on before have seen and recorded. Some in pamphlets or verse and some that we have had the pleasure of listening to in days long ago.

EBENEZER HALL.

I want to speak about Ebenezer Hall to-night. There was a little hall in Byron Street where a meeting was carried on. Most of the people came from Matchett Street Hall. It was a small meeting to start with and I remember having two weeks meetings there shortly after it commenced. It was there I first heard the name of Bob Weir, when his mother told me one night that prayer had been answered and Bob had been saved. She told me how he was saved through someone preaching and then getting into an argument with him.

That hall was removed in 1911 to Comber Place, Old Lodge Road. It was there that the Ebenezer people, as they are now called, first thought of having Sunday afternoon meetings. I started those meetings with forty people. After sixteen Sundays without a break we finished with two hundred and forty. There were many attended those meetings

who did not belong to the assemblies. Many of them joined the assembly. We would like to see more of that now, and if we were what we ought to be, we would. Often we sing "Revive thy work, O Lord," and I think it is possible. If the coming of the Lord is delayed a little longer God may send a time of revival. It is not at all likely that God would allow the Church to end in defeat.

The old elders, one by one, have been removed but we have quite a lot of young people. We would like to see them more interested than they are in the affairs of the assembly and even in meetings like these. Alas, many of them are not interested at all. Now I would say again, I was young myself as you know and I would not expect the young people to read nothing but the scriptures. We all certainly should read other books that will help us to understand the scriptures and enjoy and appreciate them more, but **PLEASE DON'T PREACH BOOKS.**

Now let us go back to Comber Place. The brethren were successful in obtaining a larger place—Manor Hall. They bought that hall and it is a very good one. I think I am safe in saying that the most active man in connection with it was Bob Weir. He lived for that meeting and worked for it. There is a little room at the back of the platform where I had many long talks with him. Sometimes he sent for me to talk over things that were troubling him or difficulties that had arisen. I never enter that room but I think of Bob Weir. His special gift was conducting open-air meetings and no one has been able to take his place. Many a soul Bob brought to the Lord in his own way. We were all sorry when strength and health failed him and he had to give up. The assembly in Ebenezer misses him and for years to come his name and his work will be remembered.

ADAM STREET HALL.

Another meeting which must be set down as one of the early assemblies is Adam Street. I mention it because it is like myself it has kept in the middle of the road. Though

I cannot remember them building that hall I had the privilege of being present at the opening meeting. There was a large attendance and Halyburton spoke. Adam Street is one of the assemblies that has kept in touch with me since the beginning, when I set out in the Lord's work. Some people thought I wasn't called, perhaps some think that yet. I believe though that I was. The first believers meeting that I went to was at Crossgar and most of the time was occupied with a solemn address from the preaching brethren against the foolishness of young men giving up their employment and going out to preach. It did not have any effect on me. Andrew Fraser came round to me after the meeting and said, "Go on for God and you will likely be preaching when they are all dead." So here I am now and they are all dead years ago. We should never be discouraged if we find someone against us. You will never find everybody for you and if you try to please everyone you will please nobody. You know we all can develop into critics before we know, and it is the worst business that a man can take up. If you are going to be a critic you will always get plenty to criticise and you will never be among the unemployed. It was a great privilege to know Andrew Fraser. I knew him fairly well, I remember him living with Mr. McClay in Stricklands Glen.

DONEGALL ROAD HALL.

I remember Abraham Matthews building Donegall Road Hall. Many thought it was a waste of time and money for there was nothing but fields all around it. I said to him "I think you are making a mistake as there are no houses near nor people to gather in." He said "Well, we are building it in faith, we expect all these streets will be built up in a few years." So they are, and the hall is now in a good place and I have had many happy meetings there. The little assembly has prospered well largely from Sunday School work, childrens' meetings and open-air work.

All over the world today there is quite an interest in the

gospel. There are many young missionaries going forth. I don't believe that more than half of them were ever sent of God. They take a notion, there is some attraction, some fascination about it. Perhaps a romance in seeing these other countries and wild scenes and then coming back and talking about it. Follow Paul's example, he didn't tell his call until he came back. That is the Bible way. The "call" will soon manifest itself if God is with the man or WOMAN. I mention this because certain people are telling us that a woman should not go to the mission field or teach a Sunday School class. A brother said at a meeting that I was at, "It is not of God for a sister to do these things." I could not help speaking to him afterwards and saying, "Surely it would not be wrong for a woman to teach her own children the gospel in the corner of her home and if a few neighbouring children came in there would be no harm in her continuing and if so many came in, couldn't she take them along to the hall." God has a place for the sisters as well as the men. I don't think it is preaching. We have no authority for a woman standing on a platform to preach or sing.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND SOME NEWER ASSEMBLIES.

Reading: Matthew 28. 18.

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth."

I HAPPENED a few nights ago to give some particulars about how I was brought to the Lord—some details that are not in my little tract and so some of the Christians have been saying "We would like to hear more about his own personal experience".

One of the reasons why I have not given more is because I don't like talking about myself. It is not a good subject. I remember some years ago at the Easter meetings I told a story or two about myself and there was a good brother present and he remarked, "I never like to hear a man talking about himself. It always makes me sick," so I told another story the next day: I told about the brother becoming sick yesterday, but, I said "I am glad to see that he has recovered again so he is going to get another one today."

Now there is no use in condemning anyone for giving their personal experience in connection with the things of God. No one ever talked so much about himself as the great Apostle Paul, but he didn't do it just to be talking about himself, but in order to bring glory and honour to the God who saved him and sent him out in His work.

I am going to read to you a story tonight I think you never heard before. It is a story about myself and before I read it I want to say this about it. It happened here in the city and it is every word true and all the people who are referred to in it are still living, except one. I told this story in a meeting in Scotland one time years ago and there was a military officer there who took it down in

shorthand and it afterwards appeared in an English newspaper and then when he was about to write a little book he wrote asking if I would allow him to put the story in the book and I said, "Certainly, on condition that you keep my name out of it"; so he kept the conditions and this is the story:—

"He is Irish, and like most of his kin, 'proud of it too'. As a boy he came to Christ, and as a young man he set out on his life-mission, namely, the spreading abroad in his own and in the neighbouring Islands, of the Gospel of God's free grace.

From the first, his path was fraught with difficulty. He went without guarantee of any support whatsoever.

Three rules he formed and imposed upon himself. These were:—I will never invite myself to any assembly to preach; I will never make my financial needs known to any but God; I will never be in debt. Today he looks back over fifty years experience of God's faithfulness, thankful none of these rules has been broken. Surely a great enough miracle in itself. And the greater miracle is composed of a succession of lesser miracles (though none the less real) attesting to the great care manifested by God, upon those who honour Him.

Come back down the years awhile He is desirous of reaching a certain town in England. (That 'town in England' by the way was Whitehaven). His money is just sufficient to take him to Belfast, but he reasons thus; 'If my faith in God is as real as it should be, I will go as far as my money will take me, and see what God will do.' This he does. Oh, the unfailingness of God in the hour of extremity. From every depth of Christian experience, the deliverance is 'Wherefore God . . .' Leaving the station in Belfast and crossing almost penniless to the English Steamer, he is accosted by a well-known Christian gentleman who hails him desiring to have conversation. 'Have you got your ticket?' is his first query. 'No, not yet,' replies our friend. 'Then I will get it for you', and get it he did.

(He got me a good one too—First Class). So was God's servant brought to his desired haven . . .” Whitehaven.

“He has rented an Orange Hall in County Cavan. After much searching, he has found lodging, and commences a series of evangelistic services. In spite of much opposition the hall is well filled and many souls find peace through making living contact with the Saviour. The last week of the meetings arrives. He has an anxious time. His money is done and the hall rent and lodgings still unpaid. Says he; ‘I did pray earnestly for deliverance from my difficulties.’ The week passes with no sign of the needed help, until comes Saturday and a knock at the door of his lodging. A Christian friend enters hurriedly, and having regained his breath, speaks; ‘I’m tired. I’ve walked three miles to bring you this money, because I could not sleep all night for thinking about you, that you might be needing money for the work here.’ The amount brought is the exact equivalent to the combined hall rent and lodging money, and so the Lord has again met his need. There is a little more to this incident. The hall proprietors refuse to accept payment of the rent due; and the man of God has sufficient cash in hand to take him to his home town. Leaving the district, meditating upon that scripture; ‘As poor, yet making many rich,’ his heart is filled with gratitude to the Lord.

Half a century of service for God means half a century of travel in all sorts of conveyances from the humble jaunting-car to the immaculate Rolls-Royce; by rail, by road, by sea; and never has he been in an accident. (That was true when that was written. It is not true now, for I have had two or three accidents since. I had my arm broken, two ribs broken and some other injuries, but never in the Lord's work, never because of the Lord's work. Just accidents we are all liable to). He has proclaimed the gospel when a posse of policemen accompanied him for protection (that was some distance from the town of Cavan in a country place. They were determined to drive us out of

that country and they burned the tent, but the Dublin brethren were very kind, and they sent us another one, so we had about 40 policemen—six of them guarded the house we stayed in, another six guarded the hall. 40 came to the meetings. Two of these policemen were saved as a result of the meetings). He has met with bitter antagonism, but not with injury. Looking back over fifty years, his heart is filled with praise to God. Looking forward, do you wonder that he says with relish; 'And now for the second fifty.' "

A good bit of the second fifty has gone and I think there are a few here who never heard that story. It was taken down in shorthand and in passing I might say, that is exactly how the books I have written were produced. They are shorthand notes of messages given at conferences, taken down and afterwards written out, with one exception, the little book "The Infallible Book". That one was carefully studied, because the occasion was to be a big one. A conference in the Y.M.C.A. Hall on the "Fundamentals". I had an accident that day and broke my teeth which compelled me to speak very slowly and so that was a blessing in disguise for I had to speak so slowly that the Newsletter reporter got every word of it and he said, "It is ready for printing—there will be no alterations made". It is there just as he got it and it has gone round the world, that little book. It has helped a great many young believers out of their difficulties in connection with Bible inspiration and in one case that I know of I sent it to a student of Trinity College years ago. He read it and it answered his difficulties. There were certain things that were troubling his mind and the study of this little book and the Scriptures referred to in it helped him out of his difficulties. He got another young man to read it and he also was helped, and one of the Professors read it and said;—"Well, no one could say anything against that", and so it has gone the rounds, and has been in all sorts of people's hands. In that way it has been a blessing.

I remember a special thing about that meeting. We had sixteen clergymen present that night. One—a Unitarian minister—got up and asked some awkward questions. One was this. "When you speak of the Bible being ALL inspired, do you mean the Authorised Version or the Revised Version or the Manuscripts or the copy of the Manuscripts?" "Well," I said, "You had the same opportunity of hearing what I said as all the other people in the Hall, so I won't answer your questions. You want a debate. I am not a debator." I have never been successful at that. When I came outside there was a big crowd standing, mostly young men, but there was an old man in the centre who was saying "That was a good address on the inspiration of the Bible, but I don't think it could be his own." So I stepped forward and said, "If you are suspicious ask the publishers. Mr. Pickering of Messrs. Pickering & Inglis has already asked permission to publish it and if I am not the author kindly let me know afterwards when you find out who the real author is." Nobody else ever claimed the authorship and I suppose that is fifteen years ago—perhaps more, so I have come to believe that it is really my own. It is like what John McNeill said about the 23rd Psalm. "I have read it, and preached from it, and sung it so often that I sometimes wonder did I write it or David," and he said "David came before me so I suppose he is the author of it." That is how the word of God should get into our hearts; we should make it our own and then it will be a blessing to us.

It has always been interesting to me to think of the leading brethren of the older school that I have met. I met Reginald Radcliffe in Liverpool long years ago, the man so much connected with Richard Weaver. I saw Richard Weaver too, and in the house of Fred Arnot I met Dr. McLean and Henry Groves, the two men who started what is now known as "Echoes of Service". I possess the first volume of that work. It was not called "Echoes" then, but "Missionary Tidings". Henry Groves was brother-in-law

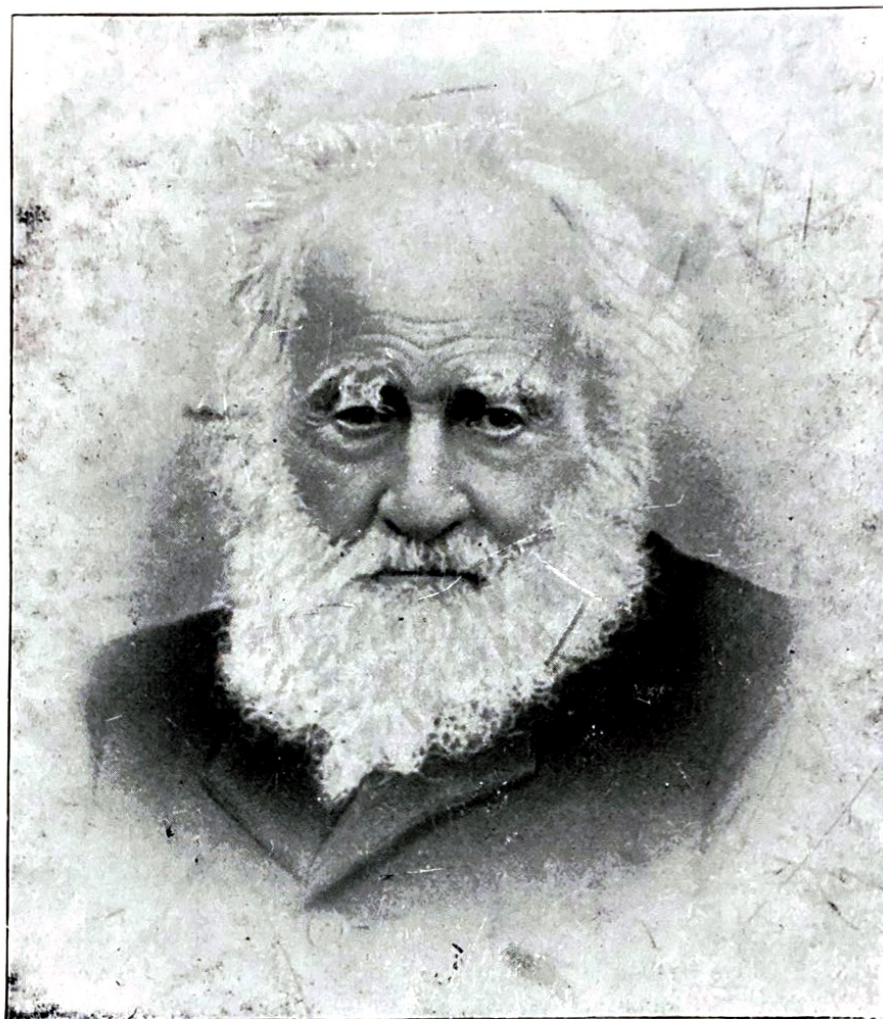
IN EARLIER YEARS.



Wm Gilmore



Mr. GILMORE AND Mr. KANE.
(Friends for over 73 years).



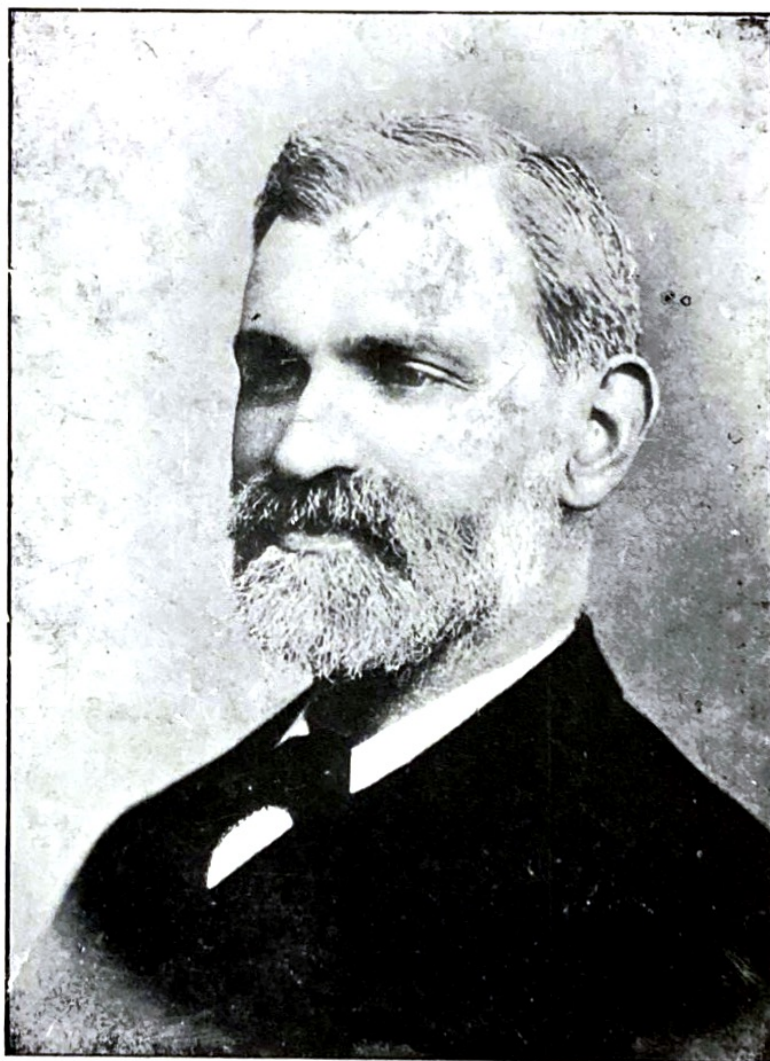
ROBERT C. CHAPMAN.



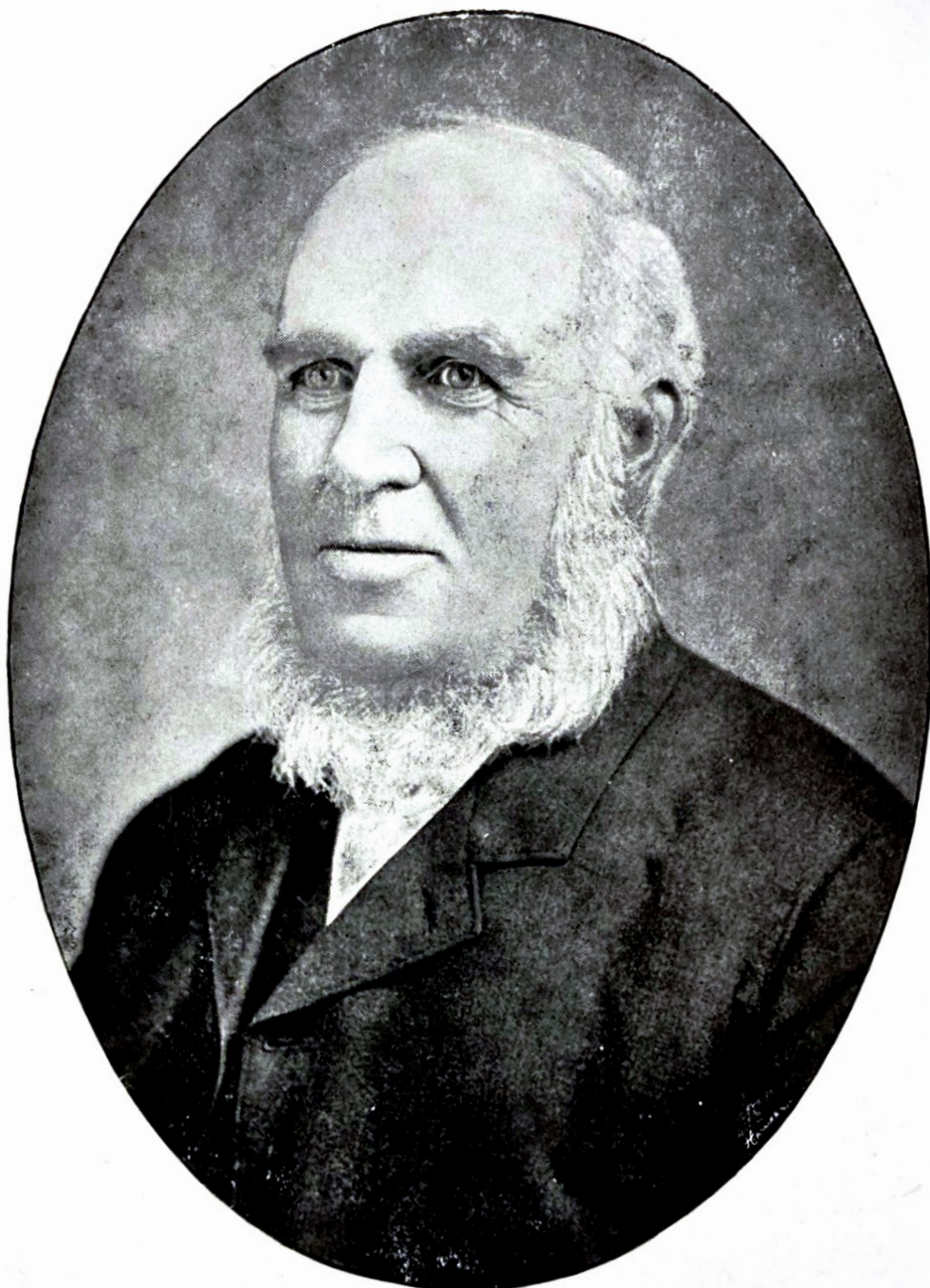
JOHN RITCHIE.



FRED. STANLEY ARNOT.



DAVID RAE.



RICHARD WEAVER.



ADAM STREET GOSPEL HALL



ALBERTBRIDGE ROAD GOSPEL HALL
(Was formerly Mourne Street Assembly).



APSLEY HALL



BLOOMFIELD GOSPEL HALL
(The newest hall in Belfast).



BALLYHACKAMORE GOSPEL HALL
(Newtownards Road).



CREGAGH STREET GOSPEL HALL



DONEGALL ROAD GOSPEL HALL



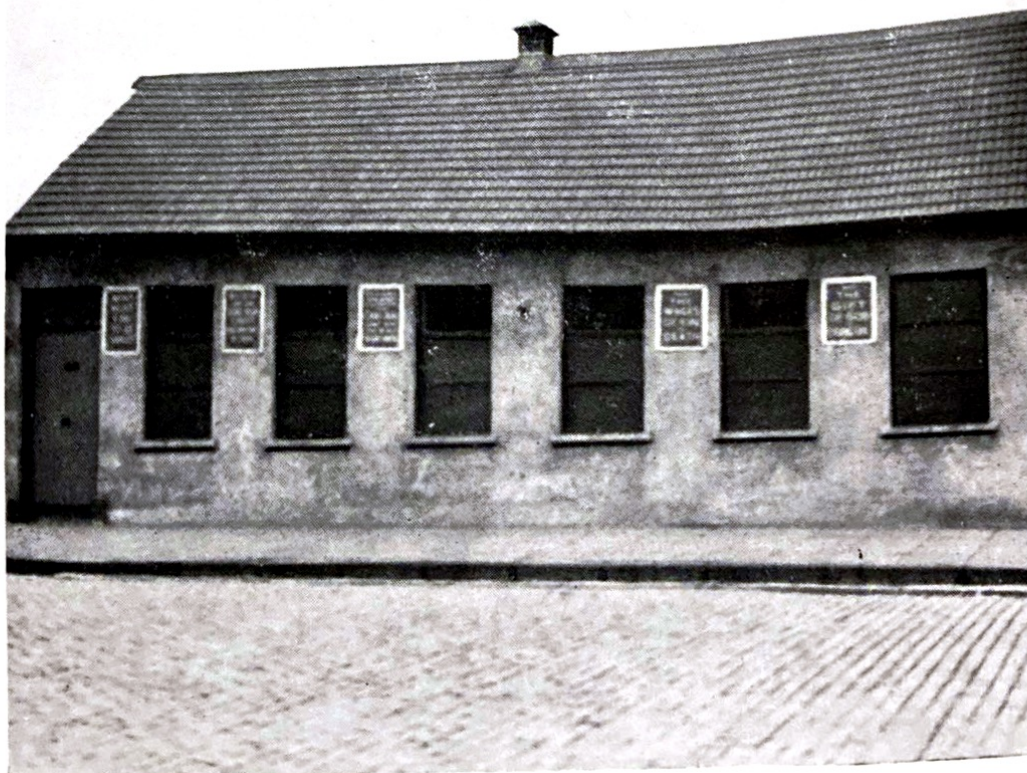
EBENEZER GOSPEL HALL, OLDPARK ROAD
 Photograph shows side door leading to Minor Hall,
 Main Hall is above the shops.



MATCHETT STREET GOSPEL HALL



NEWTOWNARDS GOSPEL HALL



OLD LODGE ROAD GOSPEL HALL



ORMEAU ROAD GOSPEL HALL



OLDPARK GOSPEL HALL
(Where Mr. Gilmore's addresses were given).



PARKGATE AVENUE GOSPEL HALL
(One of the newer assemblies).



No. 8 CHRISTOPHER STREET.

First meetings were held here before an assembly was commenced in city.



SANDY ROW ORANGE HALL.

(The assembly here developed into Apsley Hall).



MOURNE STREET HALL,

became Albertbridge Road.
This hall is almost in ruins.
It is not used at all by the assemblies.

of George Muller, the son of another great missionary, Norris Groves, who went out to Baghdad and passed through a terrible time of hardship, and so I met these brethren.

I think one of the most noted men that I ever had tea with was Mr. R. C. Chapman. He came to the city in order to see some of the 12th July meetings. He stayed with Martin Shaw the Accountant and he asked him if he could tell him what would be the biggest meeting on the 12th July. He told him it would be Ahorey. "How many will be there?" "Oh, about 700." "And what will be the smallest?" "Newtownards." (The Newtownards meeting was held on the 12th July in those days until the drums made so much noise it was thought better to shift it to Ballyhay). "How many will be at Newtownards?" "150 or 200." "That is where I will go, I like to help small ones." I learned a great deal from that circumstance.

The other meetings were very large that year because the news had got round that "Chapman was coming", and so Newtownards was very small and we had grand meetings. He spoke for $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours in one of the meetings, although he was then 90 years old, and he put so much energy and go into it that it makes young fellows like me ashamed that I cannot put a little more into it. It was very interesting for me to listen to this great Bible teacher. There was a long table and I sat at the end of it. He came along and said "I will sit beside you and then they will have the young and old together." He died $9\frac{1}{2}$ years after that; five months off 100 his strength failed and he passed away. I mention that in case some of you are beginning to be discouraged at feeling old. Better keep up your heart because here is a man that preached on until a few Sundays before he died—nearly 100 years old, and as I told you one night before, I have promised to speak at the Centenary in Newtownards meeting, if I am still able to stand; that will be another seven years. I have not given up hope that God needs me and wants me. My life will be

for God until my work is done. Man is immortal till his work is done.

ORMEAU ROAD HALL.

I think somebody mentioned that I said nothing about Ormeau Hall. There was a little hall in a place called Fulton Street where Apsley Hall still have their Open-Air meeting on Sunday nights. There was a little wooden hall there. Some brethren thought they should go to the Ormeau Road and so they went and quite a number followed them from Apsley Hall, including Mr. D. W. Alexander and his daughter and three aunts. William Campbell and Mrs. Campbell and quite a number of others all went there and they have a fairly good sized meeting and a nice hall. I have had meetings in it many a time. The first meetings I ever had on the Tabernacle were in that hall and we had the place packed, for the Tabernacle was a sort of new subject then. It is not new now. There are some who specialise in it. I never did. I met a man in Largs. They called him "Tabernacle Taylor" for he never preached on anything else. "I am glad to meet you", I said, "because I was told that there isn't a book published on the Tabernacle that you have not read." "That is true." "I want you to answer a question. How were the corner boards secured?" "Well now, I have read ever so much but I have never been able to answer that question yet." A man who knew everything about the Tabernacle and he couldn't tell me that, and I am not going to tell you it now, but I have seen solutions of it since.

KINGSBRIDGE HALL and CREGAGH HALL.

We now come to Kingsbridge. The Assembly there has grown and they have a nice hall, one of the nicest halls I think in the city. Possibly Ballyhackamore and Kingsbridge hall were built from the same plans. Then I would mention Cregagh Hall which had a very small beginning. I remember when the meetings were in a little wooden hall

in Roslyn Street. It was small and I think most of those who were in that meeting have passed away, but when the meeting was brought up to Cregagh Street, there was a great improvement in the attendance, and Cregagh, though beginning as a very small meeting, is now quite a large one, and one of the most successful in the city, especially since they opened their new hall. I had the pleasure of having meetings there too. I had a whole week on the 119th Psalm and another week on King David.

PARKGATE HALL and BALLYHACKAMORE HALL.

With regard to another little hall—Parkgate Avenue, it is one of the newer meetings. It has grown well too and then we have Ballyhackamore. I really could not tell you very much about it. I know that some came from Baptists on the Sandown Road. They have a Baptist Church there and some came from this Baptist place to Ballyhackamore. There is a large meeting there and some very good elders too, including Mr. Robinson and others who have been a great help in keeping that Assembly going. I remember a little bit of friction they had there one time because a certain man came over and drilled them into what has got to be known as "Needed Truth" and, in passing, I would say I went to see John Brown who was the founder of the "Needed Truth". I always like to do things straight. John Brown was a very successful business man, a well-educated man and when I knew him first he was a man who drove about in a carriage and had a coachmen. He did a lot of preaching even on the street. I went to see John Brown and spoke to him about this teaching. He told me, "I have been misrepresented in that, for all that I ever intended was to try to keep the young people from running after everything in town and try to build up their own Assembly. Well, some of the brethren from Armagh have come and pushed it further than I ever intended." Not Armagh brethren that are there now. Speaking in Ayr one night I referred to John Brown's putting

up of this new building. He called his place "The House of God", but he came away from that; but I said in that meeting that this thing Mr. Brown had built and called the "House of God" had proved to be the house that Jack built and that is why it came down. A gentleman came to me at the end of the meeting and said, "I am John Brown's brother." "Well," I said, "I did not know his brother was in the meeting, but it is all the same. What is your belief about it?" "That is my belief—the house that Jack built, it won't last." These new fangled things won't last.

We cannot be too strict in our teaching in connection with the "Church of God" at the present time, and I don't like people running after everything, I like people young and old to keep at their own Assembly and I think it is plain reading in the Acts that the early disciples built up the Assemblies that they were connected with. I don't think that work should be started outside and away from Assembly control. If this is encouraged everybody might go starting a meeting if they had a notion. You should try to work with the meetings and encourage them by doing all you can to help, and nothing to hinder.

One of the reasons why I made a statement in that book that "I will never invite myself to any Assembly to preach" was because when my friend Cobbe and I started out, (we started together; he was a school teacher in the Model School here and he gave up his position and resigned in the same week that I started and we joined together in connection with the Lord's work) he told me about one Assembly then that had received six letters on the one day from preachers wanting to go there for meetings. "Well," I said, "was mine among them?" "No, nor mine." That was the first hint I got that these things were done and that is why I made this statement that I never asked any brethren for their hall, and I never asked for any financial support because they never called me. It was God who called me and I have tried to trust God for support and I

am here still. I have some remarkable experiences in connection with those difficult days in Cavan when I was put to the test. I had reached the last shilling and I had reached the last penny, except for two penny stamps and had some things to pay. Now it was rather strange that when I reached that very point a letter was handed to me by the postman and when I read it this is what it said. "I am greatly interested in the district that you have gone to preach in and I hope that some of my friends may get converted and if you would kindly let me know how much your mission would cost I would like to send you a cheque to cover the amount."

How would you like to get a letter like that after having made these vows before God. I was up against the wall. Will you stand by the vows you have made to God or will you answer this letter and tell her to send on the cheque? After some prayer I replied stating that I had made three vows and kept them and would never knock at man's door until God shut His, and I said up to the present He hadn't shut it and two days after a letter came from the same lady enclosing £5 to meet present expenses, and it did that, and so again God supplied the need. That was only the first £5 she sent me for she got interested. She was afterwards in the Assembly of Newtownards and I got a £5 note half a dozen times in the year from her. The point is, if we say we are going to trust God He will test us, for we don't know whether we are faithful or not until we get tested, so I got fairly well tested and fairly severely trained too, for I would not like to tell you some of the experiences I had in those days in connection with getting lodgings and all that. But there were people saved, and that is a great matter. That is what I was out for, and that is what I am out for yet, and I hope somebody will be saved as a result of these meetings, although we are not just giving Gospel messages, yet we are showing what the Gospel has done elsewhere.

I would like to call attention to some of the things

stated in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the money question, "Preachers and Money" would be a very attractive title.

I believe when God prospers a man in business that he should realise this, that God is prospering him so that he will be a blessing to others and especially in connection with the spread of the Gospel.

"Till none can say, of the children of men,
'Nobody ever told me before.'"

There is little said in the Acts about preachers and money. In chapter 20 vv. 33-35 we have both the teaching and the example of the Apostle Paul on that matter. He says, "These hands have ministered to my necessities and to them that were with me." Had all the servants of God acted on this principle the World would have been evangelised in one generation. But in this, as in other things we see departure and covetousness; and worldliness characterises in many cases both preachers and missionaries. In chapter 5 we have the very solemn case of Ananias and Sapphira telling lies to the Holy Ghost about their possessions, and God's judgment fell upon them swiftly, and they died for their sin. It was not Peter who brought on that severe judgment, it was God. So at the very beginning of this dispensation of the Spirit, God has marked their sin as a lesson for all time. Probably they wanted to be thought as faithful as Barnabas but they were not. The presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, calls for holiness of life and character. But to refer again to the words of the Apostle Paul he quotes the words of the Lord Jesus not quoted elsewhere, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." May we all seek to be faithful to God and His word in the little while, "Till He come".

CHAPTER V.

UNITY, NOT UNIFORMITY.

IN our Lord's prayer for His people in John 17, He prayed that they might be one. In God's reckoning they are one; one in life; one in testimony, one in faith. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me and they have received them." But this unity has not been manifested as it should be. It should be our earnest desire to see God's people brought more closely together. But in speaking of Christian unity we must distinguish between this and what the religious world is seeking after, the re-union of christendom. This will come sometime, but it will not be satisfactory because in order to bring it about most of the fundamental truths of the gospel will be given up. Lasting unity can only come by way of the Bible, not without. We cannot recognise as true Christians those who deny the Deity of Christ, His atoning sacrifice, His physical Resurrection, and the doctrine of eternal punishment.

We may learn many useful and practical lessons on unity in the message to the Church at Philadelphia. This name does not describe a sect or a party. It describes a time of revival, when truths were re-discovered which had been forgotten or ignored for centuries. The Coming of the Lord, the keeping of His Word, and the gathering to His Name. "Thou hast a little strength and hast kept My Word and hast not denied My Name." Meeting in this way is to be continued until the Lord's return. In 1st Corinthians 11. 26 we read "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come." This little feast of the Lord's appointment is itself a symbol of unity. We meet as Christians without priest or president to guide us, and the Lord always fulfills His promise "There

am I in the midst". There are thousands of gatherings of this kind all over the world and they go on increasing as the years pass.

Again we must remember that unity does not mean uniformity. We have unity with diversity. We often think of our own great Easter meetings in Belfast as another symbol of unity. At the largest meeting on last Easter Monday there was an attendance of 4,000 from the assemblies in Belfast and from country districts. What is the attraction of these great gatherings for so many years? Nothing but the ministry of God's Word. This testimony is not pleasing to the world. It does not conform to the pattern set up by clerical authority, so it will never be popular. That need not disturb us. The movement has proved to be of God, for there were many meeting in this way although unknown to each other. We mention this, because some tell us the movement started in Dublin about 130 years ago. It certainly got a great push forward then, but all through the centuries since Pentecost in the dark and middle ages, in the persecuting times of the Covenanters, little companies met in dens and caves in the earth to keep the feast in remembrance of the One Who died for them and rose again. Many sealed their testimony with their blood. May we seek grace to be faithful to the Lord and His Truth until we see Him as He is.

Another sign of true unity is the desire to read the Word of God and understand it. We do not despise commentaries and books of exposition, but these can never take the place of the quiet meditation of the Bible for ourselves. To those who honour God in putting His Word first He opens doors of service and gives guidance as to entering the doors He opens. Some will be guided to what we call missionary work, spreading the gospel to other lands as well as at home. To those who are heaven born and heaven bound this present world is all a foreign land. "Our citizenship is in heaven whence also we look for the Saviour." It is not necessary to enlarge further on this

subject at present but we may quote verse 1 of Psalm 133
“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to
dwell together in unity”.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTES ON TEMPTATION AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT.

IN 1 Cor. 10. 13 we read: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man".

We are in the place of trial so long as we are in this world. As the Israelites were tempted in various ways in the wilderness, so we may expect to meet temptation of various kinds on the way. Others have been tempted and tried just as we are. We may think of some whom we knew, and we read of many in the Word of God. Until we are tried, we do not really know ourselves; and God makes a way out for us all. He knows all about our trials, and will limit them as to their character, their number, and the time of endurance.

Note a few typical cases of temptation:—

1. Joseph tempted to sin—"but he refused" Genesis 39. 8. The temptation must have been a sore trial to Joseph; but temptation itself is not sin: the sin is in yielding to it. The practice of the presence of God enabled him to overcome. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He suffered "for righteousness' sake": he was cast into prison, "but the Lord was with Joseph," and his suffering led to promotion. His noble refusal to sin has been an inspiration to others to follow his example. The story recorded just before this is of an unclean man, his name being a synonym for the vilest form of human depravity.

2. Jacob tempted to turn aside from the purpose of God—but he "refused" Genesis 48. 19. The retrospect of his life proves that the presence of God was real to him. He speaks of God Who "fed" him—shepherded him—all his life long. When he stood before Pharaoh he said nothing about God: he spoke of his own life as a short one of few and evil days; but now under guidance of the Holy Spirit,

he blessed Joseph's sons with crossed hands. He knew what he was doing; and, although Joseph removed his hand, Jacob would not yield. Joseph was now displeased, but he had to submit. Thus we too have sometimes to incur the displeasure of our closest friends.

3. Elisha tempted to covetousness—"but he refused" 2 Kings 5. 16. Receiving Naaman's money would have given the enemy something to talk about. It would have been said that Elisha had made himself rich by telling Naaman how to be cleansed, as the world talks of popular evangelism as a means of making money. In refusing, he used the same language as Elijah—God, "before Who I stand." A man who stands in the presence of God as His servant does not need to take short cuts to get rich. This chapter has a sad ending by the account of a covetous man getting money by false pretences, who immediately became a leper.

4. Moses was tempted to go in for a life of worldliness, but he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Hebrews 11. 24) and turned his back on the treasures of Egypt, choosing, instead, a life of suffering with the people of God. The reality of God's presence enabled him to overcome. He used the telescope of faith, and saw Him "Who is invisible". He was long-sighted, and "had respect unto the recompence of the reward". Many scriptures encourage those who serve the Lord to look for the crowning day, when all true service shall be abundantly rewarded.

5. Timothy was tempted with "old wives' fables," and was told to "refuse" them 1 Tim. 4. 7. The term would include profane, secular things, which would hinder our progress in the spiritual life. "Old wives' fables" can still be found in gossip, idle talk, hearing and telling things detrimental to the reputation of others; in novels, which are only unbelievable tales. Read fact instead of fiction, such as some of the lighter sciences or books of general knowledge: all knowledge is useful. Much present-day preaching is only fiction. They preach doubt instead of faith. Better not to hear it, for it is really infidelity.

CHAPTER VII.

GOD'S RICH PROVISION, THE INFALLIBLE BOOK.

IN our Lord's prayer for His disciples, recorded in John 17, He says, "I have given them Thy Word." The Word of God was Christ's gift to these early disciples, and it is His gift to us. But the fact that we have this great gift in the homely form of a little Book which we can take up and put down at will may cause us sometimes to forget what a priceless treasure we possess.

We believe that this book we call the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible. We have many reasons for our strong confidence in the Scriptures, we shall give in brief outline only five out of the many infallible proofs that the Bible is the Word of God. 1. **Its Miraculous Preservation**; 2. **Fulfilled Prophecy**; 3. **Its Marvellous Unity**; 4. **Its Claims to be Infallible**; 5. **Its Wonderful Power**.

Its Miraculous Preservation.

One of the marks of the divine origin of the Bible is that it has been miraculously preserved to us. God who gave it at the first has watched over it and guarded it through the ages, so that we have it to-day not one verse wanting. Some have wanted to shorten it by removing parts which they considered objectionable or unnecessary, others have wanted to lengthen it by adding spurious books. They seem to think they could give us a better Bible than the one God has given us. But man has not succeeded in either taking from or in adding to the Scriptures of truth. Thousands of years ago there were thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, and there are thirty-nine now. Hundreds of

years ago there were twenty-seven books in the New Testament, and there are twenty-seven still. This complete preservation of the Bible is the more remarkable when we think of

1. ITS GREAT AGE. Human books soon become obsolete. They were born, boomed, and buried all in a few years. Some publisher has said that there is not one book in a thousand that lives five years, and no more than one in fifty thousand lives in a century. But here is a Book some of it four thousand years old, yet it bears no sign of decay. It has stood the test of time. The storms which have swept other books out of existence have only increased the demand of this one. It is still the best seller. More copies of it are printed than any other book. It is the only Book in the world that is never off the press. It is being circulated by millions, and that in hundreds of languages. It ought to be our aim to give the whole Bible to the whole world, for like the tree that grows by the crystal river, its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Besides, this is certainly the best way of defending the Bible—let it out and it will defend itself.

2. THE PERSECUTIONS IT HAS ENDURED. No other book in the world has had so many enemies; wicked men have opposed it in every way possible. From generation to generation this opposition has been kept alive. Why this continued hostility to the Book of God? Why cannot men let it alone? Because the old serpent, the Devil, is the moving power behind the opposition to the Bible. He has roused against it the vice of the earth and the venom of hell. Romanists have burned it, Mohammedans have cursed it, infidels have blasphemed it, critics have twisted it, Modernists have betrayed it, but the old Book still lives, and will continue to live after all its assailants are dead.

“His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.”

Fulfilled Prophecy.

A second reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in its fulfilled prophecies. These prophecies predicted events which none could have foreseen but God. No man can foretell the future. Where is the wise man who can tell us what will be the condition of things in the world, say, twenty years from now? But Jehovah says, "I am God, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things not yet done" (Isa. 46. 10). Bible prophecies cannot be accounted for except upon the ground of direct revelation from God. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1. 2). The men who wrote the prophecies had to study for themselves, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow" (1 Peter 1. 11). The Bible contains a vast number of prophecies which have been fulfilled in every detail. In some cases centuries elapsed between the prediction and the fulfilment, yet all came to pass, because the mouth of the Lord had spoken it. We have only time to mention a few of these prophecies, which may be taken as representative of all. Look at the predictions concerning the overthrow of the ancient cities of Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre. At the time their destruction was foretold these cities were great in population, pomp, and power. Their overthrow seemed as unlikely as the overthrow of London, Paris, or New York does now. But they perished according to the Word of the Lord through His servants the prophets.

1. NINEVEH. The walls of Nineveh were sixty miles in compass, one hundred feet high, and fortified by fifteen hundred towers, yet its destruction was so complete that in the second century no trace of it remained. Thus the prophetic words of Nahum have been fulfilled: "I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will

set thee as a gazing stock; and it shall come to pass that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee and say, Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her?" (Nahum 3. 6, 7).

2. **BABYLON.** Next we have the evidence of Babylon, great Babylon. With its massive walls, its brazen gates, its hanging gardens, its artificial lake, its magnificent temple; it was one of the wonders of the world. But it has long ago become heaps of rubbish, its only inhabitants being wild beasts, while the surrounding country is a vast desert. All this, and much more concerning it, was foretold by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. "Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their folds there; but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures" (Isa. 13. 20-22). "The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire." "And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing without an inhabitant" (Jer. 51. 37-58).

3. **TYRE.** Add to this the testimony of Tyre, once the greatest commercial city of the world. Its merchants were princes, and its traffickers the honourable of the earth. It is now a bare rock whereon fishers dry their nets. After a siege lasting thirteen years, it was captured and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Two and a half centuries later, Alexander pulled down what remained of the ruined walls, and cast it into the sea in order to form a causeway whereby to join the mainland with the island on which modern Tyre was built. Thus was fulfilled Ezekiel's peculiar prophecy, "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken it saith the Lord God" (Ezekiel 26. 4-5).

4. **THE JEWISH PEOPLE.** Again, think of the many fulfilled prophecies in connection with the Jewish people. There are still about 15 millions of Jews scattered among

the nations of the earth. They have been persecuted, robbed, imprisoned, but the more they are afflicted the more they multiply and grow. Their continued preservation is a perpetual miracle. How can we account for it? It is part of God's prophetic plan revealed through His prophets long ago. In Hosea 3. 4 we read, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;" and in Numbers 23. 9, "Lo the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."

5. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Then we have the many prophecies concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. Hundreds of predictions find their fulfilment in Him. "To Him give all the prophets witness." From Paradise to Patmos Christ is the grand theme of Holy Scripture. The wondrous story of His virgin birth. His virtuous life; His vicarious death, and His victorious resurrection might be all told in the language of Moses and the prophets. We have only to mention six predictions concerning His birth, which were fulfilled in every detail.

When the curse fell upon Adam and Eve, a coming Deliverer was promised who would bruise the serpent's head. Further on, His descent is predicted, showing that He was to come of the seed of Abraham. Dying Israel foretold that our Lord would spring out of Judah. Isaiah limits His lineage to the House of David, and predicts His virgin birth. Micah adds that this should take place at Bethlehem. The New Testament tells the story how all this was fulfilled, prediction and fulfilment fitting each other like lock and key. Fulfilled prophecy proves to any candid mind that the statutes of the Lord are right.

A third reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in

Its Marvellous Unity.

Here we have sixty-six books written by about forty different persons.

1. **THE WRITERS.** The writers differed in social standing and in natural and educational abilities. Among them we find kings, statesmen, judges, poets, philosophers, preachers, poor men, rich men, bond men. They wrote in different places including the desert of Sinai, the cave of Adullam, the banks of the Chebar, the rivers of Babylon, the prisons of Rome, and the isle that is called Patmos. They wrote at different times covering nearly sixteen centuries. The first writer was dead nearly fifteen hundred years before the last one was born. Most of them were strangers to each other. They had no opportunity of consulting with one another or arranging to write a connected book. But though sundered far by distance and time their writings are in unbroken agreement, the Book is one. This great fact cannot be accounted for except upon the ground that one great mind, the mind of God, devised the whole. The whole Bible is an organic unity. Like a tree, or a body, it is governed by the principle of life. Each and every part is essential to the whole.

2. **THE OLD TESTAMENT.** The Old Testament is necessary to the New. Even the last three chapters of the New Testament cannot be understood without a knowledge of the first three chapters of the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation cannot be understood without the book of Daniel; Hebrews cannot be understood without Leviticus. As Girdlestone truly says, "There is not an isolated book in the whole collection, even that strange little book, the Song of Solomon, has threads of connection with other books. So has the prophecy of Obadiah, though it contains only one short chapter." The unity of the Bible is further seen in the way the various writers quote from, and endorse, the writings of each other. Take for example the Book of Nehemiah, one of the latest in the Old Testament. It quotes from, or alludes to, several of the earlier

books, including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Daniel, Zechariah, Chronicles, and Ezra. In the ninth chapter we have a wonderful prayer recorded in which reference is made to Creation, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the giving of the law, the manna, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and fire, the forty years wandering, the multiplication of Israel as the stars, the entrance into Caanan, and other historical incidents. Thus we find a great part of the Old Testament endorsed in the book of Nehemiah alone. The book of Zechariah abounds in quotations from the former prophets. We might give illustrations from other books, but these are sufficient to show that the books of the Old Testament are linked together in a unity which cannot be severed.

3. THE NEW TESTAMENT. Turning to the New Testament we find that it has its roots in the Old and cannot be torn away from it. If all Old Testament quotations and allusions were removed from it there would not be much of a New Testament left. In the Gospel of Matthew alone there are over one hundred quotations. In Hebrews there are so many that if they were all cut out it is said there would only be left what would make three chapters. The New Testament then endorses the Old. The New Testament writers also endorse the writings of each other. We have only time to give two illustrations of this. In 1 Timothy 5. 18 we read, "The Scriptures saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his hire." The earlier part of this quotation is from Deuteronomy, while the latter part is from Luke's Gospel. The apostle quotes the two together as being equally Scripture. Again, in 2 Peter 3. 15, 16, Peter refers to his "Beloved brother Paul," and to "all the epistles," and places them on a level with "the other Scriptures." Thus the Old Testament and the New Testament must stand together, for the Lord Himself said, "The Scriptures cannot be broken."

A fourth reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and therefore infallible, is that

It Claims to be Infallible.

1. **THE CLAIMS OF THE BIBLE.** About three thousand times throughout the Scriptures we find such phrases as "The Lord spake," "God said," "The Lord commanded," "The Word of the Lord came," "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue." These quotations from the Old Testament prove that the writers claimed to have received a Divine revelation. The same is true of the New Testament also. The presence and power of the inspiring Spirit is claimed throughout. In John 14 we read concerning the Spirit's mission, "He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you;" and in chapter 16, "He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." These declarations solve such questions as "How could the disciples remember Christ's addresses or give in detail His interviews with sinners?" The Holy Spirit was their unfailing remembrancer. They also solve the problem how the New Testament writers were able to tell us of the last days, the rise and fall of the Man of sin, the Coming of the Lord, the resurrection of the dead, and the future state. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. The Holy Spirit is the author of Holy Scripture, but He used men as the instruments of His revelation. The Word of God has come to us through human personality. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We do not profess to know just how the Spirit operated on the minds of the writers to produce the Holy Scriptures. Neither do we profess to know just how the Spirit operates on the human heart to produce conversion. His mode of working may be beyond our knowledge, but the effects of His working are clearly seen. The Bible has proved

itself both infallible and indestructible. How is this fact to be accounted for except upon the ground that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God"? It is God breathed. The life of God is in it. This inspiration of Scripture includes every part of it.

2. EVERY PART OF SCRIPTURE INSPIRED. Every book, from Genesis to Revelation, its histories, prophecies, types, narratives, miracles, parables, proverbs, are all inspired of God. It includes the record of the sinful words and deeds of men and of Satan. The Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded all such things for our instruction and warning. The record of them is therefore part of the Word of God. It includes the form as well as the substance, the words as well as the thoughts. To deny that the words are inspired is to deny the inspiration of the Bible altogether. "Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body." The prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, so man could not have been at liberty in the selection of words. The writers themselves believed the words to be inspired. Paul definitely claims inspiration both for his message and for the words in which it was expressed, "Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The inspiration of words is further proved in the way the writers used the Scriptures. For example, in Hebrews 12 we find an argument based on a phrase "yet once more." In Hebrews 2 a similar argument is based on a word, the word "one." In Galatians 3 an argument is based on a letter "seed," not "seeds."

3. OUR LORD AND THE SCRIPTURES. Then our blessed Lord Himself teaches that the Scriptures are inspired as to their words. In the Sermon on the Mount He said, "Verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." The jot (the yod) is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and the tittle is only part of a letter, therefore no stronger words could be used to affirm the

inspiration of the Scriptures in every part as originally given. Then look at Christ's method of quoting them. He did not say, "It is implied," "It is thought," "It is suggested." He said, "It is written." Consider also the place the Scriptures had in His own life. To Him they were the bread of life. It was with special reference to Himself He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Again, when in conflict with Satan in the wilderness, He defeated the tempter by words quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. Further, when in controversy with the scribes and Pharisees, the Scriptures were to Him the last word. He said, "Have ye not read?" "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures." Again, in the hour of crisis, when He looked death in the face, the thoughts of His heart were expressed in words chosen from the Scriptures. Then after His resurrection, when teaching His disciples, He made the Scriptures the basis of His instruction. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Our Lord's attitude to the Scripture was always that of devout reverence and unreserved confidence. What the Scriptures were to Him, that they must ever be to us. We are safe in following His example. If it must be Christ or the critics, we shall continue to trust Christ. We cannot accept the theory of inspiration which attributes mistakes to Him or gives us a mutilated Bible. The whole Word of God is our heritage, and we shall keep it. The Bible alone must be our final authority; and not the ever changing opinions of men. We cannot follow the wandering stars of Modernism, but, God helping us, we shall continue to steer by the fixed light of His inspired Word till we anchor in the haven of eternal rest.

Its Wonderful Power.

A fifth reason why we believe the Bible to be the inspired

Word of God, and therefore infallible, is found in its wonderful power.

It is not a dead letter. "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word "discerner" means critic. In these days we have critics and higher critics, but the Bible is still the highest critic. When a man submits his mind to the Word of God he soon feels its power. In this way any honest seeker after truth can prove for himself that the Bible is God's Word. Jesus said, "If any man shall do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Many have honestly tried this test, and it has never failed. This is better than being occupied with infidel objections which have all been answered and refuted long ago. There are difficulties in the Bible, as there are difficulties in nature. But, as Tregelles said, "No difficulty in connection with a proved fact can invalidate the fact itself." When we have decided upon the ground of proper evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, then every difficulty must be judged in the light of that fact. Put the Bible to the test by believing it. The final test of its trust-worthiness lies in the soul's experience of its teaching and its power. There is an experience of the soul so real that nothing can gainsay it. When the healed man in John 9 said, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see," all the Pharisees in Jerusalem could not argue him out of that fact. We know that the Bible is the Word of God as surely as we know that the sun shines. In many ways we have felt its power.

1. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SAVING POWER.

This is one of the qualities which inspiration imparts to it. Paul speaks of the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. We have no doubt that the Bible possesses this quality. We have proved in our own experience that it does what it claims to be able to do. We have been born again by the

incorruptible seed of the Word of God. It matters little who we heard speaking it, or in what book we read it. It was not man's word, but the Word of God itself which brought us to the knowledge of salvation. We have also seen it verified in the experience of others. We have seen men and women delivered from sin's tyranny and power, and filled with joy and peace through believing in the Word of God.

2. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SATISFYING POWER. Other books grow stale and cease to interest us, but the Bible never loses its freshness. Chapman said, "The Bible is always a new Book to the man who knows it best." Its unfathomable depth proves that it came from God. However deep we go, there are always deeper depths beneath. To understand it we need the power and illumination of the Spirit who gave it. But Bible study in fellowship with God is a real joy and satisfaction to the soul. We can truly say, "How sweet are Thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." Let us read it more carefully, believe it more intensely, obey it more fully, preach it more faithfully, and it will satisfy our longings as nothing else can do.

3. THE BIBLE HAS A WONDERFUL SUSTAINING POWER. In times of trouble it has cheered us. We have come to it when sorrow has cast its gloom over us, and found in it the comfort we needed. In times of depression it has restored us. We have come to it when enemies have assailed and friends have betrayed, and found in it a balm for every wound. In times of trial it has preserved us. We have come to it when temptations fierce and strong have crossed our pathway, and found through it the power to overcome. In times of discouragement it has strengthened us. We have come to it when cast down because of the way, and found in it the cordial for a fainting heart. We might go on to mention many other ways in which the Word of God has been our support along life's thorny road. Having this experience of the truth and power of the Bible,

nothing can shake our confidence in it as the very Word of God.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." Psalm 19. 7-11.