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RAYMOND COTTEN -- MIGHTY IN PRAYER
By Duane V. Maxey

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OUR "LAST RESORT" -- GOD'S "FIRST CHOICE"

Jealous of Jesus' fame, John 7:32 tells us that "the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him." The officers went on their nefarious errand no doubt fully intent upon arresting Jesus, but so awe-struck were they by his speaking that even though, according to John 7:44, some in the crowd "would have taken him... no man laid hands on him." There was something unearthly about Christ's words -- something that brought those would-be arresters under arrest themselves! MEN had sent them to arrest Jesus and bring Him into the hands of human authorities, but as he spake they sensed that GOD HAD SENT Jesus to take them into custody! -- to bring them bound by the convicting power of the Holy Ghost out of sin and into hands of Almighty God!

When they awe-struck officers returned without Jesus in custody, "the chief priests and Pharisees.. said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?" Those "officers answered, NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN!" (John 7:44-45)

Through Christ's utterances those men felt GOD -- Heaven and earth were brought together -- humanity sensed Deity and stood dumbfounded through the voiced words of the lowly Galilean. Never before, had those officers heard a man speak like He spoke! His utterances were "quick, (i. e., "Alive!") and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [were] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of [their] heart(s)." (Hebrews 4:12)

Although the utterances I heard were in prayer instead of in preaching, I had a somewhat similar experience one day when I was pastoring the Bible Missionary Church in St. Louis, Missouri. It also involved my coming into the presence of a lowly man -- a preacher that was really "of little repute" -- at least not one of the prominent evangelists in the BMC.

In 1966 we were planning a revival meeting, and we had tried to call several different "leading evangelists" unsuccessfully. Therefore, rather as a last resort, we called Raymond Cotten, from Eldon, Missouri. I confess that prior to that time my estimation of him as a preacher had not been high. He just struck me as easy-going, country "hay-seed" sort of holiness preacher -- one who loved God and loved holiness, but very plain, and not at all the kind of personality one would want for an evangelist. But, he held meetings, we had failed to get one of the "big-guns" to come, he was available, and so we called him. But my estimation of that dear man of God was soon to take a big jump.

He came, and we started the meeting. He called for a time of fasting and prayer at the noon hour. In addition to my pastoral work I was also working at the Staley Paint Mfg. Co., but still I decided to fast and pray with Bro. Cotten at the church building during the lunch hour. And, it was on first day that I met him for prayer that my estimation of him began to take a big upswing. I drove over from the Staley Paint plant to our sanctuary to spend a season with Bro. Cotten praying and then return for the rest of my shift.

He was not a "pulpiteer," his physical appearance in the pulpit was very plain, and there was nothing exciting in his slow-spoken manner of delivery. Unlike some of the rest of us, he wasn't given to a lot of bodily motion, pulpit-pounding, and gesturing in his preaching -- and in fact, his strength was not in his preaching at all. His power was in the realm of something, the name of which like "preaching," begins with "pr" but it ends with "ayer" -- prayer.

When I entered the sanctuary that noon hour, I heard sounds that are quite rare even in holiness circles, and I saw something I had never seen before: There was dear Bro. Cotten sitting at the altar, groaning with groanings that cannot be uttered, with a roll of tissue for his streaming tears, and a brown paper sack to catch the soaked tissues. NEVER HAD I HEARD A MAN PRAY QUITE LIKE HE PRAYED!

When I entered the sanctuary, I felt a deeply moving spiritual power vibrating and resonating in response to his groans -- he had a-hold of heaven, and I could feel it! At once, I thought: "Oh, my! This is what we need! This is what I need! -- not an evangelist well-known on earth, but an evangelist, if you please, that is well-known in heaven, who has power with God, who pulls on the prayer-ropes behind the scenes and makes things move!"

I discovered that my "last resort" call had been to the man of "God's First Choice"! a man whose power lay in the secret place -- the place where few feel called, but where Heaven is first moved if it is moved at all. Raymond Cotten knew how to pray -- No, not just pray, he knew how to get into a realm of spiritual intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered! When I went into the sanctuary that day, his words were few, his groans continual: "Uhhhh, Uhhhh! Uhhhh! Oh God! Uhhhh, Uhhhh! Uhhhh!" The tears flowed, the tissues were soaked and discarded, and the groans resounded and resonated throughout my inmost being.

A BAPTISM OF PERFECT LOVE WHILE PRAYING WITH RAYMOND COTTEN

The mighty impact of his intercession was not transmitted in the English language -- nor could it have been so transmitted. My ears were not tickled with words, my mind was not

following a flowery prayer-discourse -- but my soul was being deeply moved. I was brought into "the secret place of the Most High" -- not through being in a building, but through being in the presence of a mighty intercessor who was in the presence of God! And, Oh what I felt!

I continued to meet with him, and while I was not prepared to cast away my confidence, I hungered for a fresh witness of Perfect Love. In particular, one child's misbehavior in the services had annoyed me. I wanted more love. With but a few interjectory words, Bro. Cotten groaned, and wept, and wiped the tears, and groaned again, and although I had been such a stranger to his realm of intercession, I joined with him the best I could -- and, during one of those noon-hour prayer and fasting sessions, God dumped a tub-load of Perfect Love Honey into my soul! It was one of the most delicious outpourings of the Holy Spirit I had ever enjoyed. For days, yea weeks! I walked in its glow! Everything in the Book seemed to revolve around God's Love, Perfect Love! I had experienced Holiness as a mighty refining Fire, but never before had I experienced it as Perfect Love in quite that way, and certainly not in that amount!

NEVER BEFORE HAD MAN PRAYED AS HE PRAYED! As Jesus spake, He rose mightily in the estimation of those would-be arresting officers, and as Raymond Cotten prayed during that first and succeeding prayermeetings with me, he too rose in my estimation of him as a man of God -- so much so, that I later called him for another meeting at St. Louis, called him for a meeting in Elkins, West Virginia, and finally, called him for a meeting in Portland, Oregon.

On August 1, 1984, GOD CALLED HIM to his last, and ETERNAL MEETING -- HEAVEN!

I did not find any articles by Raymond Cotten in The Missionary Revivalists, and the picture I copied from the Revivalist is not really one of good quality. But, I trust that this little Tribute to him has painted for you the best and truest picture you can get of him during his earthly sojourn -- not the picture of a striking appearance, nor that of an Apollos in the pulpit -- but the picture of an humble evangelist of little repute who had GREAT POWER WITH GOD IN PRAYER -- ONE WHO COULD PULL HEAVEN AND EARTH TOGETHER WITH HIS "GROANINGS THAT COULD NOT BE UTTERED"!

The following account of his home-going and tributes I took from the October, 1984 Missionary Revivalist.

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RAYMOND COTTEN -- CALLED HOME

Rev. Raymond E. Cotten, evangelist in the Bible Missionary Church, went to his eternal reward August 1, 1984. Brother Cotten was a "weeping prophet of God." He was born October 2, 1913 in Miller County, Missouri, a son of Norman and Mande Robbins Cotten. On September 7, 1944, he was married to Ellen Marie Hughes who survives him. Sister Cotten stood by her husband in his ministry across the years and is living in Eldon, Missouri, which has been their home.

Brother Cotten was a graduate of Colorado Springs Bible College in 1944. He pastored in a number of states and was a charter member of the Eldon Bible Missionary Church and at the time of his death was a member of that church.

Besides his wife Brother Cotten is survived by four sons: Tom, of Russellville, James of Kansas City, Kansas, Steve and John of Kenner, Louisiana; one brother, Leonard of Eldon, Missouri; four sisters, Mrs. Cecil Hombs of Westfield, Wisconsin, Mrs. Fern Hoskins of Columbia, Missouri; Mrs. Lois Dean Phelps of Nashville, Tennessee; Miss Nina Faye Cotten of Jefferson City, Missouri; four grandchildren and a host of friends.

Funeral services were conducted on August 4, 1984, in Eldon, Missouri by Rev. I Parker Maxey assisted by Brother Cotten's pastor, Rev. Bob Davis, Interment was in the Dooley Cemetery south of Eldon.

Brother Cotten was a successful evangelist and was known and respected as a man of compassionate spirit and one who wept over the lost. In his opening remarks, Brother Maxey made mention of these particular qualities of this Soldier of the Cross as he paid tribute to him. Brother Cotten suffered a great deal during his last days on earth but was uncomplaining through it all.

Pastor Rev. Bob Davis

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TRIBUTES TO BROTHER RAYMOND COTTEN

Brother Raymond Cotten was a preacher of righteousness. He was truly a man of God and a brother beloved. His life was a blessing to many. I am glad I had the privilege to know Brother Cotten. The Bible Missionary Church has lost a true soldier, but his influence will live on. By the grace of God I expect to meet him in the Glory. World.

My wife joins me in expressing our sincerest sympathy to Sister Cotten and all the family. Our prayers are with you. -- Spencer Johnson, General Moderator, B.M.C.

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Almost thirty years ago God needed some men to stand for the old paths that were being forsaken by so many holiness people. In the person of Raymond Cotten God found one of several men who dared to take their stand. Since that time, until God signaled that his work was completed, Brother Cotten has been a faithful and loyal member of the Missouri--East Kansas District of the Bible Missionary Church. He was highly regarded all across the district. During his recent illness, whenever I visited a church on the district, someone was sure to ask about Brother Cotten.

The first time I heard him preach was in revival in Ontario, Oregon, and I was very impressed with his message on holiness. He was an excellent Sunday school teacher and as long as his health permitted he taught the adult class in the Eldon Bible Missionary Church. He also

supplied the pulpits of many of our churches wherever he was needed. You never had to worry about erroneous teaching, for he had a clear grasp on the doctrinal truths of the Scriptures.

I shall personally miss him. My family and I extend to Sister Marie Cotten, Tom, Jim, Steve and John, the daughters-in-law and the grandchildren, our deepest sympathy. We challenge every one of you to make plans to meet him in Heaven. -- D. N. Hayford, District Moderator Missouri--E. Kansas District, B.M.C.

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