



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

Volume 2, No. 11

Issue # 211

The Remnant Concept In the Scriptures

This perhaps, is one of those kinds of subjects when we first think about we wonder if there might be enough material in the Scriptures to make a message out of it. A few Scriptures come to mind, of course, in relation to that. At first we might think, "It might take a little work to get this together." However, the more one digs into the Scripture, compares Scripture, and tries to look at the ideas that are brought into

focus in a subject like this, we soon recognize that it is quite a broad subject. Thus, I recognize, as I tried to recopy some of my notes, that I had to do some condensing. There are some things we cannot touch.

I would like to give the basic concepts of the remnant idea in Scriptures. I want to lay the foundation for this idea as the Word of truth brings it to us. Certainly, it blessed my heart as I

IN THIS ISSUE

Church

The Remnant Concept In the Scriptures	241
The Misleading Label	255

Book Reprint

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study	264
---	------------

studied it. We want to look at the remnant concept in the Scriptures and what it brings to our minds as we look at these various Scriptures, and what it represents to us today. We want to do justice to the concepts. Therefore, we need to limit our application. I will basically look at the concepts.

The earliest usage of the term “remnant,” actually meant those who escaped a calamity. I am thinking of a family, tribe, or a

city and those who escaped. They were those who were actually left over or remained. The residue were referred to as the remnant. That was the earliest understanding of the term and it certainly is its usage.

When we study the root word of this, it is very closely related to the word “remain,” in Scripture. Remnant actually comes right out of the same root, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek. The word remnant itself

Vol. 2 No. 11, Issue # 211. The Pulpit Exchange is a compilation of written sermons without commentary, published as often as possible, in the interests of promoting sound preaching in our conservative Anabaptist churches. All sermons have been transcribed and printed with permission. Names are removed so that we can focus on the message and content rather than on a certain speaker or style. (Names will be published in the next issue).

Messages have been selected on the basis of topic rather than the speaker. Messages have been selected from congregations or speakers within the Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship, Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario, Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties, PA., Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Nationwide Fellowship Churches, Ohio Wisler Mennonite, Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference, and certain selected unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations.

We welcome submission of recorded sermons, topics, school meetings, writer's meetings, and special conferences by ministry and laity (where recording is permitted) provided permission has been obtained by the speaker for the recording. Submissions must have a title, the name of the speaker and the congregation responsible for recording (date would be helpful).

Published by Door of Peace Publications/Les Éditions «Porte-de-Paix» a conservative Amish Mennonite/Anabaptist publisher
c/o Keith G. White, P.O. Box 104, Blyth, Ontario Canada N0M 1H0

Cost per Issue \$4.95 + \$2.50 p& h Canada/ \$3.50 p& h USA

is only used six times in the New Testament but the idea and the concept are found in many more Scriptures than that. Those who escaped various calamities — things such as war, pestilence, or famine — by God’s providence they were delivered — they were always referred to and viewed, in the earliest usage of the term as the remnant. It simply meant that they remained or were left.

In Genesis 7, we have an early use of this. Genesis 7 gives a very detailed account of the calamity of the worldwide flood. This idea is brought into focus. “And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark” (Genesis 7:21–23). The concept is very clearly brought into focus. All the others were destroyed. All flesh died — all the fowls — all in whose nostrils was the breath of life — all that

was on the dry land — every living substance. This is emphasized and only one small remnant was left — Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives — eight souls were spared from that devastation. This clearly pictures the idea of the remnant as those who remain.

Another illustration is in Job 1 where the messengers came to Job to tell him what had befallen his servants and his family. There were three different messengers that came. First of all one told about the Sabeans and he concluded his story by saying, “I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” (Job 1:15) “While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven,” and he concluded his account by saying, “I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” (verse 16) Then, the third one came to tell about the destruction of his family and he concluded with the same words, “I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” Three times these messengers came with the news that they alone had escaped. They, in truth, represent the remnant.

We could liken it to a broader application such as in Exodus 12 when the death angel passed over the land of Egypt. Those who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord had applied the blood

to the doorposts and the lintels and God passed over them. They truly were the remnant. They were delivered from the death. In that sense we could truly view them as the remnant. Another illustration is Rahab. She and her family (her household) alone were delivered from the destruction at Jericho. They alone escaped. In truth, that picture is the remnant.

As time moves on the concept of the remnant became a bit broader than that and it had a bit of a different application, although at times it was used in that same sense. However, as we go through the Scriptures, we notice that it was applied more specifically to the Israelites in whom God in His mercy spared when His judgments fell on them. The minority that was spared, leftover, and remained were referred to as the remnant. The word gains that application as we move through the Scriptures.

From that point then it moved on and became more of a spiritual concept even among Israel. It gained the meaning of those whom God has chosen because of their fear of God, their willingness to identify with the Word of God, and with the promises of God. Therefore, because of this, God chose to call it the remnant.

It took of that concept as we move on through the Scriptures. We will note that by looking at a number of Scriptures. However, I simply wanted to give, in the beginning, the progression of the etymology of the word, and how it changed its usage or understanding as we move through time. We can see that the concept of the remnant includes every one of these.

However, when we look at it in the New Testament sense, as we will come to, we will note that we primarily view it in the latter sense. Now I would like to develop the message by looking at three different areas which the remnant concept seems to bring into sharp focus. As I studied it, I thought that we could group the idea into three basic areas that do clearly come into focus. 1) *With regard to the remnant concept in Scripture, the remnant is likened unto seeds.* I actually never thought of that. It never stood out to me before until after digging into, and studying it. This is very clear in the Scripture that the remnant which God is working with and has chosen, is clearly likened unto a seed.

In the history of Israel, it is very clear that God was ever working with them and ever preserving them through a remnant. In their history, they repeatedly

suffered major catastrophes that brought them to the brink of extinction. We can study in the history of the Israelites, not only in Bible times but in latter times that this is repeated in their history. There were those who were trying to annihilate them and almost did. Yet, there was always a remnant preserved. There is a principle, and that is because in that there is a seed that God is preserving. That is the truth. The Scriptures clearly bring that out.

When Israel, in their rebellion and disobedience, turned against God, because of His justice, of necessity God had to bring severe judgments on them. The Scriptures are very clear that it was because of their rebellion and disobedience. However, at the same time, because of God's righteousness and His promises that He made unto the fathers, He ever preserved a seed.

I thought of the fact that it was not only a seed, but it was also a precious seed. I thought of the Pilgrims when they came to America in the early days of this country. Perhaps one of the severe tests for them that first winter was to be sure to preserve precious seed so that they would have enough seed to plant the following spring. I am sure they did that and I am sure they valued the

principle that if they would have food to eat the next summer, they needed to carefully and jealously preserve a seed, so they could plant the next spring. This is the principle. Perhaps our forefathers did a little more of that before the days of commercial seed companies, before the days of modern transportation as we know it today where it is so easy to transport seed. They preserved their own seed and had to jealously guard and protect it so that there would be quality seed for the next spring.

This is the principle that the remnant brings out. This one principle is clearly brought out in the Scriptures. God is ever doing that. Let us look at a few verses which bring that out rather clearly. Isaiah 6 is a familiar setting. We have the call of God coming to Isaiah "who will go for us?" (verse 8). Then, the question is "how long?" in verse 11. God answers that question, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant." This referred to a coming destruction.

The Scriptures elaborate on that destruction in verse 12, until "the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land." This is the devastation the Lord would bring as a judgment upon them. Notice verse 13, "But yet

in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” While doing a little study on this verse, I soon discovered that commentators take different interpretations of this verse. Some apply it to the time when Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jerusalem and left the poorest of the land behind to be keepers of the vineyards and vinedressers and husbandmen. In 2 Kings 25:12 we have that account mentioned that the poorest of the land were left behind. Some of the Jews in the outlying area, in their poverty and some of the dispersed Jews from surrounding areas came back to Jerusalem and identified with them. It was perhaps a tenth of them. Finally, because they did not take heart to the warnings of Jeremiah, some of those fled to Egypt and were destroyed.

The Scripture goes on to say that they are like the oak tree. It seems like their leaves are all gone and they are bare. It seems like they are eaten, so to speak, yet their, “substance is in them.” The commentators all agree on this portion that this is referring to the fact of the holy remnant — the holy seed. In fact, a marginal

reading says, “the holy seed is its stock or stump.” In other words though God made severely judge and punish in His wrath, yet, He will leave the stump. He will leave the stock that it might sprout and bring forth fruit. That is the concept. He will ever leave that holy seed in tact that it might bring forth fruit.

2 Kings 19: 30, 31 shows God in His foreknowledge knows His end and plan and He knows how to accomplish it. This is the account of when the Assyrian army, Sennacherib came against Hezekiah and Hezekiah laid out that letter before the Lord. In fact, we have the very same account in Isaiah 37:31, 32, “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.” The Lord’s promise at this time was that He would deliver them, though later He would allow Jerusalem to be destroyed, yet there would go forth a holy seed. A remnant would escape, and it would be by “the zeal of the LORD of hosts.” That was the blessed promise.

Other Scriptures would agree to this point. In Ezra 9, we know

that Ezra clearly recognized that God had spared a remnant. Ezra was post-exile. He encouraged those who had left and were going back to Jerusalem. He was there as a leader giving direction and he clearly had this vision that God had spared a remnant. God was using this remnant to accomplish His work. In chapter 9 it came to his ears and attention that some of the holy seed had corrupted themselves and intermarried. They had married heathen wives. Ezra 9:2 says, “the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands.” They have taken “daughters for themselves,” and so on. When he heard that he was distressed. He “rent [his] garment and [his] mantle, and plucked off the hair of [his] head and of [his] beard, and sat down astonished.” He was devastated. How could they, whom God had called and spared, turn back into sin and do the very things which had taken them into the captivity. Ezra was devastated that the holy seed would corrupt themselves like this.

In Ezra 9:8, 9 Ezra had a clear concept of the remnant being a seed that God wanted to use. “And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us

a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we were bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.” Ezra clearly understood that God was viewing them as a holy seed and as a little remnant that He would use to build His people.

In the New Testament, in Romans 9:6–8, the apostle Paul picked up this very same idea and used it to try and convince the Jewish leaders and people that God is ever working through His holy seed, and that is what was unfolding before their very eyes, although they could not see it. They were blind to the truth. He was trying to help them understand that the new people of God, the followers of this man Jesus Christ, were in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning this seed. “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.” This simply means that even though they had rejected God’s Word, it did not bring God’s Word to nought. It is continuing. “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” It continues by saying that because of the promised word to Abraham they will receive the Son of promise and through him the Messiah will be born. Christ was actually the fulfillment of that promised seed.

In Galatians 3, he picks up this discussion very clearly and elaborates on it. If we want to make a detailed study of the principle there, we can look at in Galatians 3 where it concludes in verse 29, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” He makes it clear that Christ was that promised seed — the Holy Seed brought forth — the holy messiah. When “the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.” (Galatians 4:4) Thus, the remnant concept was clearly applied to the faithful ones. They were viewed as the spiritual kernel, and the spiritual seed that God would use to root downward and spring upward. This was the principle that was in focus.

2) *Secondly in focus is that the usage and concepts suggest that the remnant means that it will be only a few.* We have already noted this by some of the illustrations I mentioned such as Noah

and his sons and their wives. It was only eight — only a few were spared from that total devastation. In the case of the messenger of Job every one of them said, “I alone have escaped.” Only a few had escaped. In the case of Rahab, it was only her household.

In Genesis 12, God called a man. He called one man. He called him in Ur of the Chaldeans to leave his family and kindred land to go into a land that He would show him. Out of that one man, God promised to bring forth a new nation. God rescued Abraham from heathenism and used him to be that very seed. God used one man to start over the seed like He did with Noah. God called Abraham out of heathenism and used him — one man from the body of nations and He promised that all nations on earth would be blessed.

The Israelites, as well as others recognized that the remnant is referring to that special, delivered chosen one — the people. It is not referring to the lump or to the whole, but it is referring to the few. In Jeremiah 42 this comes out clearly. In Jeremiah’s time the people came to him with this request. The people were aware of this concept. “All the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, And said

unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us)” (Jeremiah 42:1b, 2). They knew that there was only a few, and they referred to themselves as the remnant. “We know that we are but a remnant, only a few of us left.” Now . . . “pray for us . . . That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.” Jeremiah clearly expounded to them on God. We need to be aware that the remnant represents only a few.

Isaiah and Jeremiah have the most references to the remnant. They had the concept clear. They spoke often about the remnant of Israel and of Judah. The remnant is clearly mentioned a number of times. For example, in Isaiah 10:20–24, “it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall

return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.” Verse 22 implies that though they were a great multitude and like the sand of the sea, yet a few of them shall return. That is really what it means. A few of them shall return because the consumption is decreed. The Scripture continues by saying that righteousness shall be poured out. Only a few of them shall escape His judgment. He uses the contrast of the sand of the sea to the remnant who were only a few.

God can accomplish more with a few faithful ones than with a multitude of disobedient ones. We notice that God ever works with the remnant. There would be other verses in the prophets that we could choose but I would like to go to the New Testament and we notice this principle. This principle clearly comes out in familiar verses in the New Testament. God is ever working with and calling the faithful few. This in truth has become the remnant of God. Matthew 7:13 says, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the

gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

In Matthew 22, Jesus gave the account of the parable of the marriage of the king’s son. In fact, in that account the word remnant is used in a negative way. Many were called and the servants were told to go out and call them in that were bidden to the wedding and they began making excuses. One went to their business. Another went to their farm and so on. They all began to make excuses. Then it says, “And the remnant took his servants . . . and slew them.” (Matthew 22:6) The remnant did that. They were those who were left, that had not gone to their business. It is interesting how Jesus concluded that story. He said, “For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14)

This refers to the universal call of the Gospel which goes out to all humanity.

In Revelation 17:14, notice clearly that these few chosen ones are on the side of victory. “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.” They are the few who have identified

with the Lord Jesus. They were the remnant, the holy seed that aligned themselves with the “Lord of lords, and [the] King of kings.” We have a very similar Scripture in Revelation 12:17. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” This clearly identifies the remnant of seed. In the first application it refers to the holy seed of Israel, which carries right on through to the New Testament saints. They are those “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” There we see the Biblical definition of the remnant as being those faithful few, the chosen ones who identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.

At one point in Jesus’ ministry, He turned back and maybe was speaking to His faithful disciples and faithful followers in Luke 12:32. Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” He called them that “little flock.” He knew that they would be the overcomers and the Lord would truly give them the kingdom. The remnant always brings into focus the faithful few. We then need to be willing to be in the minority and willing to be

identified with our Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, because we know that only as we are among the chosen, faithful ones, will we be victorious with Him. We need to be willing to be that offscouring of the world, to be misunderstood, and scoffed at. We need to bear that so that we might be among the faithful remnant of God.

3) *The third concept that comes into focus when we think of the remnant is that it always brings into sharp focus God's acts of mercy and grace.* Whenever we think of the remnant it immediately calls our attention to the fact that the remnant exists only because of God's graciousness and mercy. That is so very clear as we look at the remnant concept in Scripture. The experience of Noah is interesting when we think of Noah as being that remnant. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). Each one of the concepts as we look at it, every time there was a deliberate remnant, there was a clear reference to the mercy and grace of God. God was at work.

We see this in Israel's experiences. In Exodus 32 the children of Israel built a golden calf. The Scripture says God was angry and His wrath waxed hot. God had told Moses to step back (so

to speak) in verse 9, "And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation."

We might quickly say, "Where was the remnant in God's mind?" It is very clear in the following chapters that God was not overlooking the remnant. He was suggesting that He might use Moses as the remnant. That is what God was suggesting at this point. "I will make of thee a great nation," but Moses did not want that. Moses was saying, "What about the promises to the fathers?" And "Would that not be sidestepping some?" "Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people." (verse 11) He said in essence, "Do You know that these are your people? You have chosen them. You brought them forth 'out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?' Why disown them, even though they were worthy of it?" Thus, God was saying, "This people are not worthy of me, and I have a right to disown them." Then in the end of the chapter, we have Moses' great intercession. Moses interceded on their behalf

and said, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (verse 32) The Lord answered and said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book," (verse 33) establishing a principle. Then, the Lord continues in the next chapter and says, "Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt." (Exodus 33:1) "Take the people which thou hast brought ought of Egypt." Moses caught that and it bothered him. It seemed that the Lord was trying to make a strong point here. They had disowned Him and the question was still in Moses' mind, "Was God disowning them?" Moses questioned God on this.

In Exodus 33 we have a very interesting discourse that the Lord spake to Moses "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). They had to talk this out. It is very clear that Moses had the people on his heart and he brought this before the Lord and said, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight." (verse 13) Moses knew

that they needed God's grace, and he was imploring God's grace. Very clearly in this passage he mentions it several times. "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." (verse 15) Moses knew that they needed God's grace and God's mercy.

In Exodus 34:6, 10, the Lord made it very clear that He would shower His grace. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth . . . Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee." God made it very clear that He would be gracious and He would pour out his grace even though they were worthy of death, and destruction.

That is the concept of the remnant. God is ever displaying His power and His grace. There are more Scriptures here that show this. I will simply mention a few of these. Isaiah 7:2, 3 mentions that Isaiah had a son named Shearjashub, which literally means, "a remnant shall return." He named one of his sons to be a

clear testimony that God's grace was on display and God would bring a remnant out of His people.

In Jeremiah 15:11 we have a prayer of the people. This is where they turned to the Lord and the Lord clearly gave an answer. "The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction." He continues in verse 14, "And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you." The Lord said that through that whole experience in Babylon "I will bring out a remnant, and it will go well with the remnant." It is interesting that each time the prophecies concerning their judgment came into focus, on the heels of that there is usually a reference to the remnant.

Jeremiah 23:3 clearly says the remnant shall return. Jeremiah 31:7, 8, is the same promise — out of Babylon a remnant shall return. God would bring them out. Micah 2:12; 5:7; Zephaniah 2:4-7; Zechariah 8:1-8, all speak of this remnant God would bring out of the captivity. He would take them again into the promised land and establish them, and

through them, He would accomplish His great purposes.

In the New Testament we see the true application of this truth in the concept of the remnant. It always brings grace into focus. We have it clearly expounded and brought to our attention in the New Testament in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." Christ came. That was the promise of the Lord Jesus coming to humanity. He identified with the human family. We have that in the previous verses. He came into the world. "He came unto his own, and . . . as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (verses 11, 12) Let us enlarge on this. In the incarnation, He was made flesh and dwelt among us. His example was full of grace and truth.

Verse 16, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." We understand the phrase, "and grace for grace," simply means that He multiplied His grace to us. He was just pouring out grace upon grace upon grace. He was multiplying His grace to us through this gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Of his fulness have all we received," that is, all the provisions of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. This verse expounds the

remnant concept in this idea that always brings into focus God's grace. This immediately puts the spotlight on our Saviour and points to the Lord Jesus, and His fullness and the grace that we receive through Him.

Verse 17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Here is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament pointed forward to in the remnant, always suggesting that God had a work of grace that he would work out in the remnant. Another part of the study that should be included in this is the grace that God would yet unfold on Israel. That is another aspect. Many of these prophets refer to it and that is a part of this grace as I would understand it. It all relates to the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. He is the final object that all the other Scriptures point forward to. In His fulness we all receive that grace. It is only through Christ that we can have the fulness of it, and only through Him can that grace be multiplied to us.

Therefore, as we think of this concept (of the remnant) we should ever bow our heads in gratitude and thankfulness for the grace that has come to us, and the grace that the Lord has poured out upon us. I trust we can apply each one of these concepts to our

own experience. We recognize that as people of God, we are called to be among the holy seed. Many are called but few are chosen. We are among the chosen ones. In the New Testament sense the Lord is looking to us to ever be the preserver of faith on the earth. That is a great part of our responsibility as the New Testament people of God. We are here and God is looking to us to be a preserver of the faith for the coming generation. That should ever stir in us a jealousy and a zeal to be a faithful preserver of the holy seed of the remnant.

In the second place, we ever recognize that we are in the minority in this world, and we are called to faithfully bear the reproach which the identity with Christ brings upon us. May we ever bear that willingly and joyfully that we are willing to identify with the remnant.

Thirdly, may we ever be conscious of the love that brought about our deliverance. It is a fact that God has looked with His love upon us. Even as God looked upon Israel with special love, and chose them (not because they were greater than other nations, were more in number, or were mightier) because He loved them as the Scripture says in Deuteronomy 7. May we

have that same concept that “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) We respond to His great love but He has chosen us and called us unto Himself. Thereby we recognize that we are indebted because we are part of that chosen remnant who God, in His mercy, has so graciously showered His love and His grace.

We could take that idea a step further then as we think of the fact that we are a part of the revival movement. I believe that is another aspect, another thought of God’s redeeming remnant and preserving of the holy seed. This should cause our hearts to swell up in gratitude and thankfulness to the Lord that He has called us and preserved us as well. We might ask, “Why me Lord? Why was I chosen?”

Every one of us could raise that question. However, we believe the answer to that is that it was of His grace and fulness that we all received. The Lord was ever in His mercy calling us unto Himself.

May this message and these few thoughts in relation to the remnant concept in the Scriptures help us to recognize who we are and the great responsibility we have in being the people of God. May we deeply appreciate and propagate it here in time while we are yet here. If we identify with the remnant people of God, here on earth, then someday He will call us to be identified with the saints in glory and with that glorious host that will be with Him in all eternity. May the Lord help us to that end.

The Misleading Label (The So-called Invisible Church)

I desire to talk about a label. Labels are very common and also very useful. We can hardly imagine how confusing it would be if the things we relate to and work with were unlabeled. Those of us who help various families unload their belongings are grateful for the fact that those boxes we carry from the truck are all labeled. Since they were labeled, we knew where to take them.

However, the possibility of a

mistake does exist on the part of those who do the labelling that it can receive a wrong label. That is almost as bad as no label at all. In such an instance we would say that the label is misleading. That can have serious consequences. Suppose for example a container of poison is mistakenly labeled medicine. That could prove to be a fatal mistake.

In the moral and spiritual realm, mistakes of this kind have

been committed. One of Isaiah's indictments against the people of his generation was their practice of changing God applied labels. I have that right here in front of me. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20) What they did back then is still being done today in various ways and for various reasons.

For this occasion I have therefore chosen a message entitled, "The Misleading Label." In our day there are many such misleading labels, but for this occasion we will confine our intention to only one. Did you ever read about, or hear someone talk about the supposedly invisible Church? If you have not yet, someday you probably will. The expression, "the invisible Church," is a misleading label. For this occasion my purpose is to show how this misapplied label found its way into common usage and why it should not be perpetuated.

I want it understood that I did not mean to scold anyone who may have used this label rather innocently. I too in my early ministry would occasionally use this label. I did so because I heard it used by older responsible

brethren. They in turn had evidently followed someone else's example. The real question is, "How did it ever get into our Mennonite vocabulary?"

Here is the answer. It was borrowed — unwisely borrowed. I say that because the concept of an invisible church is neither of Anabaptist origin, nor is it of Biblical origin. How then did it originate? By way of an answer, I will first attempt to describe the soil out of which this false concept grew. This necessitates going back to the time when the once faithful Church lost its original New Testament character. This was a gradual process during which, more and more, the Church compromised with the world.

Finally, in the fourth century during the reign of a Roman emperor named Constantine, a great tragedy occurred. At the time it was not recognized as a tragedy because outwardly the changes that then occurred made it appear as though Christianity had finally gained relief from persecution, and it finally gained respect from the public. Supposedly due to a strange personal experience, Constantine the emperor suddenly took a new tolerant, even friendly, attitude toward Christianity and the Church. Rather suddenly, perse-

cution stopped, but in return for the favours he showered upon the Church, Constantine expected the Church leaders of that day to let him help them steer their “ship.” Unfortunately, they allowed him to do that.

A later emperor, took the further step of making Christianity compulsory and infant baptism soon became the means by which that requirement was enforced. The obvious result of this was that the so-called Church soon largely consisted of people who were Christian in name only.

Another result was the erasing of the line between the world and the Church. The Church lost its original character and became a territorial type church which embraced the entire population of the land. Since everyone was christened as an infant, a label “Christendom,” came into use and was applied to the whole population. By this process the world which previously needed to be evangelized strangely disappeared.

Amid all these developments, the separation of Church and State, which is so clearly taught in Romans 13, likewise fell by the way. After becoming the officially adopted state religion, Christianity quickly lost all semblance of what it had been. One writer states it this way, “The

Roman Empire became Christian and the world Church became worldly. Eventually this large degenerated, so-called Church came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church and still later the Holy Roman Empire.

Throughout much of the dark ages, Church and State were not only interwoven but they also were engaged in a power struggle. Sometimes the State controlled the Church. Sometimes the Church controlled the State. The Roman church’s popes became that strong that they sometimes controlled the rulers of the various European states.

We may be wondering did not one protest? Yes, there were scattered groups of dissenters, but as is so often the case, when there is an officially adopted State religion, those dissenters, however good and right they may have been, were viewed as heretics and were dealt with very harshly.

For most of the people, being Christian in name only came to be viewed as normal. However, that inconsistency became somewhat of a concern to another group of people, namely the theologians of that day, one of whom was the well-known Augustine. Augustine was the kind of intellectual genius who could manufacture Bible support

for almost any point he wanted to make. One of the sources I consulted, identifies him as the originator of this false dualistic idea that there is both a visible and an invisible Church. Whether he actually used those terms may be debatable, but he definitely prepared the way for this distinction.

According to his thinking within the masses of Christendom, there was a little group of truly faithful believers, but who they were and where they were supposedly no one could know. Supposedly these scattered, hard to identify individuals constituted the invisible Church. Coupled with this, Augustine developed the notion of predestination. Since salvation supposedly is a matter of divine election, mortal man supposedly cannot know who actually comprises the Church.

That was a look at the soil — the historical context — out of which grew the false concept that we are now examining. For approximately one thousand years, the people of Europe lived with this lamentable mixture of religion and politics. However, here and there were groups like the Waldensians who managed, by the grace of God, to keep the torch of truth burning.

Then, during the 16th century, in Europe, a great upheaval

occurred that has come to be known as the Reformation. It is called that because of the religious reforms that were ushered in at that time by the Protestant reformers mainly Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Luther and John Calvin. They, along with their followers came to be known as Protestants because they protested against some of the policies of the long-standing Catholic church.

In conjunction with their appearance, there appeared another relatively small group which contributed in a very dynamic way to the movement that had begun. This group made a positive contribution far out of proportion to their size. Furthermore, they crusaded for changes more thoroughgoing than their Protestant counterparts. Among other things this group revived a practice of believer's baptism in contrast to infant baptism. Therefore, they felt constrained to rebaptize penitent believing adults who had experienced only infant baptism. Because they thus baptized, they were labeled by their opponents, Anabaptists — "baptizers again."

The aim of the Protestant reformers was to merely reform the existing church. In contrast to them the Anabaptists were interested in returning all the way to the New Testament type

Church, one that would be entered voluntarily and would be free from State domination. Since they maintained that vision they became the pioneers of what is now widely acclaimed as the free church movement. However, because of the stand they took, they were, in their day, severely persecuted by the Protestant reformers, among whom the Constantinian union of State and Church was allowed to continue.

Actually, the Protestant reformers were attempting to combine two irreconcilable views of the Church. On the one hand through their study of the Bible and their frequent dialogues with the Anabaptists, they had come to see what the Church should be by New Testament definition. On the other hand, they fell error to the Constantinian union of Church and State and were unwilling to give up the favours and the protection they enjoyed because, their church was viewed as a department of the State.

Therefore, they faced the dilemma of wanting both a confessional church based on personal faith and a regional church including all in a given locality. There is no way that these two views can be combined. The one cancels out the other. For a

while, Luther and Zwingli halted between these two. They rode the fence. They wrongly feared that people would not be attracted to a New Testament type church.

After a while, it became apparent to the Swiss brethren that these men from whom they had learned a great deal, were unwilling to go all the way. It was not until that point was reached that the Swiss brethren moved ahead with the formation of what eventually became the Mennonite Church.

During all this there had been a lot of dialoguing and debating between the two groups. When asked the reason for their having left the State church, the Anabaptists pointed uniformly, not to the fact that they themselves had received proper baptism, nor to the fact that the members of the State church were not properly baptized, but they pointed to the fact that the newly formed Protestant churches were no different from the Catholic churches in that no effort was made to correct members who were openly sinful.

It was not easy for their opponents to answer this charge. One writer states it this way, "The reformers were compelled to burn the midnight oil in an effort to provide an apology." The

answer they commonly gave was this false dualistic concept that there is both a visible and an invisible Church. This was the formula they fashioned to escape the criticism they received from those who wanted a pure Church. This was the device by which the Protestant reformers justified their “all- inclusive” church. When they were accused of having sinners in their church, they would invariably remind the accuser that although the person in question was less than saintly, that did not matter because after all he represented the second rate visible Church.

According to their thinking, the relative few among them who were genuinely Christian formed the invisible Church, while the large visible Church consisted of these plus the others whose names were on the church role simply by virtue of the fact that they had been baptized as an infant. They wrongly insisted on attaching the name Christian Church to this mixed multitude. However, by way of concession they acknowledged that there was a difference between the two groups — a difference in the quality of the two groups.

For John Calvin, for example, the invisible Church was infinitely smaller than the visible Church. His view of the true

Church was this, “A small and contemptible number hidden in a huge multitude. A few grains of wheat tucked away in a pile of chaff.” Among the reformers it was expected that there would be hypocrites in the Church, and supposedly, only God can tell a saint from a sinner, and can know who participates in communion with genuine trust. On this basis they claimed that the true Church is a small invisible body of people whose individual identity is known to God alone.

Such reasoning furnished them with an excuse for the non practice of church discipline. As they saw it, with their doctrine of predestination, if you started excommunicating you might make the mistake of excommunicating one of God’s elect. To all this the Anabaptists cried “No, Christ does not want an invisible Church. He wants people with a Christianity that can be seen, for He Himself said, “by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matthew 7:20)

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–40 gives our Lord’s parable of the tares, along with His interpretation of it. The Protestant reformers appealed to this, to justify the mixture of people they tolerated in their churches. The householder, who represents God said, “Let both grow together until the

harvest” (verse 30). On this basis, the reformers made little or no attempt to establish a pure Church. The reply of our forefathers was, “True, the householder did say, ‘Let both grow together,’ but” they added, “grow where? From our Lord’s interpretation, it is obvious that this mixture was not to be tolerated in the church, but in the world. In His interpretation, our Lord specifies that field represents not the Church but the world.”

The Swiss brethren then proceeded to show their opponents that the very principle which they themselves were striving for, namely religious toleration, is supported by this parable. According to the teaching of our Lord in this parable instead of forcing church membership upon everyone (as the reformers were doing) they should have been allowing individuals to voluntarily choose whether they wanted to be simply a weed (a tare) or a stalk of wheat. That choice would have involved this further choice, “Do I want to be a Catholic, do I want to be a Lutheran, a Zwinglian, a Calvinist or an Anabaptist?” Really, this is what this passage is teaching — religious toleration — allowing people to choose what they want to be and not making them be a church mem-

ber.

Another wrong thinking on the part of the Protestant reformers was their attempt to find Biblical support for their dualistic view by looking back into the Old Testament. In so doing they were trying to turn God’s time clock backward. In the Old Testament, State and Church were united, which made the reformers feel really comfortable with their arrangement. However, all the while, they were overlooking the fact that in the transition from the old to the new covenant, Church and State were separated by God Himself, so that what they were seeking to perpetuate had long been outdated.

More specifically, the reformers claimed support for their invisible Church theory on the grounds that there too, God had a faithful remnant. They would say those seven thousand who, in the time of Elijah, refused to bow the knee to Baal were the true Israelites hidden away in the masses of an outward visible Israel. In that they were correct. National Israel, especially after being overtaken by apostasy, was only the shell within which the true Israel was inclosed. However, they failed to perceive is that God’s New Testament Church is different, in that it bears no resemblance to a nation-

alistic shell, for it is exclusively the counterpart of the Old Testament faithful remnant.

By divine design, the Church is meant to be a continuation of that pure, unmixed element. Thus, in their appeal to the Old Testament, they committed the big mistake of trying to remake the New Testament Church over its Old Testament pattern. The Anabaptists could have spared themselves untold suffering at the hands of the persecuting State churches had they been willing to discontinue their effort to build visible churches containing members who were openly Christian. There were those who chose that cowardly, compromising course. There were people, for example, known as the half-way Anabaptists. They were people who to some extent shared the vision of the Anabaptists, but they stopped short of professing it openly.

Also, among the Lutherans appeared the Pietists. Again, these people were content to remain hidden in the folds of the mixed multitude. They continued to affiliate with the State churches even though they met in little groups during the week. In contrast the very heart of the Anabaptist commitment to Christ was to follow Him openly in life. The new life in Christ was to be

in evidence. Christ was to be made visible in the Church and the Church was to be made visible in the world, whatever the cost. This, the Anabaptists conceived to be the original apostolic pattern of the Church as given in the New Testament. They viewed themselves as restoring this pattern and thus completing the Reformation.

The challenge we face is to recapture their vision and keep it alive. In order to do this we need young people who will keep it alive. Unfortunately, many modern day theologians continue to perpetuate the false dualistic concept of a small invisible Church within a large somewhat visible type Church. However, thankfully, due to Anabaptist influence the more Biblical theologians now admit that the concept of an invisible Church is as foreign to the New Testament as is the concept of an invisible Christian. They will even raise this question, "If the individual Christian can be known by his fruit, how then does it happen that when such Christians are grouped together in the church, that such groups suddenly become invisible?"

That very valid question should convince anyone that the label we have been examining is indeed a misleading label. We

rub shoulders with many people, who although they claim to be Christian, for one reason or another are not affiliated with any church. Whether or not they verbalize it, such people by their actions are saying, “You do not need to evangelize us. We are Christians. We are members of the Church too. We are enrolled in the best Church of all, the invisible Church of God.”

This is one of the sad results of imbibing the false concept of an invisible church. Another result is the practice of divorcing baptism from Church membership. Any church group which adopts this practice (the practice of divorcing baptism from Church membership) is actually promoting the concept of the invisible Church. This practice does exist in our localities. The baptized person is thus made to feel that whether or not his name ever appears on the role of a particular congregation, is not an important detail because after all he is already a part of the supposedly

invisible Church. Out of this confusion has grown a supposedly churchless Christianity.

A recent survey brought to light the fact that no more than 75% of those Americans who profess to be Christians even attend a local church, and the percentage of those who actually belong to a church would be still lower. I close with this question, “Are you my brother, are you my sister, willing to maintain the visibility of your church?” If we are, we must wholeheartedly endorse the practice of nonconformity and the practice of church discipline because no church can let go of those practices and still maintain its visibility. I challenge us to help our church maintain its visibility. God wants that kind of Church.

Note: For a more thorough discussion on “The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares” see the article by this title written by Wilbur Kropf reprinted in The Christian Contender, July 2001 issue.

Scripture References

Genesis		Exodus		Deuteronomy	
6:8	251	12	243	7	254
7:21–23	243	32:9	251		
12	248	32:11	251		
		32:32, 33	252		
		33:1, 11, 13, 15	252	19:30, 31	246
		34:6, 10	252	25:12	246
				2 Kings	

	Ezra		Micah		John	
9:2	247	2:12	253	1:11, 12	253	
9:8, 9	247	5:7	253	1:14, 16	253	
				1:17	254	
	Job		Zephaniah			
1:15, 16	243	2:4-7	253		Romans	
				9:6-8	247	
	Isaiah		Zechariah	13	257	
5:20	256	8:1-8	253			
6:8, 11, 12, 13	245				Galatians	
7:2, 3	252		Matthew	3:29	248	
10:20-24	249	7:13	249	4:4	248	
37:31, 32	240	7:20	260			
		13:24-30	260		1 John	
	Jeremiah	13:36-40	260	4:19	255	
15:11, 14	253	22:6	250			
23:3	253	22:14, 16	250		Revelation	
31:7, 8	253			12:17	250	
42:1b, 2	249		Luke	17:14	250	
		12:32	250			

From the Previous Issue:

Purity

From a devotional by Aaron Troyer
(Berea Mennonite Fellowship)
Given at Mt. Carmel Bible Fellowship

Biblical Directives for Dressing our Children

From a sermon by Larry R. Weaver
Sunday, August 21, 2005
Bernville Mennonite Church

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 33.

The Temple. — Continued.

I. Temple of Zerubbabel.

NOTE. — The first Temple, built by Solomon, was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in B. C. 587. The second Temple, rebuilt under the direction of Zerubbabel, was completed about 72 years later.

1. Proclamation of Cyrus, king of Persia. — 2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:1-4.

2. Vessels of the Temple restored to Sheshbazzar. — Ezra 1:7-11.

3. Foundation of the Temple laid. — Ezra 3.

NOTE. — The foundation of Solomon's Temple was laid amid rejoicing; while the foundation of this Temple was laid with sorrow. The glory of Israel had departed.

4. Building stopped by decree of Artaxerxes. — Ezra 4:17-22.

NOTE. — The faithful builders of the Temple had two alternatives then: (1) they could take in their adversaries, which meant peace for the present but ultimate ruin; or (2) they could exclude their adversaries, which meant stormy times for the present, and ultimate success. They chose the latter. For fifteen years their work was hindered, but the world approves the wisdom of their course. The church today can profit by their example. The devil has enough subjects to fill the churches on short order, if only the church will agree to compromise; but these unconverted members are a load to the cause wherever found. Better struggle on alone amid persecution than to march on hand in hand with the world toward common ruin.

5. By decree of Darius, the work on the building continues until completed. — Ezra 6:1-15.

6. The new Temple dedicated. — Ezra 6:16-22.

7. Cleansed by Nehemiah. — Nehemiah 13:9-14.

II. The Temple of Herod. — The Temple having again been destroyed, was again rebuilt by Herod, beginning about B.C. 37. (Much of the information concerning this Temple may be found in the works of Josephus.) Herod's object in building this Temple was to allay the opposition of the Jews, who had actively opposed his attempt to Romanize Judea. The use made of the Temple seems to be in harmony with the motive in building it (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:45, 46; John 2:14). It was the scene of active work by Christ, and later by the apostles (Luke 21:37; Acts 2:46; 3:1,12; 21:26). Christ's prophecy of its destruction was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70.

III. The Temple a type of,

1. The body of Christ. — John 2:21.

2. The church of Christ. — Ephesians 2:49–22; Revelation 3:12.
3. Christians. — 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16.
4. God. — Revelation 7:15; 21:22.
5. Heaven. — Psalm 11:4; Revelation 7:15.

1. What time was spent in the building of Solomon's Temple? Zerubbabel's? Herod's?
2. Compare the motives of these men in the erection of their respective Temples.
3. Compare these Temples with regard to size; to magnificence.
4. Distinguish between the Temple and the Synagogue.
5. How did the Temple and synagogues aid in the spreading of the Gospel?

LESSON 34.

The Elder Brother.

I. Cain.

NOTE. — Considered in Lesson 3.

II. Ishmael.

1. Birth. — Genesis 16:15, 16.
2. Circumcision. — Genesis 17:26.
3. Banishment of Hagar and Ishmael. — Genesis 21:9–21; (See Galatians 4:22–31.)
4. Ishmael to become a great nation. — Genesis 16:10; 21:13.
5. Dwelt in the wilderness. — Genesis 16:12; 21:20.
6. Married an Egyptian. — Genesis 21:21.
7. His sons. — Genesis 25:13–16.
8. He and Isaac bury their father.— Genesis 25:9.
9. Death. — Genesis 25:17.
10. Reference to his descendants. — Genesis 37:25, 27, 28; 39:1; Judges 8:24; Psalm 83:6.

III. Esau.

1. Birth. — Genesis 25:24–26.
2. Occupation. — Genesis 25:27.

3. His father's favorite. — Genesis 25:28.
4. How he lost his birthright. — Genesis 25:29–34.

NOTE. — “ Foolish man,” is the verdict of, all who are acquainted with this narrative; yet how infinitely more foolish are they who sell their birthright of heaven for the vain things of earth.

5. Marries two Canaanite women. — Genesis 26:34.
6. Jacob, by deceiving his father, receives the blessing intended for Esau. — Genesis 27:1–29.
7. Esau's subsequent blessing. — Genesis 27:30–40.
8. Esau cherishes revenge. — Genesis 27:41–45.
9. Becomes Ishmael's son-in-law. — Genesis 28:6–9.
10. Reconciliation between Esau and Jacob. — Genesis 33.

NOTE. — It is pleasing to note that the spirit of brotherly love had outgrown the spirit of resentment.

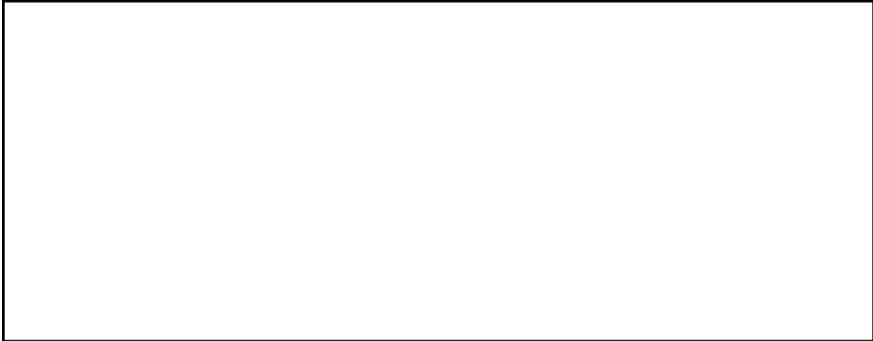
11. The two brothers bury their father. — Genesis 35:29.
12. Possessions and posterity of Esau. — Genesis 36.

IV. Manasseh.

1. Parentage. — Genesis 41:50.
2. When born. — Genesis 41:50.
3. Why so named. — Genesis 41:52.
4. He and Ephraim are claimed by their grandfather. — Genesis 48:5.
5. Ephraim favored in the ancestral blessing. Genesis 48:14, 20.
6. Joseph's protest. — Genesis 48:18.
7. Jacob's answer. — Genesis 48:19.
8. Jacob's prophecy verified. — Numbers 1:33, 35; 2:18–21.
9. References to his descendants. — Joshua 13:29; 17; 2 Kings 17:6; 1 Chronicles 5:23, 25, 26.

V. Points in common between Cain, Ishmael, Esau, and Manasseh.

1. They were the first-born in their respective families.
2. They were the elder brothers of the ones through whom the promises of God descended to succeeding generations, Manasseh excepted.
3. They occupy a conspicuous place in history.
4. They led a wild, roving life, Manasseh excepted.
5. They were the heads of mighty nations.



One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study (Continued)

1. Who was Hagar?
2. How did Esau get the name Edom? What is the last glimpse of the Edomites found in the sacred record ?
3. Compare Ishmael and Isaac.
4. Explain Galatians 4:22–31.
5. How was the life of Cain spared? Of Ishmael?

Catalogue

Sermons transcribed and available on various topics.

Volumes 1 – 8 available.

Back Issues Available

Ministry Topics

Special Meetings Available

Book Reprints are available

- 100 Lessons in Bible Study
- A Talk With Church Members
- Bible Wines: Laws of

Fermentation

- Christian Attire
- Christianity and Dress
- Christ, The Apostles and Wine
- Dress: A Brief Treatise
- The Ideal Christian Home
- The Ministry
- The Temperate Life
- Wordly Conformity in Dress

New Series:

Practical Nonconformity

Vol 1 — The Christian, Cards, Contests, Games, and Other Amusements.

Full Catalogue available