

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST:

The Christian's Finest Hour



Manfred E. Kober, Th.D.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT: THE BELIEVER'S FINEST HOUR

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1A. THE SESSION AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT:

1b. The issues at the judgment seat:



1c. Positively: Service and Rewards:

The Scriptures emphasize the work and rewards of the believer:

2 Cor. 5:10 "what he has done"

1 Cor. 3:13 "every man's work"

Eph. 6:8 "whatsoever good thing any man doeth"

Col. 3:23 "whatsoever ye do"

2c. Negatively: Not Sins

Christ's "one sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:12) brought "remission of these" (10:18) so complete that God can say, "I will remember them no more" (10:17)

2b. The interpretation of the judgment seat:

Is the Judgment Seat a *Protestant purgatory* or a *Christian's coronation*?

Is the Judgment Seat primarily a time of

tears or triumph?
gloom or glory?
remorse or rejoicing?
regret or recognition?
recrimination or recompense?

1c. The punitive view:

The judgment seat is a time of chastisement and shame:

1d. George Dollar says about Christ's action toward the believers:

He's going to take the good and faithful servants with Him; they will rule with Him over the earth. But He's going to send all of the wicked, lazy, unprofitable Christians. . . to outer darkness for one thousand years and they shall weep and there shall be gnashing of teeth (cited by Hoyt, *Bib. Sac.*, January-March 1980, 33).



2d. Kenneth Dodson also writes of punishment at the judgment seat:

Justice toward His children demands that God reward them for both good works and bad works at the Judgment Seat of Christ. There will be crowns and rewards for good works. *There will be chastisement and stripes for bad works* (*The Prize of the Up-Calling or Paul's Secret of Victory*, 82 [emphasis added]).

Dodson further writes of God:

He has a videotape of every human life, with all the lines of human influence that have gone from that life into other human lives, and He will play back all of these videotapes of all humanity. This will be "God's Drama of History" (*Ibid.*, 77 [emphasis added]).

2c. The positive view:

Theologians holding this positive position maintain that Scripture teaches that all sins, both confessed sin and unconfessed, have been borne by Christ on the cross and that the Christian will never be faced with either at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (Hoyt, *Bib. Sac.*, January-March 1980, 36)

1d. Chafer and Walvoord support this view:

With reference to sin, Scripture teaches that the child of God under grace shall not come into judgment (John 3:18; 5:24; 6:37; Rom. 5:1; 8:1; 1 Cor. 11:32); in his standing before God, and on the ground that the penalty for all sin—past, present and future (Col. 2:13)—has been borne by Christ as the perfect substitute, the believer is not only placed beyond condemnation, but being in Christ is accepted in the perfection of Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:6; Col. 2:10; Heb. 10:14) and loved of God as Christ is loved (John 17:23) (Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 1974 ed., 282).

2d. Those who take a positive approach do not minimize the consequences of the believer's sins. Hoyt has well written on the subject:

The Bible does teach that there are and will be temporal and eternal *consequences* for the believer's sins. First, present unconfessed sin results in a *loss of desire* for service as one is out of experiential fellowship with God. Second, unconfessed sin also results in *loss of power* in the believer's life because sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Third, unconfessed sin results in *loss of opportunity* since the sinning believer is not living according to the will of God. These are three very real present consequences of unconfessed sin in the believer's life (*Bib. Sac.*, January-March 1980, 84, emphasis in the original).

3b. The individuals at the Judgment Seat:

1c. The individuals have experienced the rapture:

Would not the comfort of the blessed hope turn to consternation if the believer were to anticipate public humiliation after the rapture?



2c. The individuals constitute the Bride of Christ:

They are about to be joined eternally to the Bridegroom. What earthly bridegroom criticizes and chastises his bride just prior to the wedding and actually expects her to be at the ceremony? Instead of joining him joyfully at the altar, she will withdraw tearfully to her parents. Who could blame her?

3c. Some of the individuals have been in heaven for hundreds or thousands of years:

Will the saints who have enjoyed the splendors of heaven and the fellowship of the Savior for ages suddenly have that blessedness terminated by an event that will have the carnal ones among them in a state of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?

2A. THE SUBLIMITY OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT:

It is safe to say that many believers are anything but anxious for the rapture because they have been taught to dread the *bema* after the rapture. A right understanding of the Judgment Seat puts an aura of anticipation over one's present and future life.

1b. The believer's recognition:

At the Judgment Seat the believer will be recognized by his Lord for his service. Hated by the world and misunderstood by other believers, the true worth of his character and conduct will receive divine recognition.

2b. The believer's rewards:

The New Testament revelation concerning the Church as a special company includes statements about the glorious destiny of the Bride of Christ, a company blessed in this life beyond any other group in human history (Eph. 1:3) and rewarded in glory in ways uniquely wonderful.

1c. Special rewards:
 At the *bema* special Rewards are bestowed For faithful service. They are called crowns, or better, victor's garlands.

2c. Individual rewards:
 A second category of rewards involves the recognition of every action. The most routine activity of the life of the believer will either receive a reward or forfeit a reward. Even "eating and drinking," if done for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), will be rewarded. Paul encourages both bond slaves and free servants (Eph. 6:8c) that every good activity will be rewarded. While recognition and remuneration in this life may be minimal, the Lord will grant every good action "the reward of an inheritance." An action is worthwhile in God's eyes and suitable for reward if it is done from the heart (*kardia*, Col. 3:22) with the whole being (*ek pseuches*, Col. 3:23) and with the proper attitude (*eunoios*, Eph. 6:7).

According to Col. 3 and Eph 6 work should be done
 --ethically
 --energetically
 --enthusiastically
 --expectantly



The Judgment Seat of Christ





1. The Incorruptible Crown, to those who practice self-control (I Corinthians 9:24-27).



2. The Soul-Winner's Crown to those who are faithful in witnessing for Christ (I Thessalonians 2:19, 20).



3. The Crown of Righteousness to those who love and look for Christ's appearing (II Timothy 4:5-8).



4. The Crown of Life to those who endure trial because of their love for Christ (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10. See also John 21:15, 17).



5. The Shepherd's or Pastor's Crown to those who faithfully feed their flocks and live exemplary lives before them (I Peter 5:1-4).

Col. 3:22-24
²² Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of **heart**, fearing God. ²³ And whatever you do, do it **heartily**, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Eph. 6:5-8
⁵ Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ with **goodwill** doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.

The most routine matters of life take on a new meaning for the believer who realizes that every action may be, and if done properly, will be rewarded of God. A bitter spirit and a complaining attitude will forfeit reward. How glorious to know that if we "give it all we have," even housework and homework, not just "holy" work will someday receive "the reward of the inheritance."

3c. Universal rewards:

Some rewards are promised to every believer by virtue of the gracious provision of Christ in the atonement. Even carnal believers are blood-bought and may anticipate certain rewards. These rewards are not as a result of faithfulness in this life, but in response to God's gracious salvation. They belong to every Church Age believer who has been baptized into Christ.

1d. Divine appointment:

1 Cor. 6:2-3

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Paul reminds carnal believers that they would participate in the millennial rule of Christ (rather than be excluded from the millennium). In addition, they would have the privilege of judging the angels.

2d. Divine affection:

1 Thess. 4:17

Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The experience of the eternal presence of Christ and His everlasting love would be sufficient for the Bride of Christ. Every believer will be forever with the Bridegroom. What a comfort!

3d. Divine approval:

1 Cor. 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

Paul concludes the most lengthy discussion of the Judgment Seat with the observation that Christ at that time will reveal the innermost aspects of the human heart, not for the purpose of condemnation—"there is therefore now no condemnation" (Rom. 8:1)—but for the purpose of commendation. He will find something good to say about each one of us: "and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. 4:5) Will there be regrets at the *bema*? Certainly! But the overall emphasis is that of rejoicing.

How will the believer feel moments after the Judgment Seat? Paul concludes the most lengthy passage on the Judgment Seat with these arresting and comforting words (1 Cor. 4:5):

“And then shall every man have praise of God.”

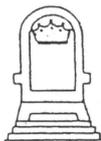
To hear these words of commendation ringing in our ears will make it worth it all. **As the rapture is the believer’s FONDEST HOPE, the Judgment Seat is the believer’s FINEST HOUR.**

CONCLUSION:

Hoyt has well said:

The Judgment Seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the judgment seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential (*Bib. Sac.*, April-June 1980, 131).

REWARDS FOR THE BELIEVERS' WORKS



Judgment Seat of Christ (The BEMA)

2 Cor. 5:10 - 1 Cor. 3:11-4:5



Wreath of Incorruptibility

1 Cor. 9:25
And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

The Victor's Garland



Wreath of Glory

1 Peter 5:2-4
2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof; not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.
4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Elder's Garland



Wreath of Life

Revelation 2:10
Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

James 1:12
Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Martyr's Garland



Wreath of Righteousness

2 Timothy 4:8
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

For Those Who Love His Appearing

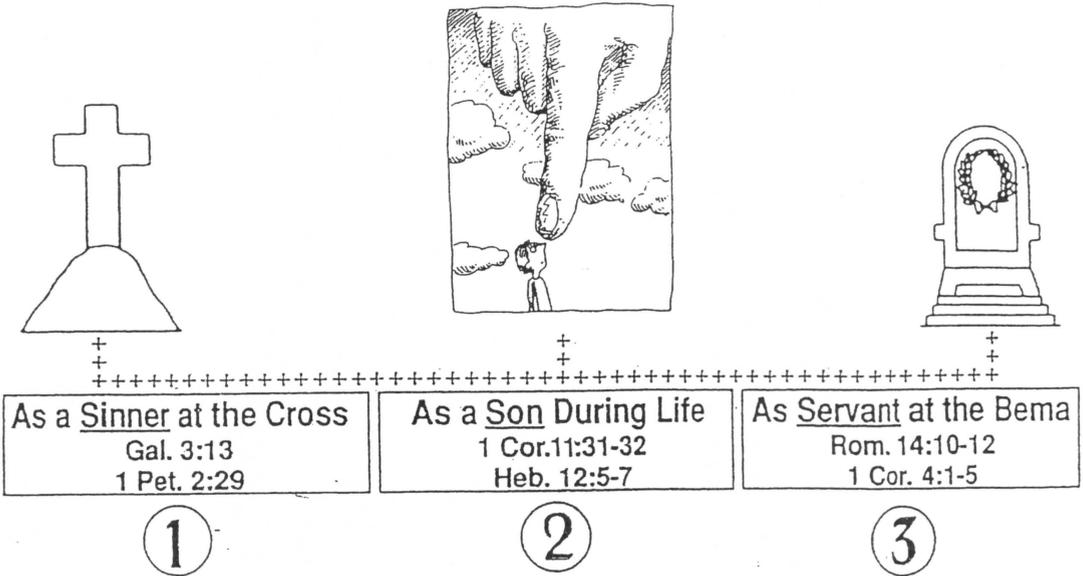


Wreath of Rejoicing

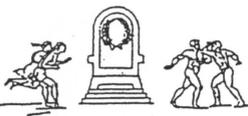
1 Thessalonians 2:19-20
19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?
20 For ye are our glory and joy.

Soul Winner's Garland

The Believer's 3 Judgments



THE PICTURES OF THE JUDGMENT SEAT

| The Picture | The Passage | The Purpose | The Prospect |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>The Believer Is A:</i> | | <i>Our Life Is A:</i> | |
| 1. Servant  | Romans 14:10-12 | LOYAL STEWARDSHIP | PROMOTION |
| <p>But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.</p> | | | |
| 2. Builder  | 1 Corinthians 3:11-13 | LASTING STRUCTURE | PRAISE |
| <p>For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble - every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.</p> | | | |
| 3. Athlete  | 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 | LAWFUL STRIVING | PRIZE |
| <p>And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body; and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.</p> | | | |

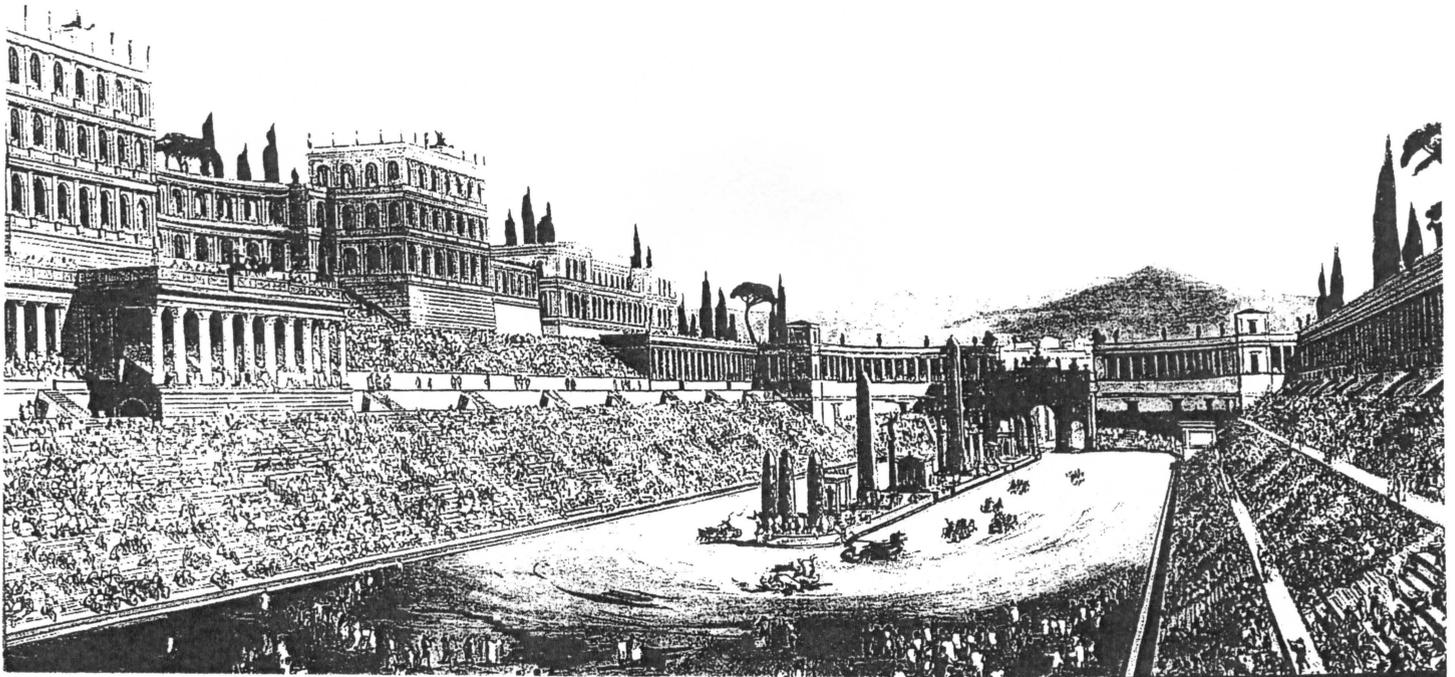
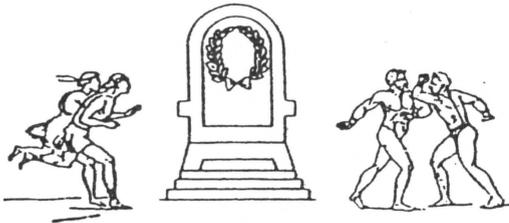
1 Cor. 9:24-27

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.



Paul's reference to the BEMA ("judgment seat") does not picture a courtroom scene but the umpire's seat at an athletic contest.

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

I CORINTHIANS 4



4 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

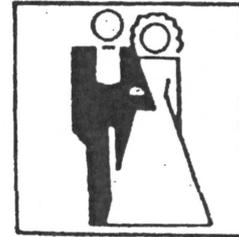
4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts:

and then shall every man have praise of God.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:7-9



7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

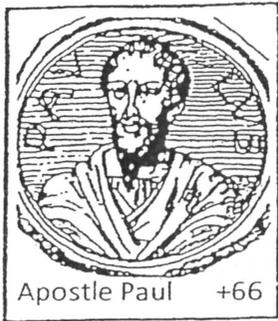


JUDGMENT SEAT
OF CHRIST



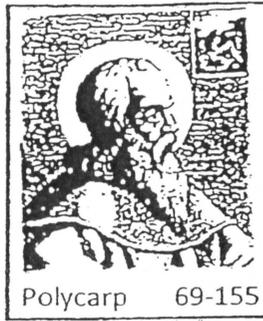
MARRIAGE OF
THE LAMB

CHRISTIANS THROUGH THE CENTURIES²⁴



Apostle Paul +66

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Polycarp 69-155

2



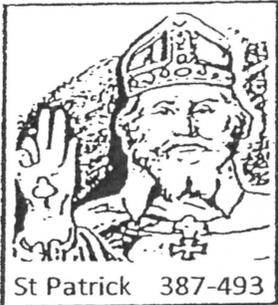
Tertullian 160-220

3



St Augustine 354-430

4



St Patrick 387-493

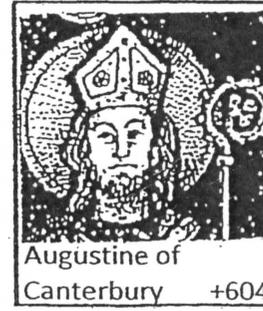
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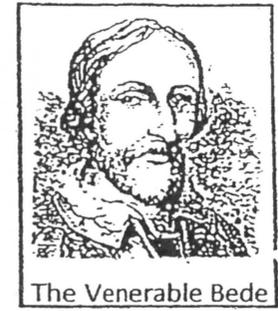
Boethius 480-524

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Augustine of
Canterbury +604

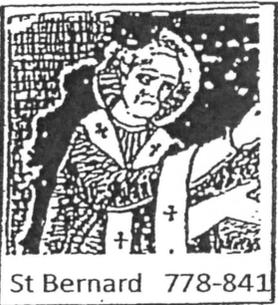
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The Venerable Bede

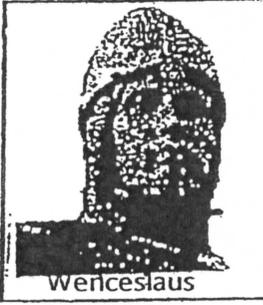
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672-735



St Bernard 778-841

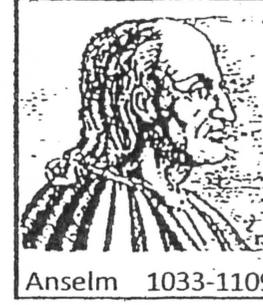
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Wenceslaus

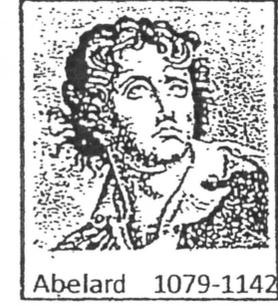
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Anselm 1033-1109

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Abelard 1079-1142

12



Elizabeth of Thuringer

1207-1231

13



John Wycliff

1330-1384

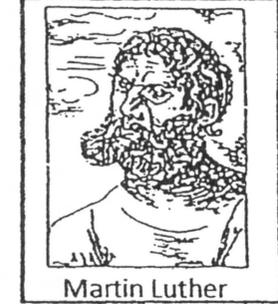
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Savanarola

1452-1498

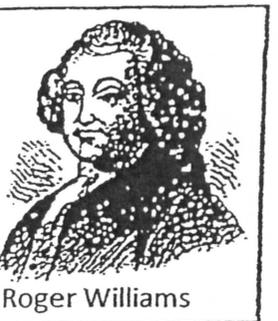
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Martin Luther

1483-1546

16



Roger Williams

1603 ? - 1683

17



Johann S Bach

1685-1750

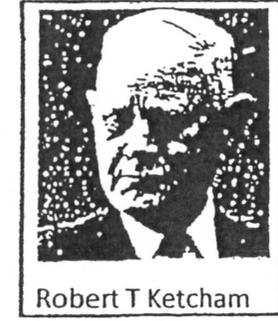
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Charles H Spurgeon

1834-1892

19



Robert T Ketcham

1889-1978

20

I have attempted to select one representative saint for each century of the Christian Church. These glorified saints revel in the presence of God and the holy angels. Are we to assume that their joy is overshadowed by a gnawing fear as to what awaits them at the yet future judgment seat of Christ? Will those like St. Patrick have their joy abruptly end at the bema possibly followed by weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth?