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## NOTES

The attention of all friends is drawn to the new arrangements in force as from 1st January. The use of a central address for all activities is abandoned, and friends will write to Welling for all matters connected with the B.S.M. and literature printed by us in England, including the sending of subscriptions and remittances for such; to Ilford for all matters connected with the "Herald," "Dawn," and "People's Paper," and all literature coming from overseas, as well as students' books coming from London publishers, this including the sending of subscriptions for these journals and remittances for such books; and to Luton for all matters connected with the Benevolent Fund and Loaning Service. It is hoped and expected that this new arrangement will enable the service to the friends to be rendered more expeditiously and efficiently. Before sending for books or literature the friends are requested to examine the back page of this issue to ascertain at which address the particular books required are stocked.

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In order to lighten the Editorial and postal despatch work, the "Bible Students Monthly" this year will be issued every two months instead of monthly as hitherto, but each issue will contain twice the quantity of reading matter so that the total amount remains the same. We hope to revert to monthly publications when conditions permit. In the meantime will the friends please note that the next issue of the B.S.M. will appear on 1st March.

It is necessary that the B.S.M. become self-supporting, a position to which it has not yet attained. In past years part of its cost has been borne by donations. It is earnestly desired therefore that every interested reader will endeavour to secure other readers. If friends will send in names and addresses of others who are likely to be interested we will gladly send them sample copies.

\* \* \* \*

Mr. J. Middleton Murry, speaking before the National Peace Council in London last October, said:

*"San Francisco is simply the confession 'We cannot do it. We cannot achieve a new social mind; we cannot create a new behaviour pattern. Let us accept the old anarchy, and comfort ourselves. Let us call it order.'"*

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, widely known as the man who directed Britain's air offensive against Germany, has said: *"The whole*

*world is now in the range of this weapon. . . . War will go on until there is a change in the human heart—and I see no signs of that."*

\* \* \* \*

Mr. Middleton Murry is well known as a man of letters; Sir Arthur Harris as a professional soldier. Both men speak with authority in their own respective spheres, and there is no denying that they, like many other citizens, desire a peaceful and orderly international life. But they have joined in a counsel of despair. They are without hope; and because their words, and the words of men like them, read and listened to by thousands of their fellows, will only intensify despair, it is the duty of we who know the hope that is before the world to broadcast our confidence and give our reasons. The coming Kingdom can achieve a new social mind; it can change the human heart; and we need, more than ever to-day, to relate our knowledge concerning that Kingdom to the situation as it exists, and to discover ways and means of telling men what we know. As Christians it is our privilege to combat the world's despair and replace it by hope. There is need now for serious consideration as to how it shall be done.

\* \* \* \*

The doctrine of the Fall of man is not so unfashionable, in some Christian quarters at least, as is popularly supposed. At the third visit of one of our brethren to a country Methodist church, to conduct the service, recently, the building was crowded, and more chairs had to be brought in, the organist remarking to him: "You are going to have a full house to-night." Taking for text John 3. 16, our brother dwelt on the fall of man into a perishing condition, Jesus the Ransom for All, the resurrection, and the Kingdom as the only hope of mankind. The congregation manifested considerable interest.

It is known that several of our friends have been invited to serve Methodist churches from time to time. Reports of such services would be very welcome, and would provide a basis for further consideration of this avenue of usefulness in the work of the Gospel.

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"It is a good deal better to live holy than to talk about it. We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody that it does. The light will be its own witness. Light-houses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine." (Moody.)

# THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

AN EXHORTATION FOR THE NEW YEAR

A. O. Hudson

There can be no finer message for the New Year than the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom. This is the age-old commission of the Christian, to tell the good tidings of the Divine purpose in creation to all who will listen; to be instant in season, out of season, preaching the Word; to shine as a light in the world, and to hold forth the Word of Life. From that day, more than nineteen centuries ago, when Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell in Jerusalem . . . HEARKEN . . .," that mission has never been abrogated. The message of repentance and conversion, of High Calling and Restitution, has gone on through the centuries, finding its way into every corner of the world, even as was predicted by Jesus, bearing fruit appropriate to this Age; and goes on still, and will go on, into that Millennial Kingdom Age which is to succeed the present, bearing again rich fruit in that day to the glory of God.

Now there are two aspects to this theme, both of which repay examination. First, what is this Gospel of the Kingdom; second, how and to whom shall it be preached? Both questions need to be answered not only in the light of our understanding of Scripture texts but also in harmony with the examples set by our Lord and His apostles, who are for all time the patterns and guides of our own Christian life and activity.

And these questions must be answered. We stand to-day, after six years of devastating war, with all the misery, turmoil and destruction which such war has brought in its train, uncertain what the future is to bring forth. Our faith has survived; we believe still in the coming of the Kingdom. Let us thank God for that. Our liberty to preach the Gospel without let or hindrance, to worship how and where we will, to serve our Lord according to the dictates of our own consciences, is ours still. Let us thank God for that also. But the status of Christian discipleship is not given to us for purely selfish ends, nor that we should organise ourselves into an exclusive little religious club that shuts itself away from the world and refuses to face up to the tremendous problems that the cessation of total war has left as a bitter legacy to the sons of men. The Church of this Gospel Age is truly a separated Church, a suffering Church, a Church living by a power not of this world; but it is also a universal

Church, a missionary Church, a Church that is the earthly sanctuary of the Holy Spirit of God, and in the power of that tremendous dynamic it must, like the rider of Revelation, go forth conquering and to conquer—or else perish.

In this post-war world, then, we must preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. What is that Gospel?

The answer can be sought within the framework of our Lord's first recorded public utterance (see Mark 1. 15). That utterance enshrined two exhortations and a statement of fact. "*Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*"

There are two phases of the Kingdom of Heaven (or Kingdom of God—the terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament). One phase is heavenly and the other is to be earthly. The earthly phase of the Kingdom was *not* then, at that time, at hand; but the doors of the heavenly phase were about to swing open to admit those who would enter. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that day the Kingdom of Heaven is preached and every man presseth into it." (Luke 16. 16.) The invitation to the earthly phase will not be issued until Christ's reign upon earth has commenced at the time of His revelation (*apokalupsis*) to all men in His Millennial Kingdom, and that in turn must wait until the last entrant to the heavenly phase has completed his earthly course and has been "changed" as Paul puts it in I Cor. 15. 51 to heavenly conditions, to be joined with the Lord Jesus Christ in the kingship and priesthood of that Millennial reign, even as it is written "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20. 4).

Repentance, then, is the first theme to be stressed in our proclamation of this Gospel. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" thundered the stentorian voice of the rugged Galilean fisherman who took the lead on that first day of Gospel preaching (Acts 2. 14). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" wrote Luke in milder words (Luke 24. 27). The people had been in some measure prepared for this message by the forthright denunciations of John the Baptist, and, to those who had been students of the Hebrew Scriptures, the passionate eloquence of Isaiah "Though your sins

be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (Isa. 1. 18). So it should be with us; in all our endeavours to enlighten men with the light wherewith we ourselves have been enlightened, right in the forefront we must place the demand for repentance and conversion. Not until the wicked man has turned from his evil ways and begun to do that which is lawful and right can he begin to appreciate the principles by which alone he shall save his soul alive (Ezek. 18. 27). And not until the one who hears has repented of his own share in the world's sin, and—more than that—repented of all the sin that is in the world and has come to Jesus to learn how he may help in the recovery of the world from that sin, is it of much avail to speak to him of the future glories God has in store for humanity.

Here there is exemplified one of the great principles by which creation is ordered. Repentance and conversion implies reason and persuasion. It cannot be effected by force. It is impossible to bring about true repentance in a man against his will. Neither is it God's design. No man will be coerced into righteous dealing. God has created man a creature of free will, and although it is a primal law of creation that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18. 4) and although it is clear to us that there is some quality in the state of sin which inevitably destroys the life of the one who harbours sin, no man will be made righteous and forced to continue in life against his own will. Even although in the Millennial Age all men will be awakened from the sleep of death and introduced to a new world order in which the outward practice of evil is, by Divine power, completely restrained, it is only that they all may have the opportunity to freely accept, or reject, Christ without the hindering effects of surrounding sin upon the would-be righteous. It will still be necessary for each of those awakened ones to hear the Gospel preached, and hearing it, to repent, and be converted, and come to Christ in absolute surrender and dedication, if they are to reap the benefits of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Unless they in this manner do become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, they will be denied entrance into the Holy City (see Rev. 21. 27) and, dying in their sin, be as though they had never been (Psa. 37. 10).

After repentance, "believe the Gospel". There is no real difference between "the Gospel" as such, and the "Gospel of the Kingdom". There are many facets of Truth which one must "believe" after conversion before the beauty and harmony of God's Plan of the Ages can be appreciated in its fulness. First of all comes full and complete acceptance of Christ, of His life and death, as essential to the salvation of the believer. We can and do according to our several philosophies define to

our own satisfaction just *why* this acceptance of Christ is necessary in the sight of God to our reconciliation with Him, but the fact remains when all is said and done that it is an act of faith and love which brings us to the feet of Jesus and leads us to say "Lord, I believe . . . thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It is that belief, reinforced by the outward evidence of a change of heart which we call conversion, that brings justification by faith, the condition of being at peace with God and of reconciliation with Him (Rom. 5. 1).

This justification however fails of its greatest potentiality unless it leads the believer to dedicate his whole life to the service of God in the interests of His Plan. That realisation of Divine goodness which led the believer to acceptance of Christ and consequent justification should logically lead him on to explore the deeper mysteries of the Divine dealings with men, and, realising God's purpose of blessing for all, to place himself at the Divine disposal to be used in such manner and at such time as God will ordain. And this we call consecration.

The highest level of Christian experience to-day lies in the profession and practice of the consecrated life—but it is not a monastic life. It is not a life which is given to shrinking and withdrawal from the world and its problems, the fears and sorrows, the strifes and perplexities, of the world of men. The term itself is taken from the function of the Levites of old in the economy of Israel. They were set apart from the nation in that they served purely in the things of God, they possessed no material inheritance in the land, they were commissioned to devote themselves heart and soul to the duties of their calling; but they were to live amongst the people, scattered through the length and breadth of the land, sharing the people's joys and sorrows, and ministering to them in the things of the spirit. They were to be teachers, counsellors and leaders in the higher spiritual matters of life; and this is the duty of the consecrated Christian of to-day.

There is an object in this. The Christian, if he does in fact fulfil this commission, becomes qualified thereby for the much greater work of the next Age when all men will be summoned before the great white throne of Rev. 20. 11 to learn of God's plans for their welfare. This Gospel which Jesus exhorted His hearers to believe does not end with the translation to heaven of the faithful consecrated Christians of this Age. The stage will then be set for those "Times of Restitution of all things" to which Peter referred, an Age during which all men, the dead as well as the living, will be brought back to life upon earth and experience the benefits of an earthly order of society over which Christ and His glorified Church will have assumed control.

Other discourses of Jesus show that this Gospel includes also a recognition of the fact that the powers of this world will not submit to this new state of society without a struggle. Jesus knew, what men have not yet realised, that the existing order based on force and selfishness must inevitably effect its own destruction. We in our day see what seems most assuredly to be the final phase of that headlong descent into catastrophe. Jesus told His disciples that He would return to earth at this crisis, His presence (*parousia*) being at first known only to His own followers, the while the world rushed heedlessly along its doomed course. Later on there would come the dawning consciousness of a new influence making itself felt in the world, and at length, when all who are of the Church had been translated to spiritual life to work forever with Christ, the full revelation of Himself in His glory to all men. From that latter point of time the Kingdom of Christ on earth commences to date, and the binding of Satan, that he may deceive the nations no more, be counted an accomplished fact. And of course that tremendous sequel must await the final collapse of the "kingdoms of this world" (Rev. 11. 15). Hence part of this Gospel is that truth so fervently held by the Early Church, that the systems of this world order are quite incapable of reformation and must inevitably pass away and give place to the universal Kingdom of Christ.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" It was the heavenly phase of that Kingdom upon which emphasis was laid in the days of the First Advent, but behind that emphasis lay the promise of the earthly. Now in our day the position is different. This Age has all but run its course; the pattern of world history, the events of to-day, the mood and temper of men, all tell us that. It is with confidence that we proclaim the imminence of the earthly Kingdom, and if we interpret the present signs aright as pointing to the Second Presence of our Lord being already an accomplished fact, then most certainly the time of His revelation to all men is within measurable reach. And if we are in fact perceiving the first rosy fingers of dawn, the herald of that "*astrape*" which shall shortly flame over the eastern hills and turn the darkness of earth's night into meridian day, why then surely our commission is to thunder forth as never before the message that first was heard on Jordan's banks:

"Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

\* \* \* \*

How then, and to whom, shall we preach this message?

Peter at Pentecost, Paul to the Athenians; these men were in no doubt over the matter. Words they had but recently heard, vibrant words, thrilling words, sounded still in their ears. "Go ye, make disciples of all nations." "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . to the uttermost parts of the earth." "And as ye go, preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.'" There can be no mistaking the import of these words. We are to be Christ's missionaries, ambassadors of His Kingdom, bearing the glad tidings wheresoever it can find lodgment.

This is truly a "sowing," but not the "sowing" in a dispensational sense which is followed by a harvest at the end of the Age. To realise this clearly will avoid some confusion of thought. "*So is the Kingdom of God*" said Jesus, "*as if a man should cast seed into the ground . . . and the seed should spring and grow up . . . first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear . . . and immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.*" (Mark 4. 26-29.) That is the dispensational sowing at the commencement of this Age, and He that sowed the seed is *the Son of Man*. He, too, comes to gather the harvest at the end of the Age (Rev. 14. 14-16). Although we as Christ's followers are intimately concerned with this dispensational sowing and reaping, this is not the same thing as that personal, individual missionary work which goes on during every century of the Age, sowing and reaping progressing side by side. Throughout all this Gospel Age, yea, and throughout all the Millennial Age which follows it, our commission remains unchanged; "Go . . . *make disciples of all nations*".

The primary purpose of this commission at the present time is for our own experience and training. The Father knows full well that though the Gospel be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, though we faithfully and strenuously fulfil our commission to be His witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, though we make ourselves all things to all men that we might by any means save some; there will only be a "little flock" that will give heed and come into present-day covenant relationship with God. No other outcome can be expected. God has determined that the masses of humanity shall be reached and converted by ways of reason and persuasion; man will attain his destiny on a basis of intelligent conviction, and it is necessary therefore that before "world conversion" on a universal scale is even attempted there must be a *fully trained and qualified body of "missionaries"* able and ready to carry out this stupendous work. The discharge of that responsibility is in Divine wisdom to be the mission of the Christian Church. The present time therefore is the training-time;

this world as it is now is the training-ground ; the adverse conditions of the present order of society the means by which each member of that Church will become so inflexibly set for the righteousness of God and so experienced in and sympathetic with the woes of the "groaning creation" that he will be abundantly able, in that day, to turn men from sin to serve the living God.

If then we do believe in this coming Kingdom of God upon earth and its standards, we will want to proclaim it now. If this Gospel is so good to us then we shall not want to hide it. Like Jeremiah of old we shall feel like saying "His word was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay". We know that men need this message, that it will solve all their problems and bring about peace on earth. We know that it is a good message, fraught with mighty power for the reclamation of the world. We know that it must be preached, for so it is written ; and with Paul we can only cry out "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel".

Therefore the strongest incentive to consistent and persistent witness to the Gospel is the effect of that witness upon ourselves. The consequence of its impact upon the world in general is merely secondary—at present. The time when the world's needs come to the forefront for attention is not yet—it lies just around the corner, where the light of the Messianic Kingdom is gathering ready to break forth upon the world. And as for ourselves, let us pause and reflect, what history has shown to be a truism, that the Christian movement or fellowship that loses the missionary spirit signs its own death-warrant. Christianity is essentially a missionary faith, and the light that is within us can only continue to burn if its radiance is continually flowing outwards to give illumination all around.

How shall the witness be given? Shall we leave it to the eloquent tongues of those gifted with fluent speech and the swiftly flowing pens of those who can set down their vision on paper? By no means. This is a work in which all who are Christ's, simple or cultured, slow-thinking or quick-witted, can have their place, each serving according to the measure of the Spirit which God has bestowed. We must never forget that the Apostles themselves were for the most part illiterate, uncultured men of the workaday world, unused to the finely polished speech and intellectual outlook of the wise and learned. It was their possession of the Holy Spirit, their love for their Lord, their consciousness of a mission to be performed, that gave them both inspiration for their message and the words in which to clothe it. So it can be with us. Be they never so halting and stumbling, the words in which the simplest child

of God expresses the faith which for him or her has transformed the world are messengers of Divine Truth to another who is ready for the living waters. And for those who cannot speak at all, there is the Christian life to be lived, more powerful by far than any sermon.

There is no set rule, then. Clearly the more usual as well as the most spectacular method of spreading the message is by public oratory—"public meetings"—and the printed page. Many less obvious methods will commend themselves to some, and there is no limit to the variety of means by which "Christ is preached."

The disciples, of course, had one means only—word of mouth. There was no such thing as the printed page in their day. Now we have various means of mechanically recording human speech so as to multiply its scope and circulation a thousand-fold—printing, pictures, films, the radio, to name but a few. And all of these, to the extent that is practically possible, could and should be laid under tribute to play their part in preaching this glorious Gospel. If the children were to hold their peace, said Jesus, the very stones would cry out ; and so now, if one form of preaching seems to have lost its effectiveness or its appeal, we must expect some other means to be found to take its place, for the Gospel must be preached.

It was said by men of old time "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also". What a testimony! Those early Christians in their faith and zeal rocked the Roman world, and so imperative was their challenge that the old paganism fought desperately for a while, trembled—and fell. We too, if we will, can turn the world upside down, and take our stand beside those stalwart pioneers of those early days. But we shall only do it if, in full confidence of faith, and burning zeal for the service of our Lord and Master, we declare, in season and out of season, whether they hear or whether they forbear, the message of the Age, the message of to-day, the message for every man—"Repent . . . Believe the Gospel . . . The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

Joy of heart lies in the fact that every hour of life we can be dispelling shadows. We must *feel* joy before we can radiate it. The world is scintillating with gladness, if we have eyes to see it. There is the joy of Nature and of beauty ; the joy of human companionship and spiritual fellowship ; the joy of worship and communion with God ; and the joy of partnership with Divine Power. How can we be miserable?

# Into the New Year

Reprinted from the  
"Herald of Christ's Kingdom"

Back of us lies the travelled road ; before us the uncharted pathway of the New Year. We wish one another a Happy Year, and happiness should be increasing in each year if we know its true meaning, and go the right way to secure it.

How then, shall we estimate the worth of the passing year to us? Surely not in material things, but in spiritual values ; by qualitative tests we may apply to our own hearts. Let us ask ourselves: Have we grown richer in the fruit of the spirit? Do we know Christ better than we did a year ago? Does He mean more to us, and things less ; and what do we plan for this new year as the chief end of all its effort? Are we consciously determined that we shall make it a year of closer accord with the purpose of God, and give us a greater intimacy with the Master? that lifts life above self-regard to the joyous plane of living for others?—If we have found the real meaning of life, then, living should be a sweet and worth-while thing to the last moment—even though it be marked by pain and disappointment, by loss and sorrows as for most of us it must be. If we have learned to discern the real values, we will not need to hide from ourselves the fact that we are growing older by the count of weeks and months, for the real values are eternal. We are not hurrying toward an hour when everything must be dropped, but rather moving with expectant hearts toward the hour when hope may be realised, when faith may lay hold of its richest treasures, when love may come into its full inheritance. For us, life is not narrowing toward the grave, it is broadening toward eternity. It approaches its birthday, the Dawn lies ahead. There are songs for the thoughtful in the passing of the year, remembering God's leading in the old, and laying triumphant hold upon His promises for the new.

The infallible recipe for happiness then, is to do good, and the infallible recipe for doing good is to abide in Christ ; let us note that joy is a fruit, and like all other fruits must be *grown* ; the Christian graces come under the law of cause and effect. None can get joy merely by prayer, although that contributes, but it is one of the ripest fruits of Christian life, and must be grown. When Jesus spoke the parable of the Vine to His disciples, He gave the secret of His happiness, and, for His joy to remain in us, the cause which produced it should continue to act if they copied His life ; His kind of joy would remain with them. No man can make things grow.

He can arrange circumstances and fulfil conditions, but the growing is done by God, causes and effects are eternal arrangements, and man can place himself in fulfilling conditions of growth. No violent overstrained exertions are necessary to a noble life, nothing possible or greater than simple faithfulness.

*One thing more.* If seeking to lose our lives in the service of Christ means practically living for others, let us live by the day. Some of us try to grasp too much of life at a time ; we think of it as a whole instead of a day. The only way to make a radiant day is to make each hour bright with the lustre of approved fidelity, keeping the days as they pass pure with holy, useful living. Each day is one white page open before us, to fill it in as a record of duty or victory. Let us remember our God, and remember those in need about us, to stretch forth a helping hand, and keep our heart open toward Heaven.

*We would fill the hours with the sweetest things  
If we had but a day.*

*We should rest, not for dreams but for fresher  
power*

*To be and to do.*

*We should take whatever our good God sent  
With a trust complete.*

When God takes hold of a man, and we see him in God's company, we know that God is willing to introduce him, and it gives him a standing with you and I. He is one of the brethren, because the "Father Himself loveth him": the Father Himself recognises him as one of the family. You and I, then, should be willing to do anything for him that we are able. It is the Father's will that we should co-operate with Him in assisting the brethren in every possible way. There are trials and difficulties for these brethren that you and I know about. All the soldiers of the cross have a narrow way, a battle with the world and the flesh and the Adversary. You and I have our own battles. What sympathy for others it should give us! All who are seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus belong to our army, whether learned or ignorant, rich or poor, black or white ; it is our privilege to love and treat them as brethren.

A. O. Hudson



## WHEN THE SUN STOOD STILL

An examination of Joshua's command to the sun and moon—*Joshua 10. 10, 15*

The story of the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua provides the incentive for many excursions into astronomical science in order to demonstrate that the idea is by no means so fantastic as it sounds. Some enthusiasts, such as Prof. Totten in the nineteenth century, have produced elaborate calculations to show that such a supernaturally lengthened day must have happened once in human history, and the records of ancient nations have been searched for stray allusions to so noteworthy an event; but in all this fervour of scientific research the fact that a careful examination of the passage in question fails to justify the popular impression has generally escaped notice.

It was shortly after the entry into the Promised Land that Joshua's army, battling to secure possession of their new home, marched all night from Gilgal to Gibeon, an uphill journey of sixteen miles, involving a climb of several thousand feet into the mountains, to intercept and do battle with the Canaanites and Amorites. Upon their arrival, at probably about five in the morning, Joshua gave battle, and, tired as his men must have been after their all night forced march, defeated the enemy and pursued him for seven miles to Beth-horon (Josh. 10. 10) and over the crest of the mountain into the valley of Ajalon, which runs in a south-westerly direction to the Mediterranean Sea. It was apparently at this point that Joshua, seeing that his prey was escaping him, uttered the cry which has been interpreted as an invocation to the powers of heaven to intervene on his behalf: "*Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves on their enemies. . . . So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.*"

Whatever the real purpose of Joshua's appeal, the powers of heaven were already taking a hand in the battle in another manner. A violent hailstorm from the Mediterranean was sweeping up the valley of Ajalon—a not uncommon phenomenon in the valley, then or now—in its course overwhelming the fleeing Canaanites. Their rout was complete; many of them perished; "they were more that died with hailstones" says the chronicler "than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword". The Israelites, high up on the summit of Beth-horon,

apparently escaped the hail but the Canaanite host was decimated. This was the decisive battle which laid the land of Canaan open to the invading Israelites.

From verses 10 and 11 it is clear that the Canaanites encountered this storm whilst they were between Beth-horon and Azekah, and therefore well down in the valley. Joshua must have been standing on the summit of Beth-horon, and from his exalted position perceived the storm approaching from the sea long before the Canaanites were aware of its onset. From where he stood, facing the south, his gaze could take in the heights of Gibeon on his left hand, and on his right the valley of Ajalon, crowded now with the retreating foe. The time would have been about eight a.m., for the seven mile pursuit between Gibeon and Beth-horon could hardly have occupied more than two or three hours. Gibeon lies E. by S.E. of Beth-horon, so that at this time the sun would appear to Joshua to be directly over the heights of Gibeon. Upon turning to his right and looking W. by S.W. through the valley of Ajalon, Joshua would see the crescent moon, in its last quarter, directly over the valley, faintly illumined by the rays of the sun. That this was the phase of the moon at the time is deduced from the fact that the Israelites crossed Jordan on the 10th of Nisan, and therefore ten days after the new moon, and that a study of the subsequent events with their datings as recorded in the Book of Joshua shows that the battle took place about six weeks later, within a day or two of the 24th of Zif, the second month, so that the moon would be in the third quarter of the second lunation of the year. It is an interesting testimony to the historical accuracy of the Book of Joshua that only at this one time in the month could the sun be over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Ajalon simultaneously from the point of view of an observer on the summit of Beth-horon.

It was not the "standing still" of the sun and moon, but the hailstorm, that achieved the victory for the Israelites. The confusion and disaster into which the Canaanite hosts were thrown by the pitiless rain of hailstones completed the havoc begun on Beth-horon by Joshua's warriors. What then was the purpose of Joshua's command to the sun and moon?

The words in question are not original to the Book of Joshua—they are quoted from the "Book of Jasher" (see vs. 13). The account of the battle

occupies vs. 10 and 11, and the thread of the narrative is not taken up again until vs. 16. The intervening portion is a parenthesis, inserted by some later transcriber of the Book of Joshua, in order to place on record the words used by Israel's great leader on this occasion, words which apparently had been preserved only in this "Book of Jasher". After the quotation, which occupies vs. 12 and part of vs. 13, and the acknowledgment "Is not this written in the Book of Jasher" there follows a short observation (vs. 14-15) by the same unknown transcriber by way of comment on the situation.

The Book of Jasher is referred to once elsewhere in the Scriptures, namely, in 2 Sam. 1. 18. Here there is mentioned a song or poem called (the song of) "the Bow," dealing probably with the prowess of archers in battle; a song which David ordered should be taught the children of Judah. From this fact, and the fact that in the Joshua quotation the passage concerned is, in the Hebrew, not prose, but poetry, it has been concluded that the Book of Jasher was a poetic composition telling of the great events in Israel's history, and was in existence certainly in the time of David. We probably do well therefore to allow for poetic licence in the words in which Joshua's appeal is recorded—much as must be allowed when reading Jud. 5. 20 "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" and Psa. 18. 9 "He bowed the heavens and came down" both of which expressions are taken from similar poetic compositions.

The passage in question then needs to be considered as a fragment of true history preserved in a fine piece of poetic language.

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." The word here rendered "stand still" is "*dom*" and means to be silent, quiet, still or dumb. Gesenius says that it is derived from the sound made by the shutting of the mouth and that its literal meaning is "to be dumb." Its significance is not that of standing still in the sense of cessation of motion, but of being still or silent in the sense of ceasing to perform customary activity. Instances of its use are in Lam. 3. 28, Jer. 8. 14 (silence), Hab. 2. 19 (dumb), 1 Kings 19. 12 (still). The literal English of the Hebrew text is "Sun, on-Gibeon be-dumb, and moon, on-valley Ajalon."

The Israelites would be hard put to it to keep up with their fleeing foes. They had been on the move since the previous evening and it was essential that this victory be complete and that no appreciable number of Canaanites be allowed to escape. The sun's heat was rapidly increasing as the morning advanced, and Joshua must have feared above everything else its effects upon his weary troops.

In this extremity he appealed to the Lord (vs. 12), not for the cessation of the sun's progress, which would involve a corresponding increase in the duration of noonday heat, but for the silencing or cessation of the sun's activity so that the greater coolness of the day might invigorate his tiring forces.

God answered the prayer by sending the hail-storm described in the account. As the dark clouds swept up the valley, first the crescent moon over Ajalon, and then the sun over Gibeon, were blotted out, and their rays "ceased" from the earth for the remainder of the day, "until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."

In vs. 13 "*The sun . . . hastened not to go down about a whole day*" there is no justification in the Hebrew text for the use of "down". The word is "*boa*", a verb meaning to come in or to enter, but not to go down or descend. It is normally used for "to enter" as into a chamber, and is so used in some parts of the Old Testament to describe the sun's setting, as if entering into his chamber, but in the passage under examination it probably signifies that the sunlight failed to break through the clouds so as to enter upon the earth for the remainder of that day. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that the word for "sun" used in this account is not "*chammah*," the sun itself, but "*shemesh*," the sun's radiance or rays, or as we would say, the sunlight. Similarly the word for "moon" used in the passage is "*yareach*," "the scent of the moon", i.e., moonlight, and not "*levonah*", the lunar satellite itself.

"And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel" (vs. 1. 14). This is the comment of the unknown transcriber who felt bound thus to complete his quotation from the Book of Jasher. The reference is of course to the hailstorm, which, the account tells us, was definitely sent by the Lord to ensure the Israelite victory.

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*The eternal Truth of God moves on  
In undisputed sway,  
While all the narrow creeds of men  
Decline and pass away.  
The eternal Light of God shines on  
Beneath an eternal sky,  
Though human luminations cease,  
And human watch-fires die.  
But faith still mounts the endless years  
And Truth grows lovelier still;  
And light shines in upon the soul  
From God's immortal hill.*



## MY GLORY ALL THE CROSS



A discourse on Galatians 6. 14

T. Holmes

The self-conceit of man varies little throughout the run of time. To-day, as in the days gone by, men dwell upon what they can "do", varied only from time to time by appeals concerning what they "ought to do". The more cultured and civilised the man claims to be, the more he is prone to exalt this sense of "something to do". And, it must be confessed, it is a good thing in his native sphere that man does have within him the urge to "do". In man's relation to his fellowman and to his earthly environment this urge to "do" is a great boon. It is this in-born "urge" that is responsible for all progress and reform that man has achieved. It has carved for him a home out of the forest fastnesses; it has linked his dwelling place with roads (both steel and macadam), it has lit his home with electric light; it has made tools to lighten his toil, and utensils to enhance his pleasure. The measure of advancement under this urge is to be seen if we compare the simple life of the forest folk with the normal standards in a land like ours. A few wild herbs and simple fruits, plus a little fish and flesh, comprise the food of the nomad wanderer in the forest glades. His tastes are simple, his methods primitive, his ambitions nil—an existence scarcely higher than a beast.

Without this "urge to do" most men might have been the same, though be it said, this lethargic life is not the rule solely of the forest glades. It is seen in the nauseous slum—the hidden world—within the city gates. Far better that a man should have the "urge to do" than be a useless drone, devoid of will and drive and goal.

It is when the ambitious man looks up to God that the mistake is made. He wants God to take note of his work, and place it to his account. He expects God to accord him credit marks for what he has done, and to give him a place, in moral things, higher up the scale, proportioned to what he has achieved. He desires to win the same rewards, in the moral world, that he finds in his mundane sphere. A "go-getter" here expects to be a "go-getter" there. And therein lies the germ of his mistake. God has ordained things otherwise. Heaven's blessing of sun and rain may have rewarded the toil and sweat in the harvest field (in measure, more or less, since Eden's days), but Heaven's disapproval has had to fall like frost and snow on man's attempted cultivation of his soul. Man has been

slow to learn the ways of God in this higher sphere. God has not asked man to "do" but to "receive" what He has to give. Man does not understand the defiling power of sin, or that his best is far too poor to win him marks in the scale of righteousness. His best attempts have been too short—too low—to win approval before the Highest Law. As it was with Israel, so it has been with all.

"What good thing shall I do" has been the quest of ambitious man from ancient days. It is the quest of men to-day. It is the quest of ambitious Christian men. In the world that lies ahead—the world of atomic energy—the Christian thinks he has a job to do. He thinks he has to guide the democratic urge to its destiny, and bring in a world of peace and brotherhood. He claims the right to Christianise the consciences of every man, and thus to mould the Universal State.

This outlook is the outcome of a great mistake concerning Jesus Christ. He—the historic Christ—is the grand model to which the eyes of men are to be directed. His are the principles that are to be adopted; His are the acts to be copied; and He—the Man of Nazareth—is to be the inspiration of their scheme.

This may seem right in their own eyes, but it is not accordant with the way of God. God's estimate of Jesus centred in His Cross. God's appreciation of Him arose out of His consecration unto death. Not merely because He was the Man of Nazareth; not merely because He taught lofty principles; not because He presented Himself as a sacrifice for sin—that was why God loved Him as a faithful Son.

It is not the Teacher from Nazareth that God has set forth in a primary sense to the eyes of men; it is the Victim on the Cross—it is the dying Lamb of God.

This was arrant foolishness to the worldly-wise in Apostolic days (1 Cor. 1. 23). It is so to-day. To-day it is mainly men who "wear the cloth" that spurn the Cross, and count it foolishness; men who stand before their flocks as representatives of Him they so grossly misrepresent! They laud His spotless life to the skies, but good as this appreciation is it is not enough. Someone was needed who could *die* for man—a voluntary sacrifice, by means of which man could be set free from death. And that is what is meant by His Cross.

As he journeyed here and there the Apostle Paul found men ready to boast of this or that. The Jew would make his boast of the Law and of the Priesthood, and the Temple and the Holy City. Some would boast of their fasts and alms, and that they were not quite the same as the other man; others would boast of the family tree and the long line of their showy ancestry. The Greek would boast of his learning and culture, of his art and statuary, of his cities and palaces. Among them all there was none to be found who would boast of his incapacity and insufficiency, who would tell the whole world he could not do what he ought; and stood before heaven and earth as one who "came-short". Paul did all this to the full! Not but that he came of as good stock as they; not but that he had "gifts" as excellent as they! but because he had come to know the way of God towards sinners and sinners too! He knew that fallen man could not satisfy God's Law, and that to fail in one point was to fail in the whole. He knew the best work of men was as but "filthy rags", and that the filth of men and spotlessness of Christ could never blend. He knew it must be "all" of each, or "none"—"all of man" and "none of Christ", or "all of Christ" and "none of man". And so he stood and told the whole world he could glory, not in himself, but only in the Cross of Christ; that it was his delight to stand, not on his own pitch, but on the foundation of Christ; that his was no desire to keep the Law, but to find shelter behind another Man!

And Paul was unashamed in all this insufficiency in himself, for he found all he needed in Christ. He knew Christ was enough to meet his needs—his very deepest needs—and he knew Him to satisfy Heaven's demands, its very highest claims, and he was glad to be wrapped in another's worthiness, and boast of it before the world.

Others may stand aside to scoff, or drown by their concerted shout his boast of Christ—even thus all was well—for by this act he was crucified by the world, and the world was made dead to him. Even so must it be with all who would be found in Christ, not having on them their own righteousness!

In the tremendous world that lies ahead many will make their boast of Christ, of His matchless words, of His lofty principles, of His tender sympathies; but few indeed, judged by the drift of things, will be disposed to boast of His Cross, or take their stand beneath its out-spread beam. Men still want to dare and do, to build and plan, to dig and lay their own foundations; but few will be inclined to say "He did it all—He did it all for me!" And so, some day, the Will of God and

the will of man must clash, and the will of man, with all his works and pomps must crash, and lie in broken fragments beneath his bruised feet.

For ourselves we would sing:—

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus  
We gladly take our stand,  
The shadow of a mighty Rock  
Within a weary land."

"Content to let the world go by  
To know no gain or loss,  
My former life my only shame  
My glory all the Cross."

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*"I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." (Psa. 119. 15-16.)*

Here is the secret of a pure and noble life, acceptable to God. It is to be attained, not merely by prayers and righteous resolutions, but in addition to these by careful painstaking heed, by systematic and diligent effort in self-cultivation, by care and perseverance in weeding out evil thoughts, and by diligent and constant cultivation of pure, benevolent and noble thoughts, and by nipping in the bud the weeds of perversity before they bring forth their hasty harvest of sinful words and deeds. If we make the Word of God the theme of our constant meditation, its principles will soon be assimilated and become part of our mental make-up, making our characters more beautiful and commendable both to God and to our fellowmen, and in harmony with this habit of the mind the acts of life will speak.

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"Mysterious people" might the pensive unbeliever say within himself, "mysterious people. Moving amongst us, and yet not seeming to be of us. Passing through the world without seeming to be deeply concerned in its forms and fashions, its prizes and blanks; tranquil amidst its struggles, free amidst its bondage; wrapped up, it should appear, in thoughts of your own which work in you pursuits of your own. Happy in yourselves, and never so happy as when shedding quiet blessings on all around you. How have your ways won on me, durst I but say so. How has your simple character told its tale on me, more touching than all the arguments of philosophy, more convincingly than all the logic of the schools. How have you almost persuaded me to be a Christian."

A. O. Hudson

# The First Psalm

AN EXPOSITION

The first Psalm is in the nature of an introduction to the Book of Psalms. Its subject makes it peculiarly fitted to herald the sublime thoughts of later psalms, for it speaks of righteousness and evil and Divine Law. Around these three themes is built the whole fabric of revealed truth, and a clear understanding of them is an indispensable preliminary to the intelligent consideration and reception of the "deep things of God" (I Cor. 2. 10).

Although the Psalms are commonly accredited to David, it is clear that he was not the author of them all. Some belong to later times, up to the days of Hezekiah at least, and a few to earlier days, but David was certainly responsible for most of them, and he it was who began the collection, to which others were added from time to time in later days, resulting in the Book of Psalms as we now have it.

There is little internal evidence to suggest who wrote this First Psalm. The occurrence of the word "luts" for "scornful", a word which occurs only once again in the Psalms, but is of frequent occurrence in the Book of Proverbs (Prov. 1. 22, 3. 34, 9. 7-8, 13. 1, 14. 6, 15. 12, 19. 25, 29, 21. 11, 24, 22. 10, 24. 9) is thought to point to the time of Solomon, and the general tone of the Psalm is certainly reminiscent of Solomon's analytical and intellectual mind more than of the frank devotion and picturesque expressiveness of David. The authorship is not of importance, for it is the Psalm itself that is of value.

The purpose of this Psalm is the declaring of the fundamental principle upon which God has designed His creation, viz., that those things which are right, just, in harmony with His own character, shall endure for ever, and that which is evil, unjust, out of harmony with the character of God, although it may subsist for a time, must and will inevitably pass away and out of existence. Divine creation is so ordained that nothing which is inherently evil can subsist indefinitely. It contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction and must eventually come to its end. Hence we have the law propounded by Paul in Rom. 6. 23 "The wages of sin is death"—death being the antithesis of life, the opposite to conscious existence.

The Psalm eulogises the happy state of the righteous man, both now and hereafter, and accredits the maintenance of his righteous state to his observance of Divine Law. Against this it places in contrast the unhappy position of the sinful, and

declares in no uncertain terms that the end of that way is desolation, oblivion, non-existence. The fact that God's whole plan of development for man is based upon law is stressed, and rightly stressed, here. It is when this fact is realised that we find ready to our hands a yardstick by means of which we can measure the relative values of differing interpretations of Scripture.

"Blessed is the man" says verse 1 "*who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*" This word "blessed" is capable of deeper shades of meaning than the A.V. suggests. "*How happy the man . . .*" is Rotherham's rendering, and Young is even more emphatic with "*O the happiness of that one who . . .*" It is significant that "happiness" is the first quality to be mentioned in the Psalms; and characteristic of God! His eternal purpose in creation is to the promotion of happiness amongst His creatures, and that happiness is only to be achieved by complete harmony with God. Religion is not a thing to be kept apart from daily life and practised solely on Sundays; every affair and activity of every day can be woven into the fabric of one's personal communion with God and sanctified thereby. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8. 28). "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8. 10). This is the normal condition of human life, from which men have fallen away, and only as they come back to this standing of absolute dedication of life and its activities to God can they find true happiness.

"But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Vs. 2.) Here is the great principle; we must be students of the ways of God and learn to understand the principles upon which He has founded creation. The term "law" here does not confine itself merely to a set of commandments with their negative prohibitions—"Thou shalt not . . ."—but extends to those basic principles of Divine creation which lie at the root of every code of laws. We must learn *why* righteousness is desirable and sin to be abhorred and eschewed; *why* God is dealing now only with the disciples of Christ, the "Church" and will turn to convert the whole world only when the next Age, the Millennial Age, has dawned; *why* there is one

call to a spiritual salvation and destiny, and another to an earthly, and every individual perfectly satisfied with their eventual lots, whether in heaven or upon earth. We shall not attain to complete knowledge of these things whilst in the flesh, but we can learn sufficient to make us the efficient servants and ambassadors of our king.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" says the Psalmist in another place (Psalm 19. 7). "O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day". "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119. 97 and 163). In more measured cadence the Preacher says "The law of the wise is a fountain of life, that he might depart from the snares of death" (Prov. 13. 14).

"In the night" says the Psalmist (Psa. 42. 8) "his song shall be with me." Who is there among us not familiar with the haunting pathos of Cant. 3. 1 "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth"? Our faith is not for daytime only; it is a twenty-four hour a day and a seven day a week faith, and oftimes it is during the silence of the night that our deepest revelations come.

Vs. 3 "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." In the first Eden there were trees of life and a river that "watered the garden" and so gave it life (Gen. 2. 9-10). In the second Eden there are to be trees of life and a river of water of life (Rev. 22. 1-2; Ezek. 47. 12) and the trees are to be for both food and medicine—sustenance and healing. This Psalm translates the symbol into reality. Those trees of life of the Millennial Age are none other than the righteous of this Age who have measured up to the standards of the first two verses of this Psalm. *Because* they have thus entered into the Divine way of life they shall become "trees of life" to give both sustenance and healing to the redeemed multitudes who will come back to the earth from the grave "in that day". True will it be of these whom Paul elsewhere calls "ministers of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 18) that "*whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*" (Vs. 3).

There is a peculiar fitness in the association of trees with rivers. In hot countries trees are planted on the banks of rivers and streams in order to screen the water from the solar heat and to check evaporation. The trees thrust down their roots into the moist soil and are themselves sustained by the same waters that they are conserving for the use and benefit of men. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" (Psa.

46. 4). Every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus during this Gospel Age is himself a "tree" nourished by that river which is the knowledge of God revealed through His Word, the holy Scriptures; and each such follower is by his Christian life and devotion helping to conserve that Word against the coming Millennial Day when its benefits will be made free to all mankind. "The Spirit and the Bride say 'come' . . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22. 17).

Now we come to the other side of the picture. "*The ungodly are not so but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*" (Vs. 4.) This likening of the wilfully wicked man and the hopelessly evil thing to chaff which is doomed to be scattered and lost is definite in the Scriptures. "Let them be as the chaff before the wind" says the Psalmist in Psa. 35. 5 "and let the angel of the Lord destroy them". "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40. 8). "How oft" says Job (21. 17-18) "is the candle of the wicked put out! How oft cometh their destruction upon them! . . . they are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away". David continues in the same strain (Psa. 37. 1-2) "Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb", and again (Psa. 5. 4-5) "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish (properly 'worthless') shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity". And this, which is said of individuals, is equally true of every evil institution which cumbereth the earth, this aspect being seen in vision when Daniel interpreted the king's dream and described how all the might and power of those empires which stand in the way of Messiah's Kingdom will be destroyed by the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" and how every vestige of them is to be scattered like the "chaff of the summer threshing-floors" (Dan. 2. 35).

Herein is made plain the Divine intention with regard to wilful evildoers. After the full and fair opportunity for life which is to be offered to every man under the reign of Christ in the Millennial Age, the penalty for continued and wilful sin will fall inevitably upon the sinner; not eternal punishment in any shape or form, but withdrawal of life, the Divine gift of which the individual concerned refuses to make proper use. As final and irrevocable as the dispersing of chaff from the threshing floor, carried by the wind and utterly lost, is this, the logical and inevitable result of wilful and incorrigible sin.

"Therefore" says the inspired writer with conviction "the *ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation (assembly) of the righteous.*" (Vs. 5.) There is a direct link with the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection of mankind during the Millennial Age here, for the word rendered "stand" is one that has the meaning of standing firm or being set up. The New Testament word for resurrection is "*anastasis*" which means a re-standing or standing up again. "There shall be a resurrection (*anastasis*) of the dead" said Paul (Acts 24. 15) "both of the just and unjust." "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment . . . the men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment" said Jesus (Luke 11. 31-32) and again "All that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection to life (*Greek*) and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection to

*judgment (eis anastasin kriseus).* This verse in Psalm 1 is clearly a reference to the fact that, although "sinners" will in fact be restored to life in the Millennial Age, no sinner will "stand" in that judgment; he will either cease to be a sinner and so enter into life, or, remaining a sinner, reap the logical consequence of that choice as expressed in the concluding words of the Psalm "*the way of the ungodly shall perish.*"

In no finer words could the Most High express His determination to root out and destroy every vestige of sin from the fair earth of his creating, and to usher all mankind—"whosoever will"—into the orderly and glorious life which is the rightful inheritance of all who shall eventually measure up willingly to their Creator's wise and loving designs. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

## TWELVE LEGIONS

"*Thinkest thou not that I could ask of my Father, and He would presently (meaning "immediately" in the 17th century when the A.V. was translated) give me more than twelve legions of angels?*" (Matt. 26. 43).

A Roman legion consisted of six thousand soldiers. Jesus meant His disciples to understand that His Father was able to send to His assistance a heavenly host greater than would be a Roman army of seventy-two thousand men. "*The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.*" (Psa. 68. 17.) "But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" The disciples had looked and hoped for a time when the Son of Man would come in the glory of His Kingdom attended by thousands of angels—and that time Jesus had told them was certain to come; but it was not yet. To strengthen their failing faith Jesus assured them that He had but to ask, and the heavenly legions would come to His aid—but He had no intention of asking. "*Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*" (Luke 24. 26.)

Surely though those legions were there already, like the angels at the time of Elisha's peril (2 Kings 6. 17) in their invisible hosts doing honour to the Son of God in the act of ensuring salvation for the world. How they must have watched and waited, those three days when the Son of Man lay in the tomb; and what a chorus of heavenly praise and exultation must have ascended to God when, on the third day, the defences of the grave were thrown

down, and the One they knew and loved so well arose "in the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7. 16) never again to limit His glory to the limits of humanity. Resplendent in His resurrection body, the victorious King Who had vanquished the power of evil forever: with what joy must His ascension to the Throne of His Father have been attended!

"*And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying 'Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'*" (Rev. 5. 13.)

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His Wisdom is sublime,  
His heart supremely kind.  
God never is before His time,  
And never is behind.

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"My Father, help me as a follower of Christ to say 'Thy Will be done'. Thou wouldst not have me accept Thy Will because I *must*, but because I *may*. Thou wouldst have me take it, not with resignation, but with joy; not with mere absence of murmuring, but with song of praise. Give me, O Father, the blessedness of the man whose delight is in Thy Law, who can tell of Thy statutes rejoicing the heart. Then shall I obey Thee with perfect freedom and say from my heart 'Thy Will be done'."

## "As the Lightning cometh out of the East"

A study in the manner of the Second Advent

A O Hudson

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. 24. 27.)

This is a widely-discussed text. It is frequently used to support either of two considerably variant expectations regarding the manner of the Second Advent. That Advent, think some, is to be sudden and spectacular, as a flash of lightning. Not so, say others; lightning does not emerge out of the east and shine unto the west. Our Lord must have referred to the bright shining of the sun, and His coming of gradual perception to the minds of men, even as the dawn steals upon sleepers unawares, broadening gradually into full day.

Which view is correct?

Consider first the context. By way of warning to His disciples, Jesus told them that they were not to heed any assertion that He had come "in the desert" nor yet "in the secret chambers"; "FOR", said He, "AS the lightning . . . so shall also the *parousia* (presence) of the Son of man be". The meaning of this is clear; His presence, which we know will extend over a period of a thousand years, is to be universally known and perceived.

It is obvious that Jesus was likening His presence to something in nature with which they were already familiar, and had themselves witnessed a hundred times before. His use of the analogy would have been futile otherwise. We need then to determine the precise nature of the allusion.

It is sometimes suggested that the Greek word here used, "*astrape*", does not mean "lightning" but that it does mean "bright shining", and in this text refers to the sun. Put like this, the suggestion is not altogether accurate. "*Astrape*" is the regular Greek term for lightning, as reference to any lexicon will show. But the dictionary definition of a word is not sufficient unless the usage of that word in the literature and language of the period in question is also taken into consideration. Only thus may the true meaning of recorded utterances be appreciated.

The English word "lightning" is restricted in its use to that flash of light which accompanies the electrical discharges associated with a thunderstorm. The term, however, is a derivation of "lightening", any dazzling or radiant display of light, and a trace of this older English usage appears in Luke 17. 24. Just so did the Greek "*astrape*" refer, in the current usage of the time, to any bright or intense display of light, and the question as to whether lightning

or other form was concerned has to be decided by the nature of the allusion, or by the context.

The word occurs quite often in the New Testament, in the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) and in the Apocrypha, and since all these represent the language as it was spoken in the first century, their testimony can be admitted.

The following texts are quoted to show how "*astrape*", both as a noun and as a verb, has been translated in a number of instances and from these it is apparent that its general application is as suggested above.

*From the New Testament.*

Acts 9. 3. "There *shined round about* him a light from heaven."

Acts 22. 6. "There *shone* from heaven a great light round about me."

Luke 24. 4. "Two men stood by them in *shining* garments."

Luke 11. 36. "As when the *bright shining* of a candle doth give thee light."

Luke 9. 29. "His raiment was white and *glistening*."

Luke 10. 18. "I beheld Satan as *lightning* fall from heaven."

Matt. 28. 3. "His countenance was like *lightning*."

*From the Old Testament.*

Deut. 32. 41. "If I whet my *glittering* sword."

Dan. 10. 6. "His face as the appearance of *lightning*."

Hab. 3. 11. "At the shining of thy *glittering* spear."

*From the Apocrypha.*

Wisd. 11. 18. "Wild beasts . . . shooting horrible *sparkles* out of their eyes."

4 Macc. 4. 10. "There appeared from heaven angels riding on horseback *all radiant* in armour."

These examples go to show that "lightning" is not necessarily the meaning of the word in Matt. 24. 27. Jesus apparently referred to a noteworthy radiance or shining of light that was known to emerge from the east and cover the sky to the west. The rising of the sun is, of course, immediately suggested, but it is only when the nature of a Palestinian sunrise is appreciated that the force of

the allusion can be perceived. The gradualness of an English sunrise would not meet the sense of the Greek "*astrape*". We dwellers in the temperate zone are familiar with the slow increase of daylight, occupying the space of an hour or more, which constitutes our dawn, but this is true only of our own latitude. The farther one proceeds towards the tropics the more rapid is the transition from total darkness to full daylight, until at the Equator the change is practically instantaneous. To appreciate the meaning of Jesus' words, therefore, we must visualise to ourselves a Palestinian dawn.

A few quotations from travellers who have actually witnessed such a sunrise will be of interest in this connection.

H. V. Morton, in his book "*In the steps of the Master*" says: "As I sat on the stone thinking of these things, a light began to fill the sky. The sun rises over Jerusalem from behind the Mount of Olives. I turned my back on the city and, looking up over the Mount, saw a great fan of light pulsing up from the east. The fire filled the sky and turned the little clouds in its path to pink and gold, but the high ridge of the Mount, almost black against the palpitating light, hid the sun from view. . . . The sun topped the crest of the Mount of Olives, and, looking again towards Jerusalem, I saw the highest buildings gilded with light though the wall was yet unlit. In a few seconds a flood of light fell over the city, ran down the wall and into the valley of the Kedron. It swept up the stony flanks of the opposite valley, and I felt my face and my hands warm in its light."

"How often must Jesus and the disciples have watched this splendid sight from the Mount of Olives. They must have seen the city ramparts light up with the first rays of the sun. They must have seen, just above the Garden of Gethsemane, the towering white and gold mass of the Temple. They must have seen a priest come out on a pinnacle, as he came every morning, to look towards the east and report, before the first sacrifice of the day, 'The sun shineth already!' They might even have heard in the still air of dawn the daily cry from the assembled priests: 'Is the sky lit up as far as Hebron?', and the daily response of the watcher from the pinnacle: 'It is lit up as far as Hebron!'"

The same writer describes sunrise at Gaza, a little to the south of Jerusalem:

"And now, as we went onward, I saw a gathering tumult in the east. A white, palpitating light was filling the sky. It was like something approaching at great speed, a mighty army with its chariots and its horsemen. Swords of light thrust their way upwards, catching stray clouds and turning them to banners of pink and gold. Then, like an orange flung into the air, the sun leapt up, fully armed,

into the sky: it was warm, and the dead earth was instantly, vividly, and rather violently, alive."

Lord James Bryce, describing his ascent of Mount Ararat in 1876, thus describes sunrise as seen from his position halfway up the mountain; (*Transcaucasia and Ararat*):

"About 3 a.m. there suddenly sprang up, from behind the Median mountains, the morning star, shedding a light such as no star ever gives in these northern climes of ours, a light that almost outshone the moon. An hour later it began to pale in the first faint flush of yellowish light that spread over the eastern heaven, and first the rocky masses above us, then Little Ararat, throwing behind him a gigantic shadow, then the long lines of mountains beyond the Araxes, became revealed, while the wide Araxes plains still lay dim and shadowy below. One by one the stars died out as the yellow turned to a deeper glow that shot forth in long streamers, rosy fingers hovering above the snows on the mighty cone; till at last there came upon the topmost slope, six thousand feet above us, a sudden blush of pink. Swiftly it floated down the eastern face, and touched and kindled the rocks just above us. Then the sun flamed out, and in a moment the Araxes valley and all the hollows of the savage ridges we were crossing were flooded with overpowering light."

A more recent traveller, Leonard Pearson, in "*Through the Holy Land*" (1937) gives this picture of dawn at Baalbec, in the north of Palestine.

"To see the sun rise at Baalbec (three and a half thousand feet above the sea) is a sight indeed. For the view we climb on to the flat roof of the hotel. What a picture with the crimson glow of the rising sun tinting the horizon! The snow-topped Lebanons are a blaze of pink, and yellow on the lower level. Now the rays of the sun floodlight the mighty ruins of the famous temples. . . . Look at the giant columns caressed by the warm sun's glow. Now the pink tinge has gone, yet it seems to remain in the valley."

Our own booklet "*The Promise of His Presence*" may be quoted here by way of concluding these descriptions of the "*astrape*."

"The sun comes up suddenly, and a few minutes suffices to transform the velvety blackness of tropical night into the full brilliance of day. It is for this reason that very few inhabitants of the land actually witness the sun's rising, for their sleep is broken only by its dazzling beams as they encircle the earth. There is no long and gradual dawn as in more temperate countries. The first sign of approaching day is a greyness in the eastern sky, a greyness for which—in Jerusalem at least—both city watchmen and the priests in the Temple were waiting and watching; the watchmen, because it indicated the end of their period of service, and the priests, because as soon as light had flooded the land it

was their duty to offer the morning sacrifice. Hence the constant Scriptural association of the coming of day with the "watchers", and the meaning of that cryptic message, "Watchman, what of the night? . . . The morning cometh, BUT IT IS YET DARK" (Isa. 21. 11-12 French version). Within a few minutes the greyness is streaked with shafts of pink, and then, so rapidly as almost to bewilder the unaccustomed observer, a glorious effulgence of golden light spreads fan-wise from the east and moves visibly across the sky, turning the clouds in its path to pink and white and bathing the entire land in a wonderful rosy glow. It was at this time that the priest, stationed on a pinnacle of the Temple, cried out in a loud voice that the light was come and had overspread the land, and his companions below immediately commenced the ritual of the morning sacrifice. Within a few minutes more the full blaze of day is pouring down upon a people quickly arising from sleep and betaking themselves to their accustomed tasks.

"It is this emergence of light from the east, followed quickly by the sun itself, to which reference is made in Mal. 4. 2, where the promise is that the 'Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings'—the great fan of glory spreading over the sky as the sun rises being not inaptly likened to the pinions of some great celestial creature. Our Lord's own allusion to the 'astrape' emerging from the east and sweeping the sky to the west is un-

doubtedly a reference to that same phenomenon which his disciples, early risers as they must always have been and accustomed to remaining awake all night, were thoroughly accustomed to witness."

On the basis of the foregoing, then, it might be concluded that Jesus intended us to understand His *Parousia* as an event to be perceived first by the "watchers", those on the mountain-tops, the walls of Jerusalem, the pinnacles of the Temple. These would be in no uncertainty; they would know full well what the light in the sky portended, and straightway make proclamation "The Lord is come." Whilst that proclamation was still going forth, the full blaze of His presence would overspread the earth and become evident to all people. The two phases of the Second Advent are adequately included in this metaphor, the first phase, in which the Lord, coming into the space and time framework of our earthly habitation, "as a thief", gathers His own whilst the world is as yet unaware of the fact, and the second phase in which His presence is so patently obvious to all men that no man can deny it. It is from this latter point that his reign over the earth commences and the Kingdom is to date. The assumption of power by Jesus must be a real assumption of power and this cannot be until the kingdoms of this world have actually and literally given place to His Kingdom. That will be after the glorification of the Church and therefore after the first phase of His Advent has been completed.

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## THE WILDERNESS TEMPTATIONS

A STORY OF JESUS

A. O. Hudson

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*"Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."*

That the Holy Spirit should lead Jesus into temptation is unthinkable. To understand these words aright it is necessary to realise that the baptism of Jesus was not the result of a sudden decision. He came to Jordan with His mind already set on the mission before Him. He had for many years been studying the Old Testament Scriptures perceiving ever more and more clearly what His life-work was to be. He came to John at just the right time, when He was thirty years old and therefore "of age" under the Jewish law. The same Holy Spirit of God that had supervised and guided His every action since childhood had opened His mind to the meaning of the Scriptures, and drawn Him to Bethabara where John was baptising, and now, that step taken, was leading Him—Mark says *driving* Him—to the next phase of His experience, the sober con-

sideration of how and in what way He was to carry out His mission of saving the world. It was inevitable that the temptations should come, and in the very nature of things that they should come right at the beginning of His ministry, when, conscious of his newly-acquired Divine powers, He would very quickly realise their possibilities of use.

*"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred."*

He had gone into the wilderness "in the spirit"—a condition of mind something like that of John the Revelator, when he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1. 10) or of Ezekiel when the Spirit lifted him up by the river of Chebar, and he saw visions of God (Ezek. 7. 3). In such a condition of mind Jesus would be more than usually insensible to His surroundings and His bodily needs. His mind, fully occupied during those forty days and nights with the prospect before Him, going over

all the details of the mission He was setting out to accomplish, would give but little heed to the claims of the body. It is not likely that He ate nothing at all during that time, but that He spared time from His rapt condition of mind only to take the barest sustenance, so that when at last He began again to become conscious of His environment the claims of hunger asserted themselves.

*"And when the tempter came to him."*

Here is one very definite instance where the personality of the devil is clearly implied. It is fashionable nowadays to dismiss belief in the personal Devil, the implacable enemy of God and man, as an out-worn idea, and to conclude that the principle of evil, in active operation, is all that is implied by the Scriptural references to Satan. But in this story of the temptations the whole idea conveyed is that of a personal being with whom our Lord held converse. This was certainly the general belief in our Lord's own day. The Book of Wisdom, which was written within fifty years of the time of Christ, is an accurate reflection of Jewish thought at the time of the First Advent and in Wisdom 2. 24 it is indicated that the devil (*diabolos*) is the one through whom death came into the world at the beginning, as related in the third chapter of Genesis. It is important also to remember that the story as we have it must have come from our Lord's own lips, for no human being was witness of His temptation. He was alone in the wilderness, and that which passed between Jesus the Son of God and Lucifer the rebellious archangel was overheard by no man. Therefore Jesus must have told these things to His disciples in later days; and there is an interesting fragment—in the so-called "Gospel of the Ebionites" which asserts this much: "The Lord told us that for forty days the devil spoke with Him and tempted Him."

It might be said, of course, that the account could have been given to the Evangelists by direct inspiration, but in that case the accounts would surely have been in the same order. That they differ as much as they do points to their having been written from the recollections of the disciples as to what Jesus did actually say to them, even although without doubt they were guided in their writing by the Holy Spirit.

We can picture Jesus, sitting with His disciples on a grassy bank, or walking with them through the fields, suddenly making some allusion to that time which was the preface to His ministry, and telling them of the insidious suggestions that came into His mind, and the replies with which He countered them, when for forty days and forty nights He was alone with Satan.

This temptation of Jesus is the preface to His life and work, just as the temptation of the first

Adam was the preface to the life and work of man. The first Adam failed under temptation; the second triumphed. There is a striking analogy between the first and the second temptations. The tree of Gen. 3. 6 was good for food; in Matt. 4 Jesus is invited to make the stones into bread. The tree was pleasant to the eyes; Jesus is urged to create a magnificent spectacle by casting Himself down from the Temple. The tree was "greatly to be desired to make one wise"; all the power, wealth, and honour of this world is offered to our Lord.

Mark puts in a detail which has escaped the other Evangelists. He says that Jesus "was with the wild beasts". A strange phrase; and connected with it perhaps is the old Christian tradition that when Jesus spent those forty days in the wilderness all the wild beasts of the world came before Him to pay homage. Perhaps there is a profound truth behind the tradition and behind Mark's statement. Perfect man possessed powers of control over the lower creation which were lost at the Fall. Jesus must have possessed those powers and doubtless exercised them in the wilderness. Leopards, wolves, hyenas and jackals infested that same wilderness in the Lord's day, and there may even have been an occasional lion, for they were plentiful there in earlier days. Wolves have been shot there even within this present century. The Lord may well have told His disciples of His exercise of such power and Mark records the bare kernel of what He said.

*"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."*

Not that Jesus might allay His hunger; the suggestion was more subtle than that. It was nothing less than that He use His powers to satisfy the material needs of men there and then. Jesus had come that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Here was a short cut to that glorious fulness of human life to which Jesus intends eventually to draw "whosoever will." Why not do that at once, without waiting for the much longer outworking of the Divine Plan. It would be so easy to transform the economic system of the country, to drive out the Roman soldiers and the tax-gatherers and all those who fattened upon the misery of the people, to make the barren land fruitful and productive, and the vineyards and olive-groves yield tenfold their former fruitage. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." It would be so easy to bring about literal fulfilment of those old prophecies, and to bring in the Times of the Restitution at once, instead of waiting God's own time.

But it would have deprived man of needed experience, and it would have deprived God of that "people for His Name" to the calling and selection

of which this Gospel Age is being devoted. There would have been no eternal Church in the heavens, and no reconciled, deathless human race on earth, for death would still continue even though man's lot had been immeasurably improved. Jesus knew that the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, and He knew too that there could be only one possible answer to the suggestion. "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'"

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down'; for it is written 'He shall give his angels charge concerning thee. . . .'"

This "pinnacle of the temple" was probably the parapet of the portico of Herod, overlooking the valley of Jehoshaphat seven hundred feet below. It was not literally, but spiritually, that Jesus stood on that parapet and heard the insidious voice suggesting that by some such spectacular feat He could attract the notice of all men to His mission. Perhaps He remembered the tradition, current in His own day amongst the Jews, that the Messiah would appear suddenly from Heaven descending upon the crowd of worshippers in the Temple court, in much the same fashion that many Christians in our own day look for Him at His Second Advent literally and visibly descending from the skies with an audible shout, failing to realise that the Lord is now a spiritual being, invisible to human sight and that His Advent must be appreciated by evidences other than those of the natural eyesight and hearing.

But there was more in the temptation than that. Judas in later days was beset by the same temptation, and fell under it. Jesus, standing in spirit on the pinnacle of the temple, realised all that the sacred edifice stood for to the patriotic Jew. Two parties at least, the Pharisees and the Zealots, longed desperately for the day when the alien usurper would be driven out from Judah's land and the people of God enter into their inheritance again. To all such the Temple became the symbol of their hopes and their cause. Jesus must have thought how easy it would be to assume the headship of those political parties and from the pinnacle of that power gather every element in the country to a swift descent upon the Roman authority, driving it far beyond the boundaries of Judea and establishing the mountain of the Lord's house in the top of the mountains.

But that would be setting up the Kingdom of love and peace by means of the sword, and Jesus knew that "they that take the sword must perish with the sword." Hezekiah the Zealot had tried it, and failed. His son Judas the Galilean nearly won through, but he failed. In the year A.D. 70 the

entire nation, driven to desperation, tried again, and failed so utterly that they lost all, and were scattered among the nations. Jesus turned away from the alluring prospect, knowing that this was not the way of God.

"The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and saith unto him 'All these things I will give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.'"

Luke says that the devil showed him all these kingdoms and their glory "in a moment of time". John Bunyan's scornful comment on that observation was "it did not take the devil long to show all that he had". As Jesus thought of the vast panoply of human might represented in the kingdoms of this world, He might well have pondered on the manner in which He himself would eventually succeed to the throne of the world. Instead of confining His mission and work to the land and people of Israel, why not reach out to the lands beyond, to Egypt and Greece, and to Parthia, Rome's great rival in the East. Why not wrest the rule of Rome itself from the feeble fingers of the ageing Tiberius Cæsar, and from that great city rule in righteousness. Jesus rejected the short cut, the easy way, the course that could lead only to temporary alleviation of human misery and none at all of human sin, and re-affirmed his determination to follow, at all costs, the pathway marked out for Him by His Father. He answered all the suggestions with "It is written", and the devil, baffled, left Him for a season.

Let us have a positive and confident faith in our privilege of calling upon the Lord for "grace to help in every time of need". Erasmus, when confronted by Luther with the scornful assertion that "you desire to tread upon eggs without crushing them, and among glasses without breaking them", replied cautiously "I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, at least so far as the Age will permit me". Compare with that the faith which enabled Paul, braving the terrors and stormy seas and unknown lands, the bitter opposition of the Jewish leaders and the relentless intolerance of false brethren, to exclaim triumphantly "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." If we look down into the stormy waters upon which we are treading we can do naught else but sink, but if with quiet confidence we look up to the stars and remember that away in the heavens are the things that endure, we shall forget the threatening gulf below us; and the great waters which mount up to the heavens will serve but to bring us nearer to God, for we shall be riding always upon the crest of the wave.

## THE SERVANT OF THE PRIEST

A. O. Hudson

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus" (John 17. 10).

The occurrence is recorded in detail by all four of the Evangelists; they appear to have invested it with some degree of importance. John even takes care to preserve the servant's name. It seems so irrelevant an addition to the story that one wonders if there is more hidden beneath the surface than appears at first sight. It was in all probability the Temple guard, under the control of the High Priests, together with a party of Roman soldiers under their own centurion, which set out to arrest Jesus, and without doubt the High Priest's personal representative would accompany them to ensure that all went according to plan. Peter the impulsive would quite naturally pick on this official as the first object of attack in his unavailing defence of His Master. The subsequent action of Jesus is the last of His miracles, of which we have any record, before His death. Malchus was probably the last human being to feel the kindly touch of those life-giving hands and to experience the thrill of creative vitality run through his body as the healing power flowed into him and made him whole. But would this be the only reason for the prominence given to this apparently quite trivial happening?

Did Malchus become a believer as the result of his experience? Was his name preserved by John because in later years the Christian assemblies had been familiar with the presence of a man who had once gone out to assist at the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth and had ended, like Saul of Tarsus, by becoming a devoted follower? Did the servant of the High Priest transfer his allegiance and become instead a bond-slave of Jesus Christ?

There is a hint in one of the early Christian writings which seems to indicate that the Christians of the first century knew more about this matter than we do to-day. Paul tells us, quietly, in 1 Cor. 15. 7 that our Lord after His resurrection "appeared unto James", His own natural half-brother, the one who became the head of the infant Church at Jerusalem, presided over the historic conference recorded in Acts 15, and wrote the Epistle bearing his name. Paul adds no details of that appearance; he speaks as though it was a story already well known to his readers, as doubtless it was. But in the document known as the Gospel to the Hebrews, which is thought to have been written about seventy years after the Crucifixion and therefore about forty years after Paul's death, the story then current among

the Christians as to Jesus' appearance to James is given in greater detail, and with it a casual allusion which may constitute a link with the story of Malchus.

"Now the Lord, when He had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest, went unto James and appeared to him, for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour when he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep . . ."

Who was this "servant of the priest" who, according to Christian tradition was present at the tomb when the resurrection took place? It is recalled that the first witnesses of the resurrection were the members of the guard, who actually beheld the rolling away of the stone, a feat which was already completed when the women arrived on the scene. (Mark 16. 4.) These keepers were not Pilate's soldiers, but were drawn from the Temple guard, as is evident by a comparison of Pilate's reply "Ye have a watch—make it as sure as ye can" (Matt. 27. 65) with the action of the keepers in reporting the sequel to the priests and not to Pilate. (Matt. 28. 11.) What more likely then that Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, present at the arrest in Gethsemane, should also be present with—perhaps in charge of—the guard at the tomb? And if this is so, what must have been his feelings when, in the very early hours of that morning, the ground heaved and the rocks shook, the great stone closing the tomb rolled back, and Malchus and his men, confronted with an altogether unexpected and awe-inspiring sight "did shake and became as dead men"? (Matt. 28. 4.)

Whether Jesus Himself appeared to the keepers before their precipitate flight and before the women arrived at the tomb the Gospels do not say; but the incident related in the "Gospel to the Hebrews" may well enshrine a verbal testimony which has not been incorporated in the canonical books. If in fact the "servant of the priest" who suffered at Peter's hands and was miraculously healed by Jesus was also a witness of the resurrection at the moment it occurred, there is a new light thrown on that mysterious "young man in a long white garment" who, according to Mark's account (Mark 16. 2-7) was found by the women very soon afterwards sitting inside the tomb. "He is not here" said that young man to them, "He is risen." That he was not one of the disciples is evident from his words "Go ye, and tell his disciples." It has been conjectured that he was John Mark, the lad who was so close an attendant upon all that Jesus did; it might be, how-

ever, that Malchus, present at the tomb, seeing before him the One who had touched him so tenderly a few days before, knowing Him to have died upon the Cross, knew in a flash that He had indeed triumphed over death, and in the wonder of that meeting remained behind to be discovered by the women when the guards had fled.

Who was it that saw the mighty angel, glorious in appearance, roll back the stone? (Matt. 28. 2.) Not the women—the stone was already rolled back when they arrived. This particular piece of testi-

mony must have come from one of the guards or from one who was present with them, and whose testimony was afterwards accepted by the infant Church and incorporated into Matthew's Gospel.

Is it the truth of the matter, then, that Malchus became a Christian and, although his testimony to the Resurrection is not preserved in the Gospels, something of the wonderful thing that happened to him on that wonderful morning has been preserved in the traditions of the early Church?

### ANOTHER MAN'S SERVANT

*"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth!"* (Rom. 14. 4).

It is so fatally easy to value another brother's or sister's service by one's own bushel measure. We all desire very earnestly to serve our Lord and the interests of His Kingdom. We generally take delight in speaking of Him and of the Divine Plan to any who will listen. And we all have our own ideas of how best the Gospel may be preached. Is it the very intensity of our own earnestness in this direction that makes us want every other bondsman of Jesus Christ to serve in just the same manner that seems good to us? Is it the measure of our own personal talent and success in one particular field of ministry that blinds us to the possibility of effective service being rendered in another manner, *in other hands*?

"There are diversities of gifts . . . there are differences of administrations . . . but it is the same God that worketh" (1 Cor. 12. 4-6). When will we learn that the grandest characteristic of all God's handiwork is variety, and that He has ordained the accomplishment of His service in such a fashion that "every joint" supplieth a contribution fitted to its place in the body?

Says one, loftily, secure in his ability and privilege to address the assemblies as befits the office of an elder in the Church "There is no doubt that the preaching of the Word is *the* great means the Lord has ordained for the spiritual growth of His people." All very well—but what discouragement to the brother who is temperamentally quite unable to stand before an audience and deliver a prepared discourse, but in his own quiet way can lead a study circle in leisured discussion of the Scriptures to the very real edification of his fellows.

It was teacher's birthday. For weeks beforehand her pupils had been busy making pretty aprons and

tending little plants in pots to give her on the day, for this teacher was greatly beloved. At length lesson time was over and they crowded round with their offerings, stepping back with gratified smiles as the teacher expressed her surprise and delight at each successive gift. Last of all came the "black sheep" of the class, grubby and untidy, half hesitating and half defiant, avoiding the amused looks of his classmates as he extended a tightly clenched fist and deposited into teacher's hand—a hot and sticky piece of butterscotch and three marbles!

But that teacher was wise—wiser than many who have attained eldership in the assemblies. "Oh, how lovely" she cried, smiling down at the anxious little face below her. "It's *years* since anybody gave me marbles for my birthday; and I just adore butterscotch."

The grubby one made his way back to his desk, head held high and face radiant. He loved his teacher, and he had so feared his gift would be rejected, but she had understood. He had done what he could.

Brethren in the Lord! Be very careful how you disparage the service another is trying to render, just because you "cannot see what good it will do." You may be the means of dashing the enthusiasm of one who will never be able to serve in the big things, as you are privileged to serve, but is nevertheless trying to contribute some small mite to the work of the Master Whom we all love. "Take heed that ye despise not *one* of these little ones."

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"Beware of much talk. Remain in some secret place and enjoy thy God; for thou hast Him Whom all the world cannot take from thee. "I am He to Whom thou oughtest wholly to give thyself up, that so thou mayest live the rest of thy time, not in thyself, but in Me, and be free from all anxious cares." (Thomas a Kempis.)

A O Hudson

## The Parable of the Leaven

*"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."* (Matt. 13.33.)

Despite its brevity, this parable enshrines one of the deepest of the truths concerning the Kingdom which Jesus Christ came to preach and to establish. We are inclined to place so much stress upon the preparation of the "people for God's Name" to be His instruments in the future Age of world conversion that we are liable to overlook another very essential work of preparation which also must make progress during this Gospel Age, and it is this aspect of the Kingdom of Heaven which is made prominent in the parable of the leaven. The Gospel Age has been set apart in the Divine Plan not only for calling and preparing the "Ministry of Reconciliation" which is to effect the work of writing Divine law in the hearts of men during the Millennial Age, but also to allow the leaven of Christian teaching to permeate society and prepare mankind for the demands that will be made upon it during the next Age.

Note first the aptness of the allusion. The leaven is added to the meal and is necessary if the meal is to become good, wholesome bread. It does not of itself, however, convert the meal into bread. The fiery experiences of the baking process alone can do that, but the permeation of the mass by the leaven is essential before the baking may be commenced. There is a slow, invisible, nevertheless effective leavening of the dough which, when completed, allows the heat of the oven to do its beneficent work. So it is with the Kingdom, said Jesus. There is a preliminary stage in which the "raw material", so to speak, of that Kingdom is being acted upon by an influence similar to that of leaven upon meal, and results in the whole of that "raw material" being made ready for the experiences which will effect for it its ultimate destiny.

But is not leaven employed in the Scriptures as a symbol of sin? It is so employed when in Matt. 16. 6 Jesus warned his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees". In this warning He used the same characteristic of leaven to describe the insidious subtlety of those who were like dead men's sepulchres, fair on the outside but inside full of dead men's bones. Again, Paul in 1 Cor. 5. 7, referring to a scandalous affair in the Corinthian church, urged that church to expel a certain openly

profligate offender in the words "Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be . . . unleavened." Note that in this passage the picture is that of the sinner himself, remaining within the fellowship of the church, being the leaven which will permeate the entire church with its influence, in this case a baneful influence. The individual's expulsion from the community was commanded in the words "Purge out therefore the old leaven".

The children of Israel at the Exodus were to purge their houses of leaven and to eat unleavened bread seven days. The idea here was evidently to symbolise their utter separation from all that was of Egypt and a new purity consequent upon their adoption into the family of God and their redemption when the destroying angel passed over the land. Although at this feast, the feast of the Passover, leaven was forbidden, it should be noticed that at the feast of Pentecost, seven weeks later, leaven had to be associated with the offerings. (See Lev. 7. 13 ; 23. 17.)

One may conclude, then, that leaven is used, in allusion to its power of permeation, in symbol of both good and evil influences. In the case of the parable there should be no room for doubt. The Kingdom of Heaven is like this leaven, said Jesus ; this is a feature of the Kingdom I am preaching, the Kingdom which I am commencing now and which will one day be worldwide.

What is the nature of this leavening work? It is not intended to convert the nations. That work is to be carried out during the Millennial Age. It is at the most a work of preparation, of laying the foundations of that greater work which shall once and for all abolish sin in all its aspects and restore the human race to perfection.

Is there Scriptural evidence that such a work of preparation is to proceed during this Age? By all means there is. "Go ye into all the world," said Jesus, "and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16. 15). "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness" (Matt. 24. 14). And more personal to each of us "They may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2. 12). This last Scripture gives the clue. There is a work to be done by the Church in the flesh, during this Age, which is not to be productive of immediate results, but will have its fruitage in the coming Age. Whilst the chief and

foremost business of every Christian is the playing of his or her part in the calling and preparation of those who are fellow-workers in the body of Christ, there is also this secondary work amongst men in general which is likened to the influence of leaven—its results not immediately discernible, but none the less vitally necessary to the final work of the future.

Jesus Himself gave further instructions on this matter. "Ye are the salt of the earth," He said (Matt. 5. 13). Salt is a preservative. It must be intimately mingled with that which is to be preserved and it must retain its freshness to be efficacious. If the salt lose its savour, it is henceforth fit for nothing. We are the salt of the earth! It is very unfortunate that the expression has passed into an everyday proverb which implies that the "salt" of the earth are the "choice ones" of the earth, whereas Jesus meant nothing of the kind. His meaning is plain—by virtue of an intimate mingling with the people of the earth, His disciples by their conduct and teachings would be a preservative and wholesome influence in the world, maintaining a witness and an example of Kingdom standards which, however unheeded at the time, would yet serve to save the world from utter depravity and make it ready in some small way for the Millennial Day and its standards. Noah and Lot were such preservative influences in their own days, preachers of righteousness in a world of unrighteousness. Who can doubt that their words and examples will be remembered by some at least of their own generation when they awaken from the sleep of death to find themselves in the Kingdom of Christ on earth?

"Ye are the light of the world," said Jesus (Matt. 5. 14). Something of a rather different nature than salt. We are to be an enlightening influence, a light that cannot be ignored even although men persist in shading their eyes from its brilliancy. *The light of the world* in a literal sense is of course the sun. Did Jesus mean that our Christian life and witness should be as obvious a fact as the existence of the sun itself, so that, whether men hear or whether they forbear, they cannot deny the fact that there have been prophets among them? (Ezek. 2. 5.)

But Jesus has not finished with His disciples yet. A still more tremendous thought comes from His lips. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5. 14). We then are to be as a city set on an hill—impossible for us *not* to be in the public eye. To what extent do we in our fellowship approach to any attempt at fulfilling this ideal? The idea of a city is that of an ordered and regulated way of life; to be set on an hill adds the thought of a Divinely set and ordained way of life. Men, looking

upon the Christian community upon earth, are to see it as a city set upon an hill—a compact community proclaiming and living by standards which have been given by Heaven and which are to be manifested to all men. Men may not acknowledge the authority of that city; they may avoid it in their travels and build their roads to swerve round the hill instead of going up and into the city; but they must always be conscious that the city is there, standing by a system of authority and rulership which one day it will have power to extend over the whole world.

So then, they who by virtue of their position as footstep followers of the Lord Jesus Christ have become as leaven in this world have the duty and privilege of working silently, unobtrusively and unknown, until the leavening process is complete and the world stands ready to be introduced to the reign of Christ in power. For two thousand years they will have been manifest to men as the salt of the earth, as the light of the world, as a city on an hill, and then at length, their work of witness completed, they will come forth in glory and power to fulfil their historic mission of world conversion. It is then that the fruit of the leavening work will be manifest. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 11. 1). It is upon the slender basis of this Gospel Age "witness" that the greater invitation to the fountain of life will be based and the grand work commence. It is because men will have already heard and known—and seen—something of Kingdom standards that some of them will break out, as the prophet declares they will break out, into the rapturous words "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isa. 25. 9).

---

*Truth; for ever on the scaffold?  
Wrong; for ever on the throne?  
Nay; that scaffold sways the future,  
And within the dim unknown  
Stands the form of Christ the Saviour  
Keeping watch around His own.*

(Whittier.)

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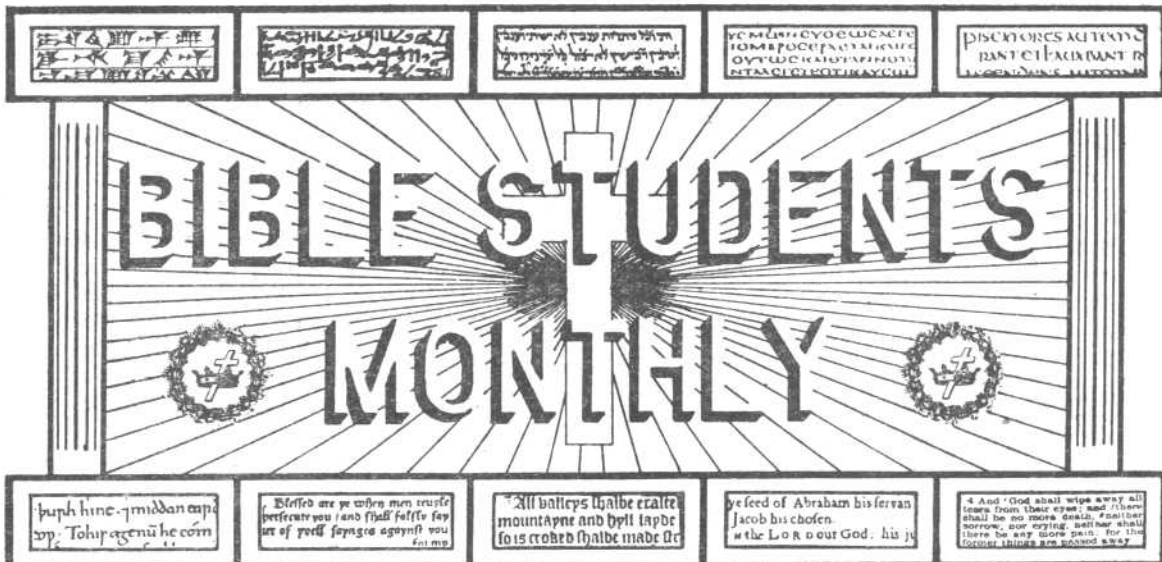
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## NOTES

The date recommended for the celebration of the Memorial this year is Sunday, 14th April, after 6.0 p.m. To those who regard this annual commemoration of the Last Supper as being in conformity with the usage of the Early Christian Church the evening service will bring back a flood of hallowed memories. The solemnity and impressiveness of the ceremony is heightened by its rarity. With a deepened understanding of all that was involved in our Lord's life on earth and His death, and a quickened perception of the glories that will attend His full revelation to the world during His Second Advent, we may "keep the feast" in quiet confidence that our faith is founded upon the solid rock of Divine Truth. This is the time of family reunion, when those who labour and worship together in Christian fellowship join in a ceremony which at once symbolises their relationship to each other and their joint relationship with Jesus their head. "Let us therefore keep the feast . . . with . . . sincerity and truth."

\* \* \* \*

This issue is specially devoted to the consideration of Scriptural themes connected with the earthly life and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The approach to the Memorial season gives occasion for a more than usual concentration upon these themes, and it is sincerely hoped that this issue, to the compilation of which a number of brethren have contributed, will be a means of blessing to the readers and serve to stimulate their faith and encourage them to steadfastness. The article "An Offering for Sin" has been submitted, and is published, as a sincere endeavour to illuminate what is to many a difficult subject, and we shall be pleased to hear from those who would like to comment upon it. Who knows but that if this doctrine were to be explored from a new angle much of the prevalent difference of thought might be cleared away and we all climb together to a new level in our understanding of the call to joint heirship with Christ?

\* \* \* \*

A correspondent from Cornwall points out that the last two paragraphs in the article "What is the Soul?" which appeared in our December issue, are misleading. He says "the last two paragraphs plainly state . . . that the soul is composed of body and life, and that the life is the part on which is impressed the knowledge and experiences which the soul goes through. This is quite contrary to my understanding of the matter. The body is composed of materials which can be shaped and moulded, and replaced atom by atom without altering the main mass. But I cannot conceive of a small piece of spirit of life being placed in a body, moulded by the experiences of the body, returned to God in its

revised shape at the death of the body, and separately kept by God until the resurrection, and then placed in another body. The spirit of life energises, and the experiences of life mould, the body, and in the resurrection, a body similar to the former moulded one, and energised by the spirit, would be the same person."

We have quoted our correspondent in full because his remarks do express the truth of the position. The passage in the article in question was not well worded and might mislead some; the above remarks are welcomed in that they might serve to correct a possible wrong impression.

\* \* \* \*

The Manchester friends' effort at Macclesfield, first mentioned in the December B.S.M., is worthy of observation and emulation. The new group which was formed at Macclesfield in consequence of a series of four public meetings is now well established, self supporting, and anxious to take its own place in the work of Christian teaching. Our Manchester correspondent has sent us a word of exhortation, coupled with a few suggestions resulting from this particular effort, which it is hoped to reproduce in our next issue. In the meantime we quote from his letter a sentence which well expresses the sentiments with which we all could go forward in the service of our Master. "This surely is the spirit which actuates all truly anointed with the Spirit—the pursuit of common ideals in the great Christian adventure, to know Him and to be found in Him!" These Manchester friends have formed a permanent "Council of Activity" that they may the more readily work together in this labour which appeals so to them. May their efforts be richly blessed!

Friends meeting in the Christian Institute, Glasgow, under the local name of the "All-Sufficient Word Fellowship," arranged a special gathering for the week-end of 29th-30th December. The special feature of the Saturday session was a "Fellowship Meeting" at which ten speakers addressed the gathering for five minutes each on the theme "The King and the Kingdom," praise being interspersed between each speaker's remarks. The Glasgow friends have found this type of meeting very helpful. On the Sunday the guest speaker for the day was Bro. S. H. French, of London, who took as his two subjects "God's care for his own" and "Victory." These occasional gatherings have become a feature of the work of this Glasgow group and have been very much appreciated. Such holiday-time gatherings in the larger cities afford an opportunity for friends over a fairly wide area to meet and get to know one another, and are greatly to be commended. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often to another."



## “In Remembrance of Me”

A MEDITATION ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The memorial links us with our brethren in all lands and all times. But in how vastly different circumstances has the sacred feast been observed during the past nineteen hundred years. Consider the first memorial just a year after its inauguration by our Lord on that night in which He was betrayed. Can we picture the disciples gathering in response to love's request? It was no effort for them to remember Him. Their memories were crowded with mental pictures of scenes in which He had been the central figure. The four Gospels put together record only the merest fraction of all that Jesus did and taught and with which they were familiar. As if it had only been yesterday they could recall His appearance, His dress, His bearing and gestures, and above all the glory of God in His countenance. Never man spake like this man had been the testimony even of His enemies. What an indelible impression therefore must our Lord's teaching have made upon them. Think of being able to listen in memory to the sermon on the mount spoken in the voice of our Lord Himself and at the same time to be able to conjure up the whole scene! How wonderful to be able to visualise our Lord enacting some of those scenes with which the Gospels have made us so familiar, such as the cleansing of the lepers, the restoring of sight to the blind, causing the lame to walk, casting out devils, cleansing the Temple, rebuking the winds and the waves, walking on the sea and even restoring the dead to life. How vivid and tragic must the closing scenes have been to them; the triumphal procession on Palm Sunday followed by the terrible cry of "Crucify Him"; the sad procession from the judgment hall to the place called "Calvary" and the crowning horror when the three crosses were erected with Jesus in their midst.

As they gathered together for the first memorial each would have specially treasured memories of personal contacts with the Lord. Mary, the Lord's mother, would be able to go furthest back. If every mother's mind is richly stored with precious recollections of her first born, how transcendently more must Mary's have been. Possessing the secret of His birth, with what wonder and awe must she have watched her child's personality unfolding as He grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. She would recall the wrench when at the age of thirty He left the humble home to take up the work for which He had been born. The parting, however, had been softened by the thought that He

had gone to lead the nation, as their Messiah, back to God and to fulfil the angel's words given before His birth. "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of his father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." How sorely tried her faith had been by subsequent events. With growing alarm she received the report concerning the hatred which He had been arousing against Himself and of the plots of the rulers to destroy Him. Then vividly before her mind would pass the final scenes. In helpless agony she had stood before the cross with her sister and the two Marys until she could endure no more and John had led her away. But now she understood the reason for it all and all the wealth of her affection had been transformed into a passion of Divine love as she saw Him wounded for her transgressions, bruised for her iniquity and the chastisement of her peace upon Him. It was surely with trembling hands and eyes and heart that overflowed that she partook of those sacred emblems of that broken body and shed blood that had meant all the world to her.

Those amongst the disciples who could look furthest back were John and Andrew. At the first memorial they would be recalling as they had doubtless done innumerable times before that first meeting with the Lord on the banks of the Jordan. As the very first and withal two of the finest of His disciples, the Lord had been no less interested in them than they had been in Him. It had been a meeting never to be forgotten; what a wonderful evening they had spent together. First impressions are lasting and probably all would be specially recalling the circumstances in which they had first met the Lord. There was Nathaniel, he would be thinking again of how he had been making it a matter of prayer under the fig tree when the Lord gave him that heart-searching glance, spoke those thought-penetrating words and gave him that splendid commendation which he should never forget as long as he lived. Nicodemus too would be there but no longer timid. How he would recall again the events of that memorable night when the Lord had spoken to him those wonderful words of life. Little had he realised at the time the meaning of the saying addressed to him "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." As he thought of his Lord

hanging there on the cross for his sins he could now see something of its depths of meaning.

Martha and Mary would also be there with their precious store of personal recollections. How much the Lord had loved them and how frequently had he made their house His home. Never would they forget or cease to be stirred with deepest gratitude for that most wonderful of all the Lord's miracles performed on their behalf. The sisters could still hear the ringing tones of that voice that woke the dead and gave them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And what about Peter and James and John, the three so often singled out by the Lord for occasions of special intercourse with Him. How much they could recall of personal contacts. As they partook of the emblems surely their minds would go back to that wondrous vision on the mount of transfiguration when Moses and Elijah had spoken of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Instances could be multiplied of how the early disciples would in the most natural and spontaneous way remember Him. To them it would not be so much the Plan of God as the person of Christ that would be uppermost in their minds; not so much the doctrines of the Truth as the personal love of their Lord.

As we look forward to celebrating another memorial we cannot but recognise a difference between ourselves and our brethren of whom we have been speaking. Unlike them we can have no vivid personal recollection of the Lord as He was in the flesh. Our knowledge of the Man Christ Jesus is second hand, like most of our information on the subject, books forming the principal source of all our knowledge. God caused the New Testament to be written specially for that larger body of His brethren whom our Lord referred to as "those also who shall believe on Me through their word." By its aid we too can remember Him in all those incidents portrayed so simply and beautifully in the Gospels, using our sanctified imagination to make the scenes live before us. As compensation for our lack of first hand knowledge of the human life of our Lord, we have a much more complete knowledge than those first disciples of His resurrection life. The epistles written over quite a long period give evidence of how gradually was the growth into the fuller knowledge of the person and work of Christ. Even Peter refers to Paul's writings as containing some things hard to be understood. Following the epistles we have the added knowledge imparted in the Book of Revelation, giving us a history in advance of the whole of the Gospel Age and beyond. The disciples at the first memorial could look back only over the three and a half years of our Lord's earthly ministry; we can look back

over nineteen centuries and see the Lord in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, watching over His people with patient tender care.

If our knowledge of our Lord in the flesh is of necessity second hand, not so our knowledge of the risen Christ. There is no child of God but has abundant occasion for remembering the Lord in respect of His own personal contacts. While it is true that "*the sands have been washed in the foot-prints of the stranger on Galilee's shore, and the voice that subdued the rough billows is heard in Judea no more*" it is also true that "*Warm, sweet living yet, a present help is He, And faith has still her Olivet and love her Galilee.*" We must all have had personal contacts with the Lord else we have no right to a place at the memorial feast. We have been cleansed from the leprosy of sin; blind and deaf to the things of God and the voice of God, our blind eyes have been opened and our deaf ears unstopped; blind, He has opened our lips that our mouth should show forth His praise; crippled He has given us power to stand erect and walk in His ways; dead in trespasses and sins He has quickened us and made us sit together in Heavenly places in Christ. These and countless other blessings are common to all God's people, yet each has had experiences in connection with them peculiarly his own. The members of the New Creation are not mass produced. The Lord has an individual plan for every individual life. The memorial is an occasion for remembering Him with deepest gratitude for all the peculiarly personal expressions of His love. It is here that we are apt to fail most. Like the babe which though the object of maternal love's unremitting attention and tenderest care, is yet all unconscious of it, so we often take for granted, accept as coincidence, receive as a matter of course, the mother love of Jesus expressed towards and experienced by every one of His "little children."

Each memorial as it comes and goes shortens the time that yet remains to the Church on earth. In the atomic bomb God seems to have given to the world His ultimatum with a time limit that is very short. The choice is now before them, of chaos or Christ, and the decision cannot be long delayed. If the end of Satan's empire gives evidence of being so near then nearer still is the end of the church on earth. The next memorial for all we know may be the last. It almost certainly will be the last for some. Let us go forward with this solemn thought in mind, not only looking back to the cup which our Lord drank to the bitter dregs at Calvary and in which we are privileged to share, but also forward to the infallible joy, which awaits us, of being permitted to drink the wine new with Him in the Kingdom of God.

## "LET US KEEP THE FEAST"

REFLECTIONS  
FOR TO-DAY

A O Hudson

The Last Supper was not the same thing as the Passover, although the ceremony and words used by Jesus on that occasion and which have given the inspiration for two thousand years of Christian celebration must have followed close upon, and indeed were probably intermingled with, the disciples' keeping of the Passover according to Mosaic law. It is not so much that the one ceremony was distinct from the other in point of time and sequence as that it was distinct in purpose. The Passover was a ceremony of tradition, looking back to a deliverance of fourteen centuries past; the Last Supper was the inaugural ceremony of a new fellowship, looking forward to a greater deliverance which was still two thousand years in the future. The one was a remembrance of the past, the other a pledge of the future.

We therefore, as we come together again as we have done, year by year, need to balance the future with the past. When Jesus said "This do in remembrance of Me" He surely meant us to remember, not only His life on earth and death on the Cross, but also His promised coming again in the glory of His Kingdom and His *apokulupsis* to all men when that Kingdom is established in power. Ours is not a faith which dwells forever on the things of the past, however soul-stirring and inspiring they may be, however mighty in Divine power for the furtherance of God's Plan. It is a faith that looks forward to the future, that beholds with clear, undimmed eyes those glories that shall be when the Son of Man has fully come in the power of His Kingdom, and all tribes and nations have gathered before Him to learn of the pure language that He will turn unto them, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent. It is *that* coming which we have in mind as we raise the cup to our lips and repeat together "Till He come!"

There were eleven gathered with Him in that upper room. The others were not there—those who, besides the apostles, were constant attendants upon our Lord during His ministry. The three Marys, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Mark, were not there. Neither were Mary and Martha of Bethany, nor Joanna nor Salome. Neither was Lazarus, nor those secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus. The "five hundred brethren" to whom the Lord showed Him-

self after His resurrection were elsewhere, all unconscious of the ceremony that was being enacted for the first time and which they themselves would repeat, year by year continually, for the rest of their lives. It was in the truest sense of the word a family gathering, and it marked the institution of a new family, the Christian family, a family that was to hold together and endure, through centuries of suffering and persecution, until our own day; yea, and endures still. Despite all our misunderstandings, our difficulties, our disappointments and our disillusionments, we remain a family still, and those who have grasped this truth and practice it in their relations with the brethren are the ones who alone have remained truly faithful to the cause of "Present Truth."

It was appropriate therefore that the institution of the Christian family should be marked by a ceremonial which, whatever else it was intended to symbolise, did in fact bring home to the disciples one vivid realisation. They were to eat bread in the presence of their host! That meant a great deal more to those men in that day than ever it means to we Western Europeans to-day. From time immemorial—yea, and even until to-day in the Arabian deserts—to eat bread in a man's house or in his tent in the land of the sons of Abraham meant that the host was forever bound to accept the eater as one of his family, even to the extent of sacrificing his own life if needs be in the defence of his guest. It was no idle word that Jesus uttered when He said "This is my body, broken for you. Take, eat." By that action He was assuring them, in symbol, that, having partaken of bread at His hands, they were forever under His protection and members of His family. "Greater love hath no man than this," said Jesus, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." He knew full well that He must lay down His own life on behalf of those who had eaten bread with Him, and in the earnestness of His communion with the Father He prayed that these who by this ceremonial eating of bread with Him had signified their desire to be of His family forevermore might be as one family whilst still in the flesh, "that they may be one, as we are one." We need to reflect here that to be one body in heaven means to be one family on earth; the unity for which our Lord prayed is not one to be achieved as it were instantaneously upon our "change" to spiritual con-

ditions and our entrance upon heavenly glory, but is to be attained here and now in our fellowship together and our common pilgrim walk toward the Holy City. "The bread which we break," says Paul in 1 Cor. 10. 16 "is it not the communion—common union—of the body of Christ?" It is only as we enter into the real meaning of the term "communion of saints" that we can begin to perceive the basis of that fellowship which shall be our inheritance beyond the Vail but for which we must be prepared here and now if we are ever to inherit it.

The significance of the bread, then, to us, is His life given for us, our acceptance into His family, binding us together into one body. If we take the symbol to ourselves and partake of the broken bread, we must identify ourselves with that position.

But the eleven were to be initiated into an understanding even deeper than that. Not only were they to enter into a passive relationship as members of the Christ family but they were also to enter into an active partnership as blood-brothers with Jesus Christ Himself. He called them, not only to accept of His hospitality and sacrifice upon their behalf, but also to become associated with Him in a work of service which should make them for all time "joint-heirs with Christ—if so be that we suffer (endure) with Him, that we may also be glorified together." And so He bade them drink of the wine which was His blood.

The assimilating of blood meant the acquiring of blood relationship to the donor, to these men of the Eastern world. Two Bedouin Arabs, resolved to become blood-brothers to each other, would each open a vein in his wrist and the two together would allow their blood to mingle. From henceforth they were blood-brothers—each had the other's blood run in his veins. The drinking of blood, too, meant the acquiring of life from another. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," said Jesus. Hence this symbol of the cup involved a second and deeper obligation, one more personal between each believer and his Lord. It implied eternal association together in as close a sense as two brothers are together. It implied a companionship with the beloved partner in all things, in life or in death. So if Jesus spent His life in serving mankind and doing good to all, so do we. If Jesus forsook earthly ambitions and aims in order to further the interests of God's Kingdom, then so should we. If Jesus went into death at the hands of wicked men rather than swerve one iota from the course which Divine wisdom had planned for Him, then we should be ready to do the same. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the

dead by the glory of the Father, even so ye also should walk in newness of life."

The symbol of the cup, then, is that of a voluntary sharing with Him in all that He does, both in the service of mankind now, limited in scope and power though it must be, and in the infinitely wider sphere of Millennial work when that Age shall have come. "Are ye able," asked our Lord of some who desired to reign with Him, "to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?" "Lord, we are able," was the confident reply. They knew not what they said. So often, in our confidence, we say the same thing and understand the implication of what we say as little as did those disciples. May we have grace and sincerity to enter more deeply into the spirit of these things, and, approaching the holy table with full awareness of our responsibility and privilege, let us "keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The following announcement, made by friends in the Midlands, will be of interest to many who recall previous visits of American brethren to this country. Such visits are only practicable if a tour over the entire country is arranged, and it is suggested therefore that each group of friends that would appreciate such a visit write *at once* to the Acting Secretary, Bro. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, stating what days of the week are acceptable for the visit and whether accommodation can be offered.

"A Midlands group of classes, comprising Blaby, Birmingham, Coventry, Rugby, Warwick and others, have formed a fellowship and service arrangement among themselves. For some years past they have held a Convention at Birmingham at Whitsun, and this year an invitation has been extended to the Pastoral Bible Institute to send a representative on a pilgrim service and to serve the Whitsun gathering on June 5th-6th, 1946. The P.B.I. have replied that they will be pleased to sponsor this visit provided the brother's services can be put to a more general use than the one convention and district. To this end a temporary committee of these classes has been formed, and we send you an invitation to make use of the American brother's services.

"The Midlands Association is financing the ocean travel, with help, but if any class or district is able to contribute towards its own expenses for services rendered it would be appreciated.

"If you would be pleased to receive a visit, and a brother's welfare can be met, please let us know as soon as possible as time is very short."

As stated above, all replies to this invitation should be sent to Brother Walton.

# An Offering for Sin

A DOCTRINAL ESSAY

A. O. Hudson

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed." (Isa. 53. 10.)

Strange, mysterious words ; a tale of sacrifice and death on the one hand, and of new life upon the other. Seed that is to arise out of an altar-offering given for sin! Small wonder that the full significance of this scripture cannot be appreciated except by that clear understanding of the Divine Plan which is our own inheritance. And yet even we must pause, and linger over the haunting beauty of these words, and picture in our minds all that the offerings for sin meant to the pious Israelite, if we are in our turn to draw from this theme the guidance for daily life which it can afford.

The Sin-offering is not the same thing as the Ransom. Often has this fundamental truth been reiterated in our ears but very difficult it is to separate these two doctrines and view each one in its own setting. Much of the prevalent confusion on the subject has been due to men like Andrew Jukes who saw in the Day of Atonement offerings merely a series of pictures showing various aspects of our Lord's death on the Cross, and this type of interpretation, although it is the accepted one in orthodox Christian circles to-day, is based upon a complete misunderstanding of the principle underlying those sacrifices.

The Day of Atonement offerings do not in any manner picture or prefigure the Ransom given by our Lord at Calvary. They do symbolise something quite different—the process by which our Lord does recover the world from sin and the consequences of sin ; in a word, the work of reconciliation. The Ransom is the giving of the *anti-lutron*, the corresponding price. It does not of itself effect reconciliation, for after our Lord's death, and indeed even to-day, two thousand years later, the world remains unreconciled to God and sin is still with us. It does, however, form the essential basis upon which the work of reconciliation can go forward and without which reconciliation cannot be made. For the Church, that work is effected during the Gospel Age, the present time, and for mankind generally it will be effected during the Millennial Age, the day of the yet future Kingdom of God upon earth. In this connection it should be borne in mind that whereas in this Age our Lord Jesus Christ Himself reconciles His Christian disciples to God, in the future Age these same disciples are to be associated

with Him in the work of world reconciliation and will themselves be the missionaries of that Age, or, as Paul designates them, "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5. 18).

Since the Day of Atonement ritual pictures the process of the removal of sin from the world, it follows that the works of the First Advent, the Gospel Age, and the Millennial Age must all find place in the ceremonies, covering the whole period until the time that sin has been utterly removed, never to return. The "offerings for sin" occupy the central position in these ceremonies, and it is to these offerings that we now address ourselves.

The fundamental idea underlying the offering of slain sacrifices is that of giving life to God to be used again for the renewal of life in the world. This idea is met with in every type of pagan religion where sacrifice is made, and is evidently a survival from the days when mythology commenced to develop out of mankind's originally clear knowledge of the true God. The sacrifices instituted by Moses were no exception to this rule ; he declared himself, under Divine direction, that "the blood is the life thereof" (Deut. 12. 13 ; Lev. 17. 11, 14) and the sprinkling of the blood of the offering in the Most Holy quite definitely symbolised the offering of life to God, that new life might come to the people. Primitive races sacrificed their chiefs and kings when they grew old in the belief that their powers and vitality would be passed on to their successors in the leadership of the tribe. The Moabites burnt their first-born children to Moloch that the life thus given up might reappear again in enhanced vitality of the people and the land. Even the Israelites were occasionally guilty of this latter abomination and had to be prohibited its practice, as we read in Jeremiah "and they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart" (Jer. 7. 31).

It is this principle that lies behind the story of Cain and Abel. Abel's sacrifice was the more acceptable because it was the offering of *life* to God, indicating Abel's recognition of the fact that the Divine Plan provides for such offerings to be used in God's purposes for world regeneration. That is why the Apostle says "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Heb. 9. 22).

Sin cannot be overcome and its consequences nullified, the man reconciled to God, without the offering of life, which in itself involves death, the shedding of blood. Abel's sacrifice was a typical representation, a picture, of this fact, in a sense that Cain's was not and never could be, and it is for this reason that God accepted Abel's offering of slain beasts, and rejected Cain's offering of the earth's fruits (Gen. 4. 5).

God's call to Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and the substitution at the last minute of a ram caught in the thicket (Gen. 22. 13) is another example of the same principle. The writer to the Hebrews says that Abraham accounted God able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11.9), as though He could use that sacrificed life again in giving new life to the world, for Abraham knew that it must be and could only be through Isaac that the world could ever be blessed (Gen. 17. 19). The virtue of the sacrifice lay not in the act of slaying the victim, but in that the life thus released from earthly restraints and interests, and given into Divine keeping, could be used by God in His plans for world regeneration; and this is precisely the principle underlying our Lord's human life from Jordan to Calvary, and of every life that in this Age is utterly consecrated to Divine service to the exclusion of human interests.

The Day of Atonement ceremonies illustrate this principle. The place of offering was the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. The bullock, without blemish, was slain and sacrificed by fire on the Brasen Altar in the Court, and its blood taken by the High Priest beyond the Veil into the Most Holy, there to be sprinkled upon the Ark of the Covenant. This ritual was the solemn offering of sacrificed life to God, and since the bullock had been slain as representing, and in lieu of, the High Priest, the act was equivalent to the High Priest having formally offered his own life to God. But there is much more in this ritual than the mere act of dying. For some time longer the choice parts of the slain bullock were burning upon the Brasen Altar in the Court within full sight of the attendant priests, and then the remainder of the carcass was dragged forth and burned outside the Camp of Israel (Lev. 16. 27) in the sight of all people. For a perceptible period of time, therefore, this Sin-offering was being offered in a fashion known and perceived of all men until all was reduced to ashes. Not until that point was reached was the "offering for sin" completed.

This slow consuming of life wholly devoted to God foreshadowed the earthly life of Jesus, during the three and a half years between Jordan and Calvary. It was at Jordan that He said "Lo I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10. 7). At

Calvary He uttered the words "It is finished" and "bowed His head and gave up the spirit" (John 19. 20). It was the Sin-offering that was finished at that moment; the last remains of the antitypical bullock were there and then reduced to ashes in the sight of the Roman centurion and the bystanders. At that very moment the Ransom was given, the work of an instant, Jesus Christ dying on the cross "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3. 18).

The necessity for this "Sin-Offering," lies in the evident fact that the ransoming of men from the power of the grave and restoring them to conscious life on earth does not of itself transform them to perfect, sinless beings who can be expected never to transgress the laws of God again. Every man, coming back "in his own order" (1 Cor. 15. 23) will be free from the Adamic death sentence but will have still the effects of his former life with which to contend, and in the case of many human beings it will be a long, toilsome journey away from the thralldom and power of sin to the full liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8. 21). The Ransom will have given our Lord Jesus power to restore all such to conscious life, as it is written "For to this end Jesus both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14. 9) but a further work is needed with them before they can be presented faultless before the Heavenly Father. And this is where the *life* of Jesus of Nazareth, as distinct from His *death*, plays its part. The writer to the Hebrews says that "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation (i.e., a sin-offering) for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2. 17). The teachings of Jesus; the works of Jesus; the wondrous influence of Jesus; that marvellous power which radiated from His devoted life and drew men to follow Him; all this, involving so much of sacrifice and consecration on His part, even unto death, has, in a manner totally incomprehensible to our finite minds, engendered a potent dynamic force which has been operating throughout this Age for the spiritual life and sustenance of His own disciples, the Church, and will operate during the next Age in a similar fashion toward the world.

"The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6. 51). These are no idle words; they are the expression of a great truth. When the sick woman touched Jesus, He knew that vitality had gone out from Him (Luke 8. 46). How it comes about we know not; what unknown influences are at work we can only guess at; what we do know is that in a very real sense the consecrated life of Jesus upon earth,

spent wholly and completely in the service of His Father, was becoming transformed into a reservoir of creative, life-giving energy "for the life of the world." And in all subsequent days both in this Age and the next, the fruits of Jesus' life on earth have become and will be the means of imparting new strength, new incentive, new life, to men and women recovered from the sleep of death by virtue of the Ransom, and walking now in the "Narrow Way," and then along the "Highway of Holiness," back to full reconciliation with God by virtue of the Sin-Offering.

This then is the Scriptural truth pictured in olden times by the bullock on the Day of Atonement. But the story of the Sin-offering does not end there.

When Jesus was upon earth, He invited men to follow in His steps and to associate themselves with Him to such a degree that it could be truthfully said they were taking up their crosses and following Him to crucifixion. "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8. 34). The sayings of Jesus and the teachings of the Apostles regarding this self-denial and whole-hearted devotion to Jesus at the cost of ordinary earthly interests and advantages are so numerous in the New Testament and so well known that there is no need to recount them in detail. Suffice it to say that instructed Christians do know perfectly well that such a call to consecration of life and abilities to the Divine service is invited and encouraged in the teachings of Christ. Now this call to consecration is something quite apart from the general message of God's plan for mankind in the coming Kingdom, also preached by Jesus. Briefly put, God proposes the conversion of mankind in general during the next Age, the Millennial Age, but invites those who will respond to His leading, to give themselves in complete dedication of life to Him in this Age, the Gospel Age, that they might be His representatives and ambassadors in the world now, and His ministers and missionaries to mankind then. This fact is well understood and accepted, and needs no Scriptural evidence at this stage.

Now the noteworthy thing about this invitation to dedication of life, or "consecration," as we usually term it, borrowing the word from the Levitical ceremonies, is that the subsequent life, conduct, and mission of the consecrated disciple is of precisely the same character as was the earthly life of our Lord. "As he is, so are we in this world" (I. John 4. 17). In every possible manner—except in the execution of the supreme purpose for which Jesus came into the world, the giving of a "Ransom for all" (I. Tim. 2. 6)—we as His disciples are associated closely with Jesus. His mission was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom; so is ours. His work was

to do good to all men; so is ours. His aim and purpose was to banish sin and reconcile men to God, leaving them perfect and flawless in God's sight; that aim is ours. We are called to follow in His steps and to be identified in every possible respect with all that He does. To such an extent is this true that the promise to all such "overcomers" is that upon the completion of their earthly experiences and training they will be raised to reign with Christ, to sit with Him in His throne, and to reign over the earth in association with Him, for the conversion and blessing of all mankind, as a queen might reign jointly with a king (Rev. 3. 21).

It follows therefore that the earthly lives of all the members of Christ's Church are devoted and offered to God in precisely the same way that the life of Jesus between Jordan and Calvary was offered to God, and that this offering is maintained until it is ended by death. It cannot be claimed that the *effectiveness* of that offering, even of the entire Church of all ages, can be placed on a level with that of our Lord, for in His human perfection He towered above all His followers. Nevertheless God looks upon the motives of the heart, and reflects, as did Jesus in speaking of the widow who cast her two mites into the Temple treasury, "They have done what they could." And because those heart motives have been sincere and those consecrated lives have been spent to the very end in Divine service and the discharge of the Divine mission, God is able to make use of those offered lives in His future work upon earth. *Because* the offering of the corporate Church of this Age has been acceptable to God, He can use that corporate Church, in its resurrected spiritual state, as a storehouse of spiritual power which will play its part in the regeneration of the world.

It is this that is shown in the second Levitical ceremony on the Day of Atonement. After the bullock had been offered and the sprinkling of its blood upon the mercy-seat had won Divine acceptance, a goat was brought forward to the priests. This goat was treated in exactly similar fashion to the bullock. There was no difference whatever, the only essential being that the bullock must first have been offered and accepted. Once the blood of the bullock had been sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, however, that of the goat could and did follow it and was acceptable to God for His purpose.

In past centuries, believing that these ceremonies pictured the death of Christ upon the cross, expositors were forced to the conclusion that this ritual with the goat pictured the same thing as did that with the bullock but from a different aspect. This was, of course, merely an explanation offered to fit the situation. Reasoning back from the New

Testament with our present knowledge concerning the difference between the call of the Church and the hope of the world, a knowledge which the earlier expositors did not possess, it seems clear to us that, just as the offering of the bullock pictured the consecrated offering of Jesus' life between Jordan and Calvary, so the offering of the goat which followed pictured the identical offering of the consecrated life of the corporate Church during this Gospel Age.

The typical ceremony is very fitting here. The goat is a vastly inferior animal to the bullock and in the ceremony its value as an offering would bear no comparison with the bullock, which was the offering *par excellence*. (This is shown by the sentiment expressed in Psa. 51. 19, where the Psalmist, seeking for a simile to express the superiority of man's Millennial Age devotion over that of any other time in world history declares ecstatically "Then shall they offer *bullocks* upon thine altar.") Then the goat is said to be a sin-offering for "the people," i.e., all Israel, as distinct from the bullock, which was for Aaron and his house, the priesthood (Lev. 16. 11). In this manner is shown the fact, borne out by New Testament teaching, that the force and influence of Jesus' earthly life and teaching has been effective primarily for the Church, the "Royal Priesthood" and that the world in general, those who know not God, have been largely uninfluenced by it. The time is yet to come, however, when the world *will* come under the influence and power of that life of devotion, but it will be through the medium of the glorified Church and be illustrated to the world by the lives' devotion of the members of that Church. Men will "by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I. Pet. 2. 12). It may be a correct view of the matter, then, to say that just as the life of Jesus has provided a power which has influenced, guided and vitalised the "Royal Priesthood" of this Age to follow its calling and walk in His footsteps even unto death, so the inspiration and example of the course of the corporate Church in this Age, following upon the inspiration and example of Christ's life, provides a spiritual power or dynamic which will be a potent force for the reconciliation of all men in the next Age.

In this great offering for sin, therefore; this process by means of which life, with all its possibilities, is offered to God to be used in the world's reconciliation, both Jesus and His church have their respective parts to play. In neither instance does any consideration of the Ransom, the deliverance of mankind from death and the power of the grave, enter into the matter. That is an entirely different aspect of God's plan of salvation, one in which our Lord Himself is the only One, the all-sufficient One, concerned. But after the Ransom has been given,

and the way is open for reconciliation, of "making atonement," to commence, then appears the sphere in which the Sin-offering can operate. The fruits of the earthly life of Jesus, freely bestowed upon His Church to guide them to reconciliation with God, and then, added to that, the fruits of the earthly lives of His consecrated followers freely bestowed upon the world to guide them to reconciliation with God, will be universally evident in that day when all the sin that is in all the world will be as it were loaded up and removed far away from the habitation of men so that it can never return.

That aspect of the subject lies beyond the scope of this study. Man is not fully reconciled to God until all sin has been literally removed, until it can truthfully be said "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103. 12). And that is not true in history until the end of the Millennial Age. The consuming of sin-offerings upon the altar ends with the close of the Gospel Age, and after that time there is no more any sprinkling of blood upon the antitypical "mercy-seat." The "bullock for a sin-offering" and the "goat for a sin-offering" will have been offered and consumed, and there then only remains to be accomplished the literal removal of sin from the hearts and lives of men, by the writing of Divine law in their hearts and their intelligent conversion from sin and reconciliation to God, which is the purpose and the object of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

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The sudden end of the war has left us with a relatively large stock of two pamphlets topical to war conditions—"Will there be Wars for Ever?" and "Heaven's Pacific Charter." These two pamphlets will lose some of their appeal as the immediate memory of war fades into the background, and it would seem desirable therefore that a special attempt be made to use them profitably at the present time. For the next two months, therefore, these two pamphlets, Nos. 13 and 17, are offered at the special rate of 5/- per 100 or £2 for 1,000, carriage paid, instead of the normal price of 12/6 per 100, and it is hoped that this opportunity will be taken by readers who find these 12-page pamphlets useful in their endeavours to spread the Good News. Please order by number.

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The friends at Warrington announce the usual Easter Convention, to be held as is customary in St. John's Hall, Wilderspool Causeway, Grappenhall, Warrington. Intending visitors are requested to apply for accommodation at as early a date as possible to Bro. D. Stanley, 42, Euclid Avenue, Grappenhall Road, Warrington.

# The Memorial: WHAT IT MEANS TO US

An Exhortation for the Consecrated

*"This do in remembrance of me."*

*"I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto me."*

All Christians should commemorate with deep devotion the anniversary of our Lord's death. To those who have been taught the deep things of God there is more than the remembrance of this event, there is a wondrous privilege. It is not only a remembrance of the past, but it is a finger-post to the future.

## A MEMORIAL

An important event in the history of the Israelites was memorialised by some outward ceremony or ritual. This was intended to deepen the impression and to prevent the occurrence from fading from the memory. Too often and too soon the freshness of an experience fades from the mind. This can happen to the actual participants. How much more readily will it happen to non-participants!

It is God's intention that events that will establish in the minds of His people His name and His attributes shall not be forgotten. Accordingly He has issued instructions that will not permit of such forgetfulness. Forgetfulness and ingratitude seem to be marked features of His natural people. Many, many times God rebuked His people through the prophets for these lapses. He repeatedly declared that they had forgotten Him and His ways, and that they were bent on backsliding from Him. For this reason God saw the necessity for constant reminders by outward observance to instil in the minds of the people any prominent feature of His eternal purpose.

## THE PASSOVER AS A MEMORIAL

The feast of the Passover was instituted on such a basis. Here was a mighty and most striking deliverance of God's people by God's power. They must not forget it. (Exodus 12. 24.) An annual ceremony must be established. Thus was the feast of the Passover most carefully outlined by the Creator, together with specific instructions that it should be perpetuated.

Obviously as time passed this feast became a reminder only of some act in remote history. But always linked with this reminder was the name of Jehovah—His greatness and His watchful care for His own. Jehovah's name and His greatness were inseparable from this feast.

*"I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."*

This and similar exhortations were "that they might observe his statutes and keep His laws" (Psalms 105. 45).

With God there is no hidden future—all is known to Him. He saw His son Jesus as the great passover lamb. His plan included that greatest of all deliverances followed by the blessing of all the families of the earth. The human family was to be freed from sin and all its concomitants terminating in death. What a deliverance! Abraham saw it by faith and rejoiced. Joseph, the husband of Mary, had just a glimpse when he was told by God that the child should be named Saviour.

## THE ATTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES

Jesus Himself knew that He was the great Passover Lamb for the world. He tried to convey this thought to His disciples but they were so trammelled with earthly ideas of a Kingdom with great pomp, power and glory that they heeded not His words. Here is a lesson for us. Are we so attached to the affairs of this life that we fail to appreciate all that our Heavenly Father would have us know concerning the Memorial?

When the disciples enquired of the Master where they were to keep the annual Passover He gave them instructions and on the Day of Preparation they had carried out His orders. No other thought, so far as we can gather, was in their minds but the partaking of the legal Passover. Jesus had other intentions. He was about to leave them. His time had come. The Lamb of God was to be slain at the appointed time. He wished to have an intimate, loving, farewell Supper—something for them to remember; something for them to look forward to. They were not aware that they were on the threshold of the greatest event in human history! Illimitable results would follow this act.

The heart of Jesus longed for sympathy, for fellowship and for love. Here were those whom the Father had entrusted to His care; those who constituted the foundation members of the Church. They were united to Him by the closest of bonds, by Divine selection and by Divine love but at this time more like little babes depending upon a natural parent. They looked up to Jesus for all guidance

and all provision. He was their leader, their Chief. He was Messiah: but He was not yet to them what He became later when the Spirit of Truth opened their eyes and enlightened their minds.

Do we see any parallel to-day to this? Are we ignorant of what our Heavenly Father has stated of our relationship to Him and to His dear Son? Is it possible that we see only a reminder of a past event, of the great gift and great sacrifice? If the Memorial is only a reminder of the past and not a stimulus to the future, then we are as the disciples at the First Advent.

#### WHO CAN UNDERSTAND ?

We believe we are nearing the end of this Age. All the called, chosen and faithful of the Lord should be enjoying a deeper insight into the meaning and import of this last meal of our Redeemer with His loved ones. Jesus knew that His disciples would not be able to understand the deep things that He knew and had in His mind. But He longed to convey as much as possible at that time. Symbolism is a powerful means of conveying a profound thought. He must convey to them the understanding that they were to have a share with Him in a great undertaking to establish His Father's name in the earth and to have a part in the great work of blessing all the families of the earth. Further, He must convey to them the fact that to reign with Him they must suffer with Him. His pathway must be their pathway, His suffering must be the precursor of their suffering; His glory would include their ultimate glorification. No human mind can grasp this. Only those begotten of God can do so. This act of begetting is entirely the result of the work of God, consequently it may be said that only those to whom the Father reveals the great truth contained in the Memorial can fully and really enter into its height and depth, its length and breadth.

#### JESUS THE PASSOVER LAMB

It should be understood that the meal partaken of by the Lord and His disciples was not the Passover feast, for it was yet the 14th day of Nisan.\* Feast-day was the 15th. It is not reasonable to think that Jesus would break the law. Luke records that Jesus definitely stated that He would "not eat thereof." If it was not the Passover feast, what was it? Jesus saw Himself as the lamb to be slain. Within a few hours He was to die, therefore He instituted a simple ceremony that would live in their minds because it was of the deepest significance to them. He was chosen and begotten of God; they

\*The Passover lamb was eaten on the 14th; the Feast of the Passover commenced on the 15th and continued until the 21st.—Ed.

were chosen, and later to be begotten of God. He was the Son of God; they were chosen and privileged to be sons of God. They were His brethren; He was their elder brother. How his heart must have yearned over them! How great His desire to do all that He could to help them.

Surely we can see what a very intimate, family atmosphere must have pervaded that sacred, very private, but very far-reaching event. He was to leave them; but He would see them again. A place in heaven He would prepare for them and eventually spend eternity with them. All that He thought and did for them, He thinks and does for us.

When He broke the bread and said, "This is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me,*" followed by the pouring out of the wine and the words, "This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." He uttered great truths that they did not yet understand. The word "remembrance" that He used conveys the thought of "waiting for." What were they to wait for? Soon they would know and then they would continue the memorial feast annually "until He comes." This the faithful followers of the Lord do, and have done for the last nineteen hundred years. Now our hopes are high, for we are nearing the time for His glorious return in power and His first act is to gather together all those who are the chosen and begotten of His Father. In all conditions and circumstances; in peril and in danger; in sickness and in health, this simple feast has been kept.

#### INCREASED LIGHT

Very soon our Heavenly Father rewarded the faithful followers of the Lord by giving a deeper insight into the real significance of the bread and wine. It was the privilege of that faithful servant Paul to reveal the hidden meaning of the symbol used at the Lord's last supper.

There is no evidence that Jesus ate of the bread or drank of the wine—rather the words go to show that He would wait for the time of the establishment of the Kingdom. In simple and expressive language, but with impelling force and power the Apostle demonstrates that we enter into that breaking. When we partake and assimilate the bread, and it becomes part of us, this symbolises that we are one with our Head and united to all other members of that body. Paul in essence says, here is a mystery kept hid from the ages, that Christ is not composed of one person but is composed of many, all of whom become one! Christ is one, but comprises many members. (1. Cor. 12. 12.)

Evidently the great apostle found it necessary to give the foundation of his interpretation of the

symbol used in the memorial and we find him saying "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you". Paul was anxious that his fellow-members should see and know that the partaking of the emblems was more than a reminder of a sacrificial life and work finished at Calvary. For Him, for them and similarly for us it is an entering into a Covenant or agreement with the Lord Jesus and with His Father. Note the words of Jesus and see what a flood of light is thrown upon them by this understanding.

*"And I covenant for you, even as my Father has covenanted for me, a Kingdom."*

Here was a loving intimacy, a sweet fellowship that had never before been extended to members of the human family. Did the disciples appreciate these words when they were spoken? Have we appreciated them as much in the past as we do now? A greater knowledge of our loving Heavenly Father, accompanied by a wider experience of His purpose and way should endear this ceremony to us more and more. Our relationship to our Heavenly Father and to the Lord should be quickened and enhanced.

#### OUR ATTITUDE

Our Father, at this Memorial season, would have us carefully and prayerfully examine our relationship with Him and His purpose. Frequently we quote "Now are we sons of God". How have we become sons? Could we take this relationship of our own volition? Can we attain to this position by demonstrations of faiths or of works? Is it a natural growth or development? John declares it to be a privilege or position given by God (John 1. 12). Paul asserts that only those led by the Spirit of God are His sons. To all those who have the assurance of being sons of God, what an intimate, reverential, homely feeling becomes associated with the partaking of the feast. Our Heavenly Father has invited us to enter into a Divine arrangement; He has provided all that is necessary to enable us to keep ourselves in His love, and guarantees to us that we shall be with Him and the Lord for ever. How hallowed then is this time of remembrance! How grateful we should be to Him who has kept us from falling and promises to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

#### OUR PREPARATION

This knowledge that, by the grace of God, we are in a special relationship to Him; that He has undertaken all on our behalf; that He will never leave us nor forsake us, will not puff us up. If rightly exercised we shall approach this memorial with the

deepest gratitude, with the truest humility, and with the sincerest honesty of heart. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me."*

*"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."*

*"Therefore if a man purge himself from these things (dishonouring to God) he will be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, fit for the Master's use, prepared for every good work."*

If this be the attitude of our heart towards God; towards this time of the Memorial, happy will be our lot! Further, if we fully apprehend what our Father has done for us through the gift of His dear Son and with faith and with gratitude live in harmony with His definite promises, how blessed we shall be as we once more partake of the emblems so lovingly introduced and used by our Head and Elder Brother.

*"For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come."*

#### HIS GUEST CHAMBER

"Where is the Guest Chamber where I may eat?"  
The Lord said unto His own.

What honour was conferred on him who offered  
Him his room!

And thus that room became a hallowed spot  
Where with the twelve He met, a family, to eat and  
drink

Before His Olivet. . . .

I offer Thee my heart, guest chamber too;  
Within its quietness talk Thou with me  
As unto him that leaned upon Thy breast.  
Then I shall find Thou art my HOST become,  
And I—Thy guest instead,  
Partaking of Thy bread and wine which Thou alone  
hast spread;  
And I, with other guests, will follow Thee to  
Olivet. . . .

But, Thou art able still my GUEST to be,  
Come Thou my heart to fill and sanctify this room  
for me.

Let me Thy presence feel;  
So may my heart become a hallowed spot;  
Then in this sacred room I'll hold with Thee, and  
Thou with me,  
The real Communion.

(W.F.F.)

## The Mourning of Hadad-Rimmon

An examination of an interesting passage in Zechariah

*"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son. . . . In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon."* (Zech. 12. 10-11.)

The twelfth chapter of Zechariah's prophecy embraces, when the allusions are understood, one of the most beautiful visions of the establishment of the Kingdom ever penned. The setting is in that time when Israel's restoration is complete, the Ancient Worthies have returned from the grave and assumed control of affairs, the evilly disposed nations of the earth have ranged themselves to do battle against the Holy Land, and God has come out of His place to deliver His ancient people. The last four verses of the chapter describe a great outpouring of the spirit of grace and of supplication upon the people, their turning to God in repentance, and a great mourning which, likened to that of Hadadrimmon, is the occasion for cleansing from sin.

Verse 10 is often misquoted by evangelical Christians "they shall look upon *him* whom they have pierced" and used as a "proof-text" that the Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent will appear to all men in His pre-crucifixion body, exhibiting the wounds inflicted on the Cross. The careful student will realize at once that this is not the meaning of the passage at all. It is God Who is speaking, Who in this chapter declares His intention of defending His people, and says "They shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced." The word for "pierced" is *dakar*, meaning "to thrust through," and alludes to the piercing of the Father's heart by the unfaithfulness and waywardness of His chosen people. "Upon me" is not the happiest translation—"toward me" is much better, the Hebrew word being a proposition signifying motion toward a place, or used of the turning toward a thing. Hence the idea here is that of the people upon whom the spirit of grace and of supplication has been poured turning and looking toward the God Whom they had forsaken.

It is true that in John 19. 37 the Apostle quotes this Scripture in reference to the death of Jesus upon the cross; but he is not quoting it as a prophecy

of that event, but rather as an application of an appropriate Old Testament phrase. The word "*him*" does not appear in the Greek. John's words are "*They shall look unto whom they pierced*" which is a correct Greek translation of the Hebrew text of Zech. 12.

It is with this understanding in mind that we consider this "great mourning as for an only son." It should be noted that although the people "look to *me* whom they have pierced," it is said that they "mourn for *him*, as one mourneth for an only son" (vs. 10). The immediate allusion here is to the rejected shepherd of chap. 11, vs. 13-14, who had been valued by Israel at thirty pieces of silver. (See B.S.M. for June, 1942, "*The Tragedy of Judas*," for a full examination of this passage.) Now in chap. 12 Israel is pictured as having turned toward God, Whom they had pierced in rejecting His shepherd, and mourning for that shepherd as for an only son, a firstborn. The symbolic application to our Lord Jesus is obvious. It would seem that this entire passage refers to that time when restored Israel turns to God, and accepts Jesus Christ as their Saviour and King.

This is where the "mourning of Hadadrimmon" becomes a picture fraught with spiritual meaning once the import of the allusion is understood. Expositors have had a great deal of trouble with this verse; it is usual to suggest that the reference is to that great mourning which took place in Judah upon the death of good King Josiah at the Battle of Megiddo nearly two centuries before Zechariah's day (2 Chron. 35. 24-25). It is surmised that Hadadrimmon must have been the name of the precise spot in the valley of Megiddo where the battle took place, but there is no knowledge of any such place and no evidence that any district or village bearing the name of Hadadrimmon ever existed. Rummaneh, near the site of the ancient Jezreel, is pointed to as having a somewhat similar name, but the similarity is more apparent than real. It is the writer's conviction that the allusion to the mourning of Hadadrimmon has reference to something of much more immediate import to Zechariah's people than the events surrounding King Josiah's death several generations previously. It referred, in short, to the annual commemoration, maintained by

Semitic peoples for over three thousand years, of the death and resurrection of the pagan god Tammuz or Adonis.

What is called the Tammuz-Adonis myth is nearly as old as history. Its influence was widespread over Western Asia, and allusions to it are scattered here and there in the Old Testament. Mothers told the story to their babes and fathers to their sons; how that, in the dim long ago, the youthful god Adonis, as he was known in Palestine and Phoenicia, or Tammuz, as he was called in Babylonia, was slain by a wild boar in a dense forest, and went down into the netherworld, cut off in the bloom of his youth. At his going the world went dark; the sun hid itself, the trees and vegetation withered, and flocks and herds dwindled and died. In the face of this calamity, the goddess Ishtar (Venus), who loved Adonis, descended into the underworld to implore permission for the Divine Son to return to earth. Leave being granted, Adonis was raised to life, the earth bloomed and blossomed forth once more in the power of the new life he brought with him, and there was great rejoicing among the sons of men.

Fantastic and meaningless as the story may appear to be, the serious student cannot help but observe how parallel it runs to the story of One Who, at a much later time in history, truly did suffer a violent death, descend into *Hades*, and was raised again by the Holy Spirit, the Divine power of God, to reappear upon earth bringing new life to men. There is sufficient likeness here to make the subject worthy of exploration.

Once every year, from long before the time of Abraham until the tenth century of our own era—shortly before the time of William the Conqueror—the Babylonians and all the peoples of Canaan held a great "mourning" to commemorate the death of Adonis. In northern Palestine the native tribes—and, alas, many Israelites also—watched for the time (the springtime), when the waters of the river Adonis ran red, due to the red earth of the mountains being washed down to the sea. That, said they, was the blood of the slain god, and immediately the great mourning was raised. Women, their hair streaming behind them, ran about weeping and crying. Images of the dead god were carried in procession and thrown into rivers or into the sea. The shepherds took up their reed pipes and sang their laments over the departed deity, how that with his passing the fields would dry up and wither and their flocks languish and die. In the towns and within the temples ceremonial mourning was instituted, and all the land was given up to the universal lamentation.

Then came a day—usually the sixth day of the ceremony—when the note was changed. *Adonis is not dead—he is risen!* That was the cry which resounded through the streets and across the fields. The citizens decorated their houses and took offerings of flowers and fruit to their temples. The reed pipes of the shepherds played joyful strains and even the lambs and kids seemed to share in the general rejoicing. *He is not dead; he is risen; and now new life will come to us all.* That was the note upon which this pagan festival ended, year by year, on the mountains of Lebanon and in the valleys of Galilee and Megiddo.

And that is why the prophet Zechariah, searching for an illustration fitly to picture that great expression of national sorrow for the tragedy of the past, and national joy for the Lord's resurrection and His return to bring new life to the world, which will arise "in that day," was guided by the Holy Spirit to liken it to the "mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon." *Hadad* is the Aramaic "Adad"—mighty Lord—and *Rimmon* a local name for Adonis. Reference to this name of the god in this same district is made in the story of Naaman the Syrian, who besought Elisha's indulgence when he went into "the house of Rimmon" (2 Kings 5. 18). Ezekiel refers to this same commemoration when in his vision he saw the idolatrous women of Israel "weeping for Tammuz" at the north gate of the temple (Ezek. 8. 14).

Jesus, as a youth, must often have witnessed this festival. He had but to wander a few miles from his home in Nazareth, into the mountains northward, to find Himself surrounded by ruins of pagan temples and relics of ancient faiths. There in those wild districts where Israelite, Phoenician and Syrian had lived side by side for centuries, the old shepherds must have told the boy Jesus the story of Adonis, and pointed to the bright red anemones growing in profusion everywhere, telling Him that they were the drops of blood falling from the dying god. The boy Jesus knew these stories for the fables that they were; but in them He might have seen some foreshadowing of a day soon to come when He Himself was to be taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain (Acts 2. 3) and then, beyond that still, a far-off time when, amidst the rejoicings of all the world, Israel's Messiah would come in glory and power to bring life eternal to a dying and despairing world. And if, in fact, He did one day stand aloof and watch the multitudes wailing and lamenting the death of Adonis, that memory might well have been in His mind when at a later date He said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24. 26).

"And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David . . . the house of Nathan . . . the house of Levi . . . the house of Simeon" (see margin) (Vs. 12-14). This passage is eloquently expressive of the universal character of this mourning. Every family in the whole land shall mourn, and that nation-wide sorrow, ascending to Heaven, will unlock the doors of Heaven's blessings. The prophet seems to have introduced four well-known names as representative of the nation; David, the symbol of the ruling powers "in that day," leading the lamentation: Nathan, as symbolic of the prophetic fraternity, the seers (Nathan was the prophet of King David's time): Levi, the progenitor of Israel's priesthood, and head of the tribe which throughout Israel's history served in the things of God: Simeon, the materialistic, ruthless man of the world, an apt representative of "the people". King, prophets, priests and people, all will join together in this great mourning which at the last is turned into joy when restored, delivered, converted Israel will realise that the long looked for Kingdom has indeed come and that the law of the Lord is about to go forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2. 3). It is then that the concluding verse of this vision has its fulfilment (chap. 13. 1). "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." That fountain is the beginning of the flowing of the river of water of life (Ezek. 47. 1-12; Rev. 22. 1-2) and its blessings come first to the earthly missionary nation, gathered in the Holy Land, and from thence stream out into all the earth.

That is the climax of this great mourning. Just as, in the mourning for Adonis, the people cast away their sackcloth, ceased their lamentation, and came together with singing and rejoicing because the time of life had come, so "in that day," will it be true, in the words of Isaiah, that "the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isa. 51. 11). The day of eternal light shall have come, and "the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Isa. 60. 20.)

This, then is what Zechariah saw, and was inspired to write. In his day, the fulfilment of the golden words was still in the far distant future; nevertheless he knew that it would surely come. The mourning for Adonis has passed with the worship of Adonis into the place of forgotten things. But the purposes of God are working themselves out, and to-day we can see the beginnings of those events which shall culminate in the spectacle of a nation, conscious of

a great peril but conscious also of a great destiny, having its blindness turned away and turning to seek the Lord in sincerity and truth. And in that day there shall be a great mourning in the land, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, but that mourning shall be turned into joy, and in that joy shall all families of the earth have their share, and, like Israel themselves, come to join themselves unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

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What is believed to be the earliest Christian hymn of which the words are recorded is ascribed to Clement of Alexandria (second century). It is a hymn of praise to the Lord Jesus, and the fragment which is preserved, translated and paraphrased into metrical form, reads as follows:—

*"Fisher of men, the blest;  
Out of the world's unrest,  
Out of sin's troubled sea  
Taking us, Lord, to Thee.  
Out of the winds of strife  
With bait of blissful life,  
Drawing Thy nets to shore  
With choicest fish, good store."*

The theme of the hymn is evidently based upon the parable of the dragnet. It was probably realised in the early days, as to-day, that the singing of hymns having a sound scriptural basis is one of the most effective means of teaching and retaining a knowledge of the Truth.

\* \* \* \*

"Yet hath the king devised means, that his banished be not expelled from him" (2 Sam. 14. 14).

This is the principle upon which God has been working from the dawn of history. He is no ruthless autocrat, exercising grim sovereignty over a mass of helpless subjects, choosing some for everlasting bliss and dooming all the remainder to everlasting misery. Neither is He an unapproachable Deity to whom the sufferings and shortcomings of humanity make no appeal. And neither is He a Creator Whose creation has got beyond His control. For reasons too unfathomable for us to understand as yet, God knows that the way of suffering can be made a means to the execution of His ultimate ideal; and although it is not true to say that God is responsible for the world's sin and suffering—for it was man, in the exercise of his own free will and in the light of knowledge of the Divine command, that brought evil into the world—yet God has at all times had the situation firmly in hand and is working steadily to bring back to Himself those who, because of sin, have been banished from Him for a season.

T. Holmes

## “This . . . is . . . New”

The doctrinal background to the  
narrative of the Last Supper

*“And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer . . .”* (Luke 22. 14-15.)

It was with a deep sense of the tragic nature of this Passover feast that Jesus came with His little band of followers to this upper room. It was to be of a character quite different from any that He and they had attended before. The hour appointed for the consummation of His sacrifice had all but come, and He had come up to Jerusalem with that object in view.

Furthermore, the hour of the powers of darkness had also arrived, and He was to be given into their wicked hands. Heretofore none had been able to lay hands on Him, for He said “My hour is not yet come.” But now the situation was to be otherwise. Already the Prince of Darkness had made a breach into the little circle that had accompanied Him to Jerusalem. Apparently disappointed in his Master, in that He had not seized the opportunity of His prophetic ride into Jerusalem to proclaim Himself her king, Judas, in disgust, sought ways and means to wash his hands of such a blundering Leader and Master. His cogitations over these ways and means laid his mind open to a suggestion from one who was watching the fast-developing situation with the most intense interest. “Why don’t you betray Him to the authorities,” suggested the Evil One, “and thus rid the nation of one who disturbs its peace of mind with false hopes?”

The author of the plot was none other than His great adversary, for “the devil . . . put into the heart of Judas Iscariot . . . to betray him . . .” (John 13. 2). Into the unsettled mind of the apostate follower Satan injected the traitorous thought, and because it was not thrown out forthwith, he also himself entered into the unhappy wretch, to take command. “*And Satan entered into Judas . . . and he went away and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might deliver Him unto them. And they were glad and covenanted to give him money . . .*” (Luke 22. 3-5). Taking advantage then of the disaffection of one who could not understand the way of the Lord, Satan first intrudes into his mind an evil thought, then follows that with swift action by entering in himself, obsessing his victim, and taking full command. At such an hour, and against such a target as the Son of God, Satan

would not entrust the work of treachery to any member of his evil staff. Fallen angelic princes might be well able to guide the destinies of nations and peoples throughout the earth (see Dan. 10. 3-20) but they were no match for this hour, and for this sinless victim. Only the mighty “Prince of the Power of the Air” was competent to seize and exploit an opportunity like this, only he, in his own person, could see it through.

Seated at the festal board, Jesus knew what had been done; “*as they were eating Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me*” (Matt. 26. 21). “Is it I, Lord?” was the question that ran round the company, until even the treacherous lips also took it up. “*It is he to whom I shall give a sop.*” Then when Jesus had tendered the morsel to the treacherous soul, “Satan entered into him” again (John 13. 27). Even into the quiet retreat of that upper room the prince of evil had intruded himself, now to take full unbroken control of his dupe, till the victim he was seeking should be slain. That wicked act accomplished, he left Judas to exterminate himself in the flood of penitential misery that overwhelmed his soul.

After Judas, Satan-led, had left the room, Jesus turned to Peter—Peter, the passionate, the impulsive, the ready-tongued!—to tell him that Satan wanted to get hold of him too, to shake him in the sifting-sieve, but . . . “for thee I have prayed”! And that meant so much for this child of storm and sunshine! There was no prayer for the deliberate (though over-borne) betrayer, but there *was* a prayer, of deep solicitude, for the momentarily-overcome denier of the Lord.

Yet, freighted as this occasion was with such tragic things, the faithful Son had come to this hour with “great desire”! There was no shirking or hesitation in His attitude. He had come to this hour to be the “grain of wheat” sown into the soil of His Father’s field, there to die, that men might live because of Him. And so, even in this room, not the weakness of “this” or the wickedness of “that,” could rob Him of His solemn desire to take with them, for the last time until the Kingdom of God should be come, the emblem appropriate to that sacred feast.

Having partaken of the foods provided in the old time-hallowed way, Jesus took a piece of bread, then, after blessing it, passed it to the company,

saying as He did so, "Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me." This was a counterpart, but on a higher plane, to that "eating" upon which they had all been engaged that night. He was to be the true, the real, the intended Paschal Lamb for the whole House of Israel, by means of which the Kingdom of God would come.

After that distribution He took the Cup and blessed it, and as He passed it to the little group His mind went forward to an entirely different line of thought. "This Cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22. 20). Matthew adds another thought; "This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28).

Now, the Paschal Feast was not the occasion for the remission of sins in Israel. The feast associated with their cleansing from sin came much later in the year. The Atonement Day, with its sacrifices and its renewal of the Covenant (Heb. 9. 16-21) was connected with the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) which fell, not in the first month, but in the seventh, year by year, continually. It may seem strange to us that Jesus' mind should run so far forward from that Paschal Feast, with its precise remembrance, to another Feast with such dis-similar associations, did we not know that in that first year of Israelitish history the deliverance from the Egyptian yoke and the inauguration of the Covenant at Mount Sinai were but the beginning and ending of their great redemption experience. The smiting of the first-born was the last blow needed to compel the Egyptians and their many gods to "let My people go". And "go" they did, to be "a people unto Him". Through the Red Sea and the desert wastes to the foot of Sinai the deliverer led them on, and there, the redemption begun by His glittering sword was consummated by His trumpet voice. The "passing-over" was a means to a greater end. That "end" was the Covenant-making with its undertakings on each side. Jehovah consented to be their God; they consented to be His people.

But, in after years that Covenant needed to be purified by blood, and be renewed year by year on their Atonement day (Heb. 9. 18-21). Jesus' words over the Cup are in full keeping with this thought, though on a higher plane. He wanted to teach His loved ones a deep truth in this matter of the Cup.

It was not the custom in Israel for the Covenant blood to be drunk by any one. It was always used for sprinkling; some of it, by the Priest, in the Most Holy Place as a covering for sin; and some of it by the Mediator, later in the day, at the re-

dedication service of the people as they renewed their Covenant with their God (Num. 29. 7-11).

When, in due time, Jesus' blood comes to be used as the blood of the New Covenant it will not be drunk by any one. It will be sprinkled or presented by Himself as the great High Priest in the antitypical Most Holy Place, on behalf of those whom God has invited to make a New Covenant with Him (Jer. 31. 31; Heb. 8. 8-12), in place of that old Covenant which failed through the weakness of the flesh—that is, with the House of Israel and the House of Judah.

The blood of the New Covenant is intended for Israel's cleansing and for ratifying her New Covenant, even though shed so long ago. But—and here the words of Jesus apply—till it is required for its rightful and intended purpose, it is as though it were enchaliced in the Cup from which His first-born companions and followers may drink. Having drunk of this Cup, His blood is then en-veined in them—it is accounted to flow in them throughout their earthly life. Then when their own offering and sacrifice is complete, that blood (that "worth", that "merit", that vitalising thing) is then released and, as it were, returned up into His own hands again to be used according to its first intention and purpose. It is as though Jesus, in the upper room, said to His little flock by these words "I am now about to shed my blood in readiness for the antitypical Atonement Day, and the real Feast of Booths, for this nation's needs, but, as it is now only the beginning of the anti-typical Passover-tide, it is My desire that all of you shall drink of it, and that it shall remain to you, till I am ready to use it in the Age to come for the whole nation's cleansing, and when, after their banishment and subsequent re-gathering to this land, they will have become ready to covenant a New Covenant with their God. And My blood will be the blood that will unite that restored people to its God."

Looking back to that historic night in Egypt we can see that Heaven's last visitation affected one member of each household in a manner altogether different from the rest. Though in a way, all the household were under the blood, only the first-born was in danger of the first-born's fate. Had there been no blood on the lintel of that house, the destroying sword would have entered within, and the fate that was to befall the Egyptian would have befallen the first-born of Israel too. The life of the slain lamb was the price required for the sparing of the first-born's life; and yet, though thus preserved from the agonies of death, that very passing-over separated him away from his family unto the Lord. Spared thus from being cut-off from his family, yet in that

night, he was truly separated from the old home-life to belong exclusively to the Lord.

In later days, Moses reminded Israel that God had said "*all the first-born are mine ; on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast ; mine they shall be ; I am the Lord*" (Num. 3. 13). Again "*for all the first-born among the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast ; on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself*" (Num. 8. 17). The record of this demand is first set out in Exod. 13. 2—a demand made on "*the self-same day that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts*" (Ex. 12. 51).

Here, then, during that fateful night God separated out a first fruits of the nation to be His own possession, many days before He brought the remainder unto Himself at Sinai. Though in the meantime between Egypt and Sinai all the nation's first-borns were exchanged for all the males of Levi (see Num. 3. 11-13), yet the principle of separation remained the same, and when the whole community of the nation came to the holy mount Levi was separated (in the first-born's stead) unto the Lord to be a special channel of the Lord towards Israel. The people separated unto the Lord (as a first-born, Exod. 4. 22), out of all the peoples of the earth, had had its own first-born (or a tribe in lieu thereof) separated out from its own ranks, so that through its services their nation's standing and Covenant might be renewed from year to year.

This is exactly in accord with the principle involved in the words of the Lord to His disciples in the upper room. His mind had gone far forward to the re-establishment of the Covenant conditions between His Father and the re-gathered hosts of Israel, and to the part therein that He Himself must play. But (as has been said) that much-to-be-desired event lay far ahead on the stream of time. It was as if some far-sighted son of Israel could have looked forward to Sinai from some point of the night when the Passover feast was in progress, in his Egyptian hut, and could have said to the first-born of the family that there was something specially important for him in this night's happenings, with regard to the Covenant that then lay so many days ahead.

Jesus was talking to the first nucleus of the first-born class of this Gospel Age. Others have entered into this same privilege (and though of Gentile birth, yet, by faith have gained joint-inheritance in Abraham's seed) and may drink from the Paschal Cup as did those first members of the class. It is

still the blood of the New Covenant which they drink ; of the Millennial Covenant, but till that time is come it is to be taken as the bond of union between Him, whose blood it was (and is) and those in whose bodies it (by drinking) has come to be.

It was a serious thing for Jesus to invite these men (and us) to drink His Covenant blood and thus become the depository of its sacred worth until the time appointed for its primary use. To yield it back to His worthy hands implies that they and we must die, in some special manner, to set it free. It must be a death akin to His own—the kind of death by which He had set it free for its enchainment in the Cup—a death by sacrifice.

Let no one stumble at this conclusion or this privilege, nor interweave or jumble other lines of truth into this. It is our heritage in the truth to separate out things that differ, and see things each in its own light. Jesus's words stand out sharp and clear. First, there is the breaking of the bread in true Paschal form—and Jesus, the true Paschal Lamb, is the One on whom we feed during the darkness of this long Gospel night (1 Cor. 5. 7). And secondly, there is the drinking of the life-blood of the Covenant of the future Day, to be in us the bond that ties us to our Lord in that great work, till the death He has died has claimed us too (Rom. 6. 3-5).

Concerning these two things the words of Jesus are clear and precise ; each line of thought is definite and well emphasised, and thereby He invites us not only to share together the broken loaf of His sinless body, but also to take and hold within ourselves the precious blood—more precious than all the world's finest gold—until He asks us to yield it up again so that therewith He may accomplish His Covenant purposes.

The flight of time brings nearer, with every passing year, that auspicious event ; but even so, not yet is the long Passover night at an end. The great antitypical visitation of the last of the ten plagues upon the oppressors of His Israel people still lies ahead of us.

Till the great deliverance is brought to pass it is still appropriate to take the broken bread and drink the out-poured blood, knowing, the while, that the great consummation is fully assured by His death.

Once more, by the grace of God, it will be our privilege to gather at the table of the Lord, and take again the tokens of His great sacrifice. Let all who see this occasion to be a privilege—a sacred solemn feast before the Lord—look well to themselves that they eat and drink not unworthily.

Let the great truth these emblems represent be well impressed upon heart and mind, and let each child of God come through humbly to that sacred hour to renew his pledge to be dead with his Lord, and to wait patiently till the work of grace in himself shall make him a fit companion for his Lord in the great work He has yet to do for Israel, in the better years to come. Let him appreciate his

"first-born's privileges" to become, with his Lord, the channel of grace, first to re-gathered Israel, and then to a wider world long bound in sin (Rom. 8. 18-22).

Let our participation in the Paschal feast inspire our hopes and feed our assurances concerning the higher Feast of Booths yet to come.

## CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. 3. 35.)

The thought behind this word "propitiation" is that of a means of blotting out sin, not that of conciliating an offended Deity, the idea upon which much erroneous Christian theology has been built. To our English minds this fact does not come so easily as it did to the first readers of Paul's epistle to the Romans, for when their eyes fell upon the word "*hilasterion*", which has been translated "propitiation", they thought instantly of the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and so of Christ as being set forth a "mercy-seat"—a means of covering sin and reconciling man with God.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, several centuries before Christ, the translators were faced with the problem of finding a suitable Greek word to describe the "mercy-seat". They chose "*hilasterion*", which was the word for an altar or other means of offering sacrifices to appease or placate the pagan gods of Greece. This Greek translation, the *Septuagint*, was the one in general use in the time of Paul, and he would naturally use the same term, which is quite correctly translated "propitiation" in English. In a similar fashion, centuries later, the first English translators of the Hebrew Bible adopted "mercy-seat" to express the Hebrew "*kapphoreth*" because, as it is quaintly expressed in one early rendering "There God appeared mercifully unto them; and this was a figure of Christ".

Now "*kapphoreth*" means simply and solely a place of covering, and the "mercy-seat" was so named because the sins of Israel were "covered" by the annual sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering. "*Kaphar*"—to cover—is not used in the sense of putting a roof on a house or a hat on one's head, but it is a word which implies the absolute obliteration of that which is covered. It means, primarily, to paint an object with pitch or bitumen, and is used in reference to an animal that is covered with a shaggy fur, or of the obliteration of writing

by drawing the writing instrument completely over the characters. Here are some examples of its use:—

Gen. 6. 14. "Thou . . . shall *pitch* it (the ark) within and without with pitch."

Isa. 28. 18. "Your covenant with death shall be *disannulled*" (i.e., the written agreement or covenant shall be obliterated).

Prov. 16. 6. "By mercy and truth iniquity is *purged*."

It is this thought of covering, so as to obliterate completely, that lies behind the terms "reconciliation" and "atonement" in the Old Testament, for both these words are translated from "*kaphar*". Thus we have:—

Lev. 8. 15. "To make *reconciliation* upon it" (the brasen altar).

Dan. 9. 24. "To make *reconciliation* for iniquity."

Ezek. 45. 17. "The meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make *reconciliation* for the house of Israel."

Lev. 16. 6. "And Aaron shall . . . make an *atonement*."

Lev. 16. 30. "On that day shall the priest make an *atonement* for you."

Ezek. 16. 23. "When I am *pacified* toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord."

And so God says (Isa. 44. 22) "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud . . . thy sins." When the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the "mercy-seat" on the Day of Atonement he was covering over and obliterating the sins of Israel from the sight of God.

There is perhaps, more of mystic truth than we have recognised in the lines of that familiar hymn:

"The Cross now covers my sins,  
The past is under the blood;  
I'm trusting in Jesus for all,  
My will is the will of my God."

# THE FIRST CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

A glimpse of the Early Christians of Jerusalem

A. O. Hudson

*"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . and all that believed were together, and had all things common . . . and the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common . . . and great grace was upon them all . . . and they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart . . . and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2. 42-47, and 4. 32-33).*

A tremendous spiritual force was born of the enthusiasm and zeal of those first Christian converts. In days of disappointment and disillusion, such as those in which many of us now live, it is difficult to realise what mighty energy resides in the concerted action of a company in which every member is animated by fellow-feeling. "The fellowship of kindred minds" is a real fellowship indeed when those minds are bent toward the realisation of a common ideal, and these early believers had an ideal of the highest and most exhilarating nature to inspire and direct their communal actions. They set out, quite naturally and quite spontaneously, to preach the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, with all that implied both of life and blessing for all mankind "in due time" and a high spiritual calling for those who would in this day and time be joined to this company and serve as "ministers of reconciliation," to become in due time associates of the risen Saviour, joint-heirs with Christ in His Kingdom, and sons of the living God.

That was the driving force behind this wonderful family fellowship of the primitive Church. It drew its inspiration from the apostles' memories of the Last Supper. Up there in the quietness of that upper room their minds had received an impression which could never be effaced. "This do . . . in remembrance of Me." In remembrance of Him! How could they ever forget? The mystic ceremonial of bread and wine had bound them to eternal association with Jesus their Lord, and now that they had seen Him alive after death, were witnesses of His Resurrection, they knew without doubt, as Peter declared thirty-five years afterwards, that they had not followed "cunningly devised fables," but had been actual eye-witnesses of the most tremendous

event in all history. *Christ was risen!* That they knew, and now all the rest would come to pass in due time. He had gone away, but He would surely come again, and even if they in the meantime must sleep awhile in death, He would raise them to be with Him in glory and manifest them with Himself to all the world in that day when the golden visions of the prophets became glorious reality. There was no doubt about it; all was true; the Kingdom would surely come; and now they must cling together as brethren and "tell the whole world these blessed tidings". That was the joyous theme, which engrossed their thoughts and loosened their tongues as they met from one house to another and began to lay the foundations of a Church that is destined to endure to all eternity.

It was in the house of Mary the mother of Mark the evangelist that the Christians first assembled. If tradition be true, it was in that very house that the Last Supper itself had been held. There, just outside the walls of the Old City, remote equally from the Palace of Herod, the residence of the High Priest, and the official quarters of Pilate the Roman governor, the ones and twos stole out of the city gate and gathered to share with each other the joys and hopes of their new found faith. There was much scanning of the Old Testament Scriptures to be undertaken; much listening with shining eyes and eagerly parted lips as the apostles, one after another, expounded the new meaning they now saw in those ancient records. The overshadowing of the Holy Spirit was upon every such gathering, and as the flickering lamps cast their fitful shadows on the walls and the night outside grew dark and quiet, the subdued voices went on and on, telling of the glorious destiny in store for mankind and the mighty work of witnessing to which they themselves had been called.

And then the listeners became conscious of a deeper note. Their calling was not to be that of mere publicists, advertising the King and His Kingdom along purely informative and intellectual lines. They were called to *live* the Kingdom, to show all men by their own pattern of life what the teachings of their Lord could do to a man or woman who is utterly and irrevocably committed to Him. It was that which came so startlingly new to those who so recently had been in bondage to the dead letter of Judaism and its law. This was a personal relationship into which they had entered with their Lord,

and with that close intimacy was bound up the moral obligation, so much more compelling than the "thou shalt not" of the Mosaic Law, to show their love for their Master by putting His precepts into practice.

So it was that, instantaneously, the company of believers became a family. It could not possibly be otherwise. The possessions of each were no longer personal property—they belonged to the family. The necessities of those who were without means at once became the concern of the family, for they were brothers and sisters in Christ. The apostles, the eleven who were known by all to have been the closest attendants on the Lord Jesus, became in a peculiar sense His personal representatives, and quite naturally assumed the position of fathers in the family. The broad lines of the community were drawn out by them, and without any question at all the company of believers accepted the apostles' "doctrine and fellowship". There were no objections; there was no dissension; the spontaneous joy which burst forth from every heart and found expression in the Pentecostal cry "He is risen" became a medium in which the fellowship of the Spirit had its birth and grew to take full possession of the infant Church.

It is in this atmosphere that Christian missionary work is effective. "See how these Christians love one another" said the wondering Tertullian a hundred and fifty years later. The witness of the life is always tenfold more eloquent and convincing than that of the lips. No wonder that of this time it is said "and the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved". This was no arbitrary, Calvinistic act of the Father, selecting individuals here and there and attaching them willy-nilly to the growing community. The family spirit and the missionary enterprise of this band of crusaders made it possible for God to direct into their company those of Jewry whose hearts were already in a waiting attitude before Him, and who would recognise in this new spirit that had come into the world that of which the prophets had spoken. The Lord it was Who added, but the church it was that retained, those who came into the family, saw with their own eyes what Christ had done for these people, and remained to take their place and share in the work that lay before that family.

Little did those early believers dream that life for them was to go on into old age without their realising the fruition of their hopes. In the first rosy flush of the promise "I will come again" they looked for His appearing in the clouds of heaven to take them to be with Him and to set up His Kingdom upon earth, this year, next year perhaps, certainly in the third year. He had gone away, but

He would come again. They knew now, as they had not known before, why He must needs go away. He had suffered and died for them and now in the glory of His resurrection must go to the Father from Whom He had come in order that He might receive the ovation of triumph due to a conqueror. He had overthrown the gates of death and broken down the bars of hell. Satan and all his minions were defeated and now the angels of heaven were acclaiming the One Who beforetime had been pre-eminent amongst them, had laid aside the glory which He had with them before this world was, had been born of a virgin, was found in fashion as a man, manifested the glory of God in the embodiment of human perfection, and at the hands of wicked men had been crucified and slain. He had gone to be seated at the right hand of the Father whilst His disciples were to execute the commission of witnessing to His Name among all the nations. The world was a small place; they would complete that work within the next few years; and then He would come.

So it was that in their annual commemoration of that last meal together they repeated to each other the longing words "Till He come!" It became a solemn ritual among them, a phrase combining within its compass all the faith and all the hope and all the ardent desire that possessed their minds and nerved their hands to action and endurance. "*Till He come*"—surely it will not be long. As each lifted the cup to his lips he realised anew the significance of the action. He was partaking of the blood of his Lord; he had become blood-brother to his Lord; now and for all time he was irrevocably associated with his Lord in the work of reconciliation. "*This cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. . . Drink ye all of it.*" They knew that the Old Covenant was passing away, for it had failed to bring life to man, failed to effect release from the thralldom of sin. The blood of bulls and of goats, offered year by year without ceasing, had given a measure of communion with God and a feeling of peace to Israel, but it had not taken away sin. Moses the Deliverer had brought them out of Egypt and led them to Canaan, where they might live a life of peace and prosperity, but he had not given them everlasting life. And the unbelief of Israel had nullified and made of none effect all the glorious promises which had been told unto the fathers by the prophets. But God had promised a new Covenant, one that would succeed where the old one had failed, one that would take away the stony hearts of all Israel and give them hearts of flesh, one under which every man would know the Lord and sit under his own vine and fig-tree with none to make him afraid. And now

Jesus had told them that in His own Person He was about to make that new Covenant possible by the offering of His life to God just as the blessings of the Old Covenant were made possible by the offering of a sacrificial bullock to God. The day had not come, even when Jesus spoke, for that New Covenant to go into operation. Sin must reign unchecked yet for a season. The stony hearts could not yet be turned into hearts of flesh, nor the pure language be heard on the lips of the people. But the offering had been poured out "for sin" (Isa. 53. 10). For three and a half years had the antitypical bullock lain on the altar, its blood covering the mercy-seat which is in Heaven itself, mute testimony to the loving devotion of that Son who had said "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10. 7). But even with the final consuming of that offering the time had not come. Although those early believers knew it not, sin was to continue yet for another two thousand years the while the offering continued. "Drink ye, all of it" the Master had said. Slowly the realisation filtered into each mind that they, too, were called to devote their lives' best endeavours, their abilities, their talents, their resources, all that they had and were, to this same laying down of life as an offering because of the world's sin and the world's need of reconciliation from that sin.

What wonder then that in after days Paul told them that God had made them "able ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Cor. 3. 6)? They were to stand as representatives and ambassadors of that new order of things which was to be instituted at their Lord's return. More, they themselves were, by their devotion to and association with their Master, to be joined with Him in the grand future work of writing Divine law in the hearts of men. By virtue of this mystic ceremony they had become separated from all that was of the world and were now "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God". They were a company of brethren, looking forward to a life of sacrificial service until their Lord should come, and then to the ministerial duties of that New Covenant under which Israel, and not Israel only, but the whole world of man, are to receive the Divine blessing of life.

So that brave-hearted brotherhood stepped out—into the unknown. It was on the promises of God that they took their stand, and in full assurance of faith that they challenged the world with their witness. It was not long before dark storms began to rage against them—the arrest of Peter and that anxious time when the Church, gathered together, made prayer unceasingly on his behalf (Acts 12);

the trial and martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7); the menace of Saul of Tarsus, and finally, the fearful catastrophe of A.D. 70, when the armies of Rome encompassed Jerusalem and the ageing men and women who had been youths and maidens when Peter preached his Pentecostal sermon hurried quickly out of the doomed city and across Jordan to Pella. They remembered the Master's prophetic words, told them by their fathers in the faith, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Luke 21. 29). And when they returned, Jerusalem was no more. The alien had destroyed the city and the sanctuary, and nothing was ever the same again.

But in the hearts of those whose faith had survived even that crowning disaster there burned still the passionate hope "*He will come again!*" They waited still, and year by year continually, as old age crept upon each one of the fast diminishing brotherhood, they comforted one another with the sure and certain knowledge of the things they had learned in past and happier days, and talked of that Jesus Who had walked with and taught them forty years before. And year by year continually, as they gathered together to keep the feast, shaking hands held the cup, and quavering voices repeated, in tones of certainty and triumph, the thrilling words "*Till He come!*"

---

### BEGIN THE DAY

Begin the day with God!  
He is thy Sun and Day!  
His is the radiance of thy dawn;  
To Him address thy lay.

Sing a new song at morn!  
Join the glad woods and hills;  
Join the fresh winds and seas and plains,  
Join the bright flowers and rills.

Sing thy first song to God!  
Not to thy fellow men;  
Not to the creatures of His hand,  
But to the glorious One.

Take thy first walk with God!  
Let Him go forth with thee;  
By stream, or sea or mountain path,  
Seek still His company.

Thy first transaction be  
With God Himself above;  
So shall thy business prosper well,  
And all thy day be love.

(*Horatius Bonar.*)

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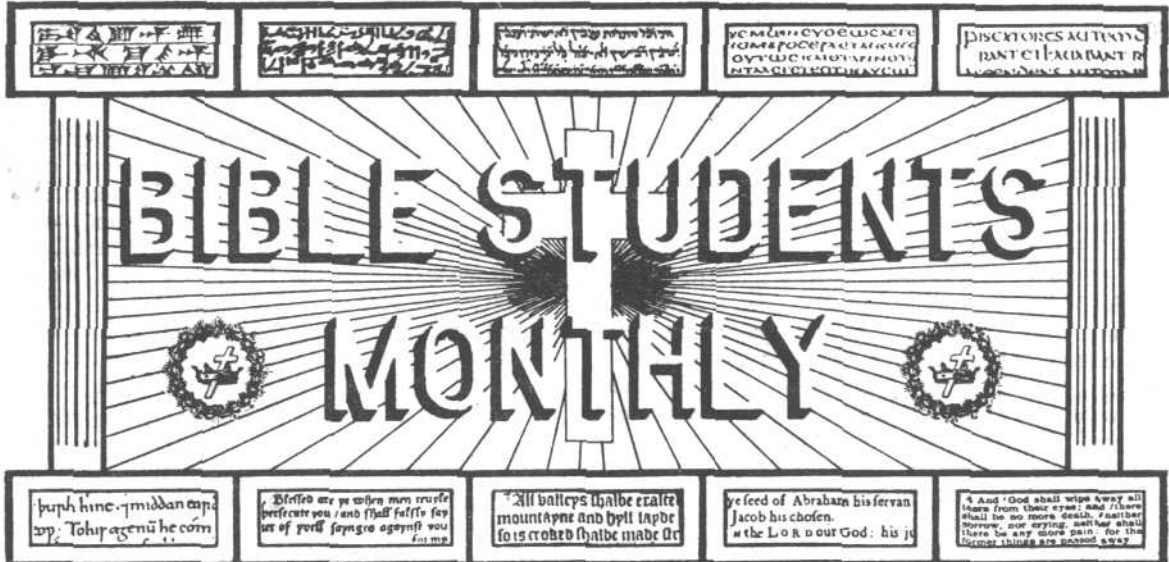
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Requests for the loan of hymnbooks for conventions and robes for baptismal services should also be sent to Bro. Ford.

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## NOTES

On February 23rd last, Brother H. J. Shearn, for many years active in ministry and service, passed away suddenly at his home at Hitchin, Herts. Advancing age had demanded our brother's retirement from close participation in the brethren's activities in recent years, but his interest in and solicitude for the welfare of the friends remained undiminished. Through difficult years his far-sightedness and genius for planning made possible to the friends many facilities for service and fellowship which would otherwise have probably not matured. He took a leading part in the formation of the Bible Students Committee in 1919 and was its Secretary for sixteen years.

The funeral took place at Hitchin on March 5th, Bro. G. A. Ford, of Luton, officiating. Our brother's confidence was that there awaited him a "crown of glory that fadeth not away"; our sympathy and prayers go out to Sister Shearn and the family, who for a season are parted from their loved one.

\* \* \* \*

The sudden passing of Brother David Stanley, of Warrington, at the early age of 49, has left a great gap in the fellowship of the friends there. Our brother was known over a wide area and was universally esteemed for his loving disposition and warmhearted zeal for the service of the brethren. As Secretary of the Warrington friends he worked unceasingly on their behalf and was busy to the last in arrangements for the forthcoming Easter Convention. He will be greatly missed, although we realise that he has but gone to higher fields of service and that in due time his abounding desire to serve his Lord will be more than satisfied in the great work of the future Age.

The funeral was conducted by Bro. L. Shephard, of Manchester, who paid tribute to our brother's sterling qualities and spoke of his faith and belief as respects the hope of the Church and the good designs of our God.

\* \* \* \*

Bro. G. A. Ford wishes to acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, through these columns, the receipt of anonymous donations to the Benevolent Fund of £1 and £2 respectively.

\* \* \* \*

Friends who took note of the Midlands brethren's announcement in our last issue regarding the possible visit of a brother from the Pastoral Bible Institute may now note that the visit will not take place this year. Those who have indicated their interest in the proposal may rest assured that any later developments will be notified them as and when they occur.

Manchester area friends report arrangements for a series of three public meetings at Wigan on May 4th, 11th and 18th, to be widely advertised by leaflets, posters and Press. Following on the recent encouraging effort at Macclesfield the result of this fresh endeavour should be awaited with interest by many. We feel sure that there will be widespread good wishes for the Master's blessing on this proclaiming of the good news of the Kingdom.

\* \* \* \*

It is an accepted fact amongst us that the Scriptures do contain definite guidance respecting the outworking of God's plans and that much of this guidance is given in the form of prophetic views of the future. It is also a generally accepted principle that such prophecy can be understood only as it becomes due for fulfilment. For this reason we need to be constant and careful students of the prophecies, expecting to find previous partial views amplified and modified in the clearer light that comes with the imminence of fulfilment. The pity of it is that discredit has been thrown upon the subject of prophecy by reason of the extreme and often exceedingly crude views and interpretations put forward from various quarters. But this does not invalidate the fact that prophecy, given in old time by holy men moved by the Holy Spirit, is truly intended to be a source of confidence and instruction to us in these days. And at the present time, when the greatest war of history has just terminated and the world faces it knows not what, it is important that we have a consistent and clear expectation of the next steps in the Divine Plan.

With these thoughts in mind, a series of notes on the basis of Scripture prophecy and its interpretation commences in this issue. It is hoped that much prevalent misconception as to the nature of prophecy may be cleared up and the way paved for some thought-provoking expositions of things which have been largely "sealed" in the past.

\* \* \* \*

Attention is drawn to the new styles in which the "Bible Students Hymnal" is now obtainable, as shown in the special announcement on the last page of this issue. It is regretted that the constantly increasing costs of bookbinding make the present prices inevitable, but the new limp cloth gold blocked style has been devised to make at least one style as cheap as possible. The "De Luxe" edition is suitable for gifts.

The new greeting cards now available should also be noted. It is hoped to increase the range and styles of such cards in the near future as supplies become more easily procurable.

# THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

## A. O. Hudson 1. First Principles

It is a principle of Scripture that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1. 21). Although the prophecies of the Bible have been openly derided by sceptics and too often quietly passed over by professing Christians, this truth remains, and unless these passages are accepted as definite predictions of future events a great deal of the Bible is meaningless and much that would be encouraging and instructive in the study of the Divine Plan is worse than useless. It is sometimes suggested that we have no need to do other than accept the prophecies and to believe them, leaving out of consideration the question as to *how* such predictions can be made and recorded in advance of the events to which they refer. The prophecies should be received, it is said, in faith, and God is pleased with such faith. This is true as far as it goes, but it is also true that those who would be "watchers on the walls of Zion" know how the Scripture bids us to be ready always to give "a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3. 15). When all that can be said and written on the subject of prophecy has been said and written, there is and will always remain much scope for the exercise of faith, for its laws and its principles touch things which are certainly far too deep for the human mind to comprehend. At the same time we surely do well to gain such a hold of what the Scriptures do reveal, and what everyday human experience has to show, as to the true nature of this marvellous power of foreseeing future events, that we can at least answer with assurance the gibes of those who may and do say "Prophecy? Who ever heard of such a thing?"

Divine foreknowledge, predestination and election, and the relationship of these to the free will of the individual, are among the deepest of Scriptural themes, and this is generally recognised by students of the Word. An understanding of the principles of prophecy is valuable in the study of these doctrines and indeed the two subjects are closely connected.

It is impossible to read the Bible without observing the prominent place that is occupied by prophecy (using the term, not in its general sense of teaching, but in its specialised sense of foretelling). The earliest prophet, according to the apocryphal books, was Enoch, for he is said to have foretold

the Flood and the doom of the fallen angels. Although the book which bears his name is not in the Bible and is not classed as canonical, Jude, in his epistle, quotes from it and it is a prophecy that he quotes: "*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all . . .*" (Jude 14; 1 Enoch 1. 9). It is an interesting fact that what is probably the earliest prophecy in human history to be recorded is one relating to the coming of Messiah, the representative of God, in the glory of His Kingdom, manifest to all men.

The first strictly Biblical prophecy is the vision of Abraham at the making of the covenant (Gen. 15). Abraham had laid out the covenant sacrifice and was keeping vigil beside it when he beheld a flaming light hovering over the offering, and, entering into a trance-like condition ("an horror of great darkness") he received the supernatural message that told him of the coming Egyptian bondage of his seed and their eventual restoration to their own land "in the fourth generation". That is the first Biblical example we have of what may be called the "prophetic consciousness" and it is the nature of that prophetic consciousness and the varieties of its operation which it is proposed to examine.

Dreams; visions; direct revelation; inspired utterances; all these manifestations of the spirit of prophecy crowd the sacred pages from the history of Abraham onward, and the chain ends only with the last survivor of the twelve apostles, and the last book of the Bible, the majestic allegory which we call the Book of Revelation, the most sublime prophecy of all.

"All Scripture" said Paul "is given by *inbreathing of God*" (2 Tim. 3. 16) and it is thus that His knowledge of things yet to come is communicated to those whose hearts and minds are right before Him. That "inbreathing" is the Holy Spirit, dispensing to every man "severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12. 11) but only to any man in proportion as he is consecrated to the service of God. David was one such man, and David said of himself "*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*" (2 Sam. 23. 2). It is to such that God is able to speak of His plans. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he *revealeth* his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3. 7).

Jesus Himself bids us give attention to these things. "Search the Scriptures", He said to the Pharisees, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me" (John 5. 39). He interpreted the Old Testament prophecies to the disciples. "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." "Blessed . . . they who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" says John the Revelator (Rev. 1. 3). It should be clear to us, then, that the study of prophecy should by no means be ignored, but find its place in every Christian life.

The prophecies of the Bible seem to divide themselves naturally into four main classes. The first class is that to which can be given the name PREDICTION, that is, the plain and straightforward foretelling of events yet future. An example of this is the utterance of Zacharias, recorded in Luke 1. 76-79, in which he foretold the future career of his son, the boy who became known in after years as John the Baptist. At much about the same time the aged Simeon, taking the child Jesus into his arms, predicted that child's future (Luke 2. 26-32). A generation later Agabus, a Christian convert, foretold the coming arrest and imprisonment of Paul (Acts 21. 10-11). And, to go to the other end of the Bible, Balaam, fourteen centuries before Christ, beheld the hosts of Israel pouring into the land and predicted Israel's final triumph at the end of this Age (Num. 24. 15-20).

It is to be noted that those who utter such predictions are themselves already men of God, devoted to His service, with minds continually dwelling upon the things of God. As we would say, they are "consecrated" men. Hence their minds are already, as it were, "tuned in" to the spiritual world and to some extent at least they have regained that ability of direct communion with God which man in his primeval perfection possessed but which was lost at the Fall, when man came under the dominion of sin. Through such channels the Holy Spirit is able to work with greater freedom and hence it is that such men become the recipients of an understanding of the future that is denied to others. The New Testament shows that there were many in the Early Church who possessed this spirit of prophecy but from early Christian literature it would seem that it was rapidly lost after the generation which had known the Apostles passed away.

The second class of prophecy, the one that includes by far the greater part of the prophetic Scriptures, is that which may be called PREVISION, that is, seeing a representation of a future event before it has happened. Such a sight may

be vouchsafed by means of a dream or a vision. It may be a true-to-life view of the event to which it relates or it may be a symbolic representation which needs to be interpreted. The well-known dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh, and of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, are examples of symbolic prevision. A true-to-life drama, depicting things as they actually afterward occurred, might well be hinted at in that impassioned plea of Pilate's wife "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Matt. 27. 19). What strange foreglimpse of the future could it have been that moved the grand-daughter of the Emperor Augustus Cæsar so to entreat her husband? Whatever it was it seems to have filled her pagan heart with terror and to have shown her something of the consequences of Christ's crucifixion.

The true nature of the visions so often described in Scripture is not fully understood, but it is probable that the "appearance" is an impression made on the visual organs by the power of the Holy Spirit without there being any objective reality, any real shape or form before the observer, so that other men might be in the company of the recipient of the vision and yet see nothing themselves. Prophecies given by means of vision and in symbolic form include the visions seen by John and described in the Book of Revelation, and the great Temple with its River and Trees of Life seen by Ezekiel. An instance where the vision affords a true picture of future things is surely the one in which Paul was "caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable things, which it is not possible for a man to relate." (2 Cor. 12. 4 Diag). In this case it seems that Paul received a clear sight of conditions in the third epoch of world history, the one which is to succeed this present Age, and in which evil will be destroyed and its effects undone: the time when Christ's Kingdom on earth and in heaven will be in full operation. Another example may be that view of the future which enabled Jesus to predict the precise manner of Peter's death (John 21. 18).

The third class of prophecy is that which is based, at least in part, upon the prophet's own observation of the world around him and his realisation, from his knowledge of the Divine principles and plans, of the inevitable outcome of the forces which he can see at work. This can be termed "PROPHETIC FORESIGHT". Such a man must needs be a keen observer of world events and maintain an intelligent contact with the affairs of his fellow men besides being a reverent and whole-hearted servant of God. He needs the guidance of the Spirit but he needs also a knowledge of the ways of men. Isaiah and Jeremiah were men of this type, and

many of Jeremiah's prophecies are clearly based upon his knowledge of the result that he saw must follow the course his countrymen were pursuing. When, in the 44th chapter of his book, he assured the Jews that by remaining in Judah they would live safely, but that if they fled into Egypt they would never return, but would die there at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, he was voicing a conviction that must first have come to him in consequence of his study of the political signs and portents, a conviction that was confirmed for him by the working of the Holy Spirit in his mind. Jesus, too, when giving His "end of the Age" prophecy, as recorded in the 21st chapter of Luke's gospel, viewed the world of his day and the temper of men, and spoke as He did speak, knowing that no other ending to a world built upon such principles was possible.

The fourth class of prophecy is best designated "REVELATION" for it deals with those communications which are made by God directly to His servants, and usually by means of a "revealing angel". Of this class is the noteworthy revelation of world history recorded in the 11th and 12th chapters of Daniel, a vivid narrative given to the prophet, and recorded by him, in the fifth century B.C., so strikingly true to subsequent history that its accuracy has been admitted by scholars to this day. We are still witnessing the progressive fulfilment of that amazing account. It is clear that such a revelation of future things, expressed in such definite terms, could have come only from God Himself, Who knows the end from the beginning, and it is in prophecies of this type therefore that the allied subject of Divine foreknowledge comes more prominently to the front.

Behind every manifestation of prophecy, then, there is the mind of God, Who, dwelling in eternity, outside the limits of time and space as those terms are understood by men, sends His thoughts into the time and space confines of our world and our lives, and by means of His Holy Spirit communicates those thoughts to men whose minds have been made receptive. From His standpoint in eternity God views the forward vista of human history and tells men of what is yet to be, "*declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my good pleasure'*" (Isa. 46. 10). Does God predestinate? The Scriptures declare that He does! Has man free will? The Scriptures maintain that he has! We should not rest content until in the pursuit of our studies we begin to see how these things both can be. Paul tells us in Romans 9 that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he might refuse to let Israel go; nay, more, that even for this very purpose He had raised him

up, that His glory and power might be shown by means of him. And who can resist God's will, asks Paul (Rom. 9. 19). And yet . . . to what extent, if any, was the masterful, ruthless Thothmes III, Pharaoh of all Egypt in the fourteenth century B.C., the victim of a compelling force not of himself, leading him on to oppress the Israelites in his land? To what extent can he be relieved of moral responsibility for what happened? These, and many similar questions, can be in fair way of answering when we have attained a clear view of the nature of Scriptural prophecy.

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*This introductory article is intended to outline the subject and awaken interest. Succeeding ones, to appear from time to time, will take up various aspects of the subject as a basis for the more detailed study of the prophecies concerning the "Last Days".*

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"The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1. 3-4.) There is something about the atmosphere of trial which seems to clear the vision of the children of God. In mountain scenery it is in stormy weather that the landscape takes upon herself the greatest beauty, and spiritually our vision is often dim and hazy when the skies are fair, but the day of trial often gives us the loveliest views of God and things Divine. It is in the furnace heated hotter than usual that the form of the Son of God is seen. It is in the fourth watch of the night of toiling that the Lord appears walking majestically upon the sea. God's witness in His word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it, and no attacks made upon it, however fierce or subtle, can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculation to the terra firma of Divine Revelation.

\* \* \* \*

"If my word abide in you." For God's Word to abide in us implies that we have a knowledge of God's Word. This necessitates the studying of the Word of God, that we may know what to pray for. We should not hasten to offer our petitions and make a great mistake, and then say, "I have made a mistake, and have asked for the wrong things." We should consider what the Word of God teaches on this subject, and if anyone has become well acquainted with the Word of God, he should know whether or not he has met the conditions which will sanctify his prayer. It is only after he has come to this position that he may continue to make his request nothing doubting. But very likely he will find that he has not a very large list of petitions that he can present.

T. Holmes

## “When ye come together”

An exhortation to consistency in the Christian profession, based on I Cor. 11. 18

The “coming together” for fellowship of the Corinthian Church was the occasion, very frequently, for the most disorderly conduct and unseemly behaviour. But even so, when the worst has been said that can be said, they were perhaps but little worse than many others of the congregations scattered up and down the land. Only, in their case, we are treated to an eye-witness point of view of their sad condition, by one who had their best interests so much at heart. One commentator has called this Corinthian Church “the Church with the lid off”, because in Paul’s letter to this Church, its congregation stands stripped of all their personal pretensions, only their repulsive realities remain. Sectarian divisions had separated them, each with its own intense preference and hatred; undisguised sin had reared its head—sin such as was not to be found among the heathen at their door—personal disputes, which found their way before the heathen magistrates had arisen in their midst, making the sad scene within the Church a most pitiable one.

Moreover, when the hour of fellowship had come, and the saints in Christ had “come together” to the appointed place, undisciplined individuals, possessing the gift of tongues, would turn the hour appointed for prayer and praise into a babel of confusing sights and sounds; several such being engaged in speech simultaneously, babbling away in unknown tongues, throwing the whole session into hopeless confusion, and laying all the assembly open in the eyes of “the unlearned” and “the believer” to be accounted mad. (1 Cor. 14. 23.)

Again, in the “Agapee”—the Love-feast with which some of these sessions closed—scenes of sheer gluttony and complete intoxication were sometimes seen; scenes, in which the poor and indigent were often put to shame by brethren who had wealth (1 Cor. 11. 22). Altogether these indictments present to our view a most unsatisfactory picture of a Christian Church, and were it not that some true saints were hidden among so much that was corrupt it would be difficult to characterise it as a Church of Christ in any sense.

The Church in Apostolic days has sometimes been styled “the Church of the first Love”—a Church kept pure and unspotted by Apostolic care and oversight. But such a description scarcely tallies with the facts. Censure and reproof is found in every Apostolic writing—not even excepting the letters to

Ephesus and Philippi—a sure token that the human material within each Church was still rough and raw, and still had so much of the way of life brought over from heathen days, or from Jewish insularity incorporated in it. Jewish aloofness and touchiness, Grecian licentiousness and pride, and barbarian brutishness and callousness made a motley mixture of perversity, which, to all human appearance was impossible of amalgamation or unity.

Ostensibly, this patchwork of humanity came together for the purpose of presenting worship to God, and of reminding themselves of what they owed to His Son, who had redeemed them, and for whose return from heaven they had been taught to long and wait. “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven”, Paul told the Thessalonians, and what was true of them was also true of their neighbours in the Corinthian metropolis.

To some degree the God of heaven and earth had superseded their former gods of gold or stone, but unfortunately, the old things had been so deeply impressed, that complete change was most difficult. Their worship at the idol shrine had been sensuous and visible—sights and sounds presented to eye and ear that made strong and deep appeal. Worship in an upper room, or in some school (Acts 19. 9) was shorn of all that sensuous appeal which the wild music of the chant, the gorgeous drapery of the priest and the stately pile of masonry could produce in them. Lacking thus the awe-and-passion-provoking influences which these visibly-seen ceremonial things produced, these ill-assorted companies of “called saints” found it difficult to enter into the spirit of worship concerning the “Spiritual” and “Unseen”. Inability to visualise the Presence of the Invisible led to unbecoming levity and laxity, and set the atmosphere of the “Gathering” on a purely human plane. Their association was mainly after the flesh—that is, in the common things of this earth-life. Paul spake of it as “carnal”—not of necessity vile, or voluptuous, but of a flesh-life lived on the level of a man; eating, drinking, working, thinking within the mere range of the five senses common to man.

Then, further, though they were professing followers and disciples of Christ, they had seemed to think of Him as a man who once trod this earth, and started this selective organisation into which

they had been invited—this Church fellowship—and had then gone away, but who, at some future time, was expected to return to take it to Himself ; but, for the time now present He was away in the far distance of heaven itself, a place far remote from this earth. That He was now possessed of such super-human Personality that, though seated at God's right Hand, He could yet be present in their midst unseen, was a thought they always seemed too earth-bound to grasp. Even those among them possessed of some Spiritual Gift seem to have accounted it to be for phenomenal display, and not as a means to deepen reverence, or intensify adoration for Him they professed to serve. The spirit of true devotion is a state of heart and mind difficult to apprehend at all times—among any people ; and we need not wonder that the brethren of Corinth (that most carnal and commercial city of ancient Greece) failed so grievously to attain thereunto.

Even in our own times, among Bible-respecting peoples, and after nineteen centuries of Christian influence (of various sorts) it is a frame of heart and mind most difficult to apprehend. When our little companies "come together" to the appointed place there are very many factors that may block the way of approach to the Holiest things. If a "comer" thereunto has the "artistic gift", heightened at times with a sense of the lofty and sublime, yet finds in his "coming" that he is ushered into a bare room, unadorned, and without softened lights, the chord of true reverence may, for him, be hard to strike. Or if another of cultured refinement himself, hears ill-chosen words spoken in rough husky tones, it may be a thing impossible for him to respond becomingly in reverential praise. Who of us in these Christian lands knows not the power of some stately Church to subdue the soul, or of the throb of some deep-toned harmonies to hush the senses, and make one step more lightly to some quiet seat, and there lay one's inner self prostrate before the Lofty and the Divine?

Church authorities have traded on this fact in human responsiveness, and have built their stately piles accordingly. But in a cold bare room, or in some public hall, devoted, at other times, to so many secularities, it is not an easy thing, at any time to respond from the "depths".

Our sense of worship has suffered, perhaps, too often from these things, while our attitude towards such occasions may have become merely casual—just a case of being "there" ; just a matter of being one of a company possessing mutual views, and for whom there is some degree of pleasure in hearing or exchanging those views. Or it could be the case that the subject for consideration has become well-trodden ground, and we may feel ourselves so well-

rooted therein, that it fails to arouse enthusiastic gratitude to God, and we would be under no sense of loss had we not been present at the gathering.

It needs here no emphasis to say, both first and last, that our "coming together in the church" should be to worship God. Never should it be to while an hour away, nor yet to be entertained by lofty phrase or cultured utterance. Nor should it be a time exclusively set apart for intensive study, or analytical research. Nor yet should it be an occasion given over to harmonic or melodic song. It is no sin to tell the story of Love Divine in words of rare charm or satisfying beauty, nor yet to find "heart's delight" in the cultured voice as it sets forth the loftier things. Nor is it a crime to analyse the subject with minute care, or make our definitions with exactitude. Indeed, it should be to our mutual pleasure, not less than to our common profit, so to do. The story of Divine Love is worthy, at all times, of our best endeavour. But these things, at their best, are matters of but secondary import—a noble means to a worthier end, and should ever be seen in that secondary light.

An Unseen Presence is in attendance wheresoever His consecrated Saints have "come together in the church". That Unseen Presence alters everything. We do not need to ask how Divinity can project "Itself" into all the assemblies here, there and everywhere. Spiritual sensibility and experience, activated by a "living faith" assures us repeatedly that the "Unseen Presence" is *there* "in the midst". To the spiritually sensitive the "Presence" brings and sets the atmosphere for the holy hour. It casts a sense of sacred calm over the "Gathering", and in the quiet hush the keen susceptibility can feel "It" there. To such "It" seems to lift the hanging folds of a veil, beneath which comes, from the other side a sanctifying influence, or else, from another point of view, it thins the curtain which divides this clinging sensuous world from the ever-brightening realities of that beyond. It makes the place of meeting the very vestibule of heaven itself ; the ante-room of the very Presence-chamber of God, spite of the bare coldness of the room. To the alert and hungry heart this over-powering sense of the Unseen can mean so much more—so extremely and incomparably much more—than lofty dome or intoned chant, or cultured voice or ornate vestments ; it can subdue that heart to rest, and hush it down in reverence more than all other things beside.

And, standing thus invisibly revealed in the midst "It" stands there waiting for the upward reaching of the soul, for the heavenward glancing of the "inner eye" ; and then, within the quiet of that hallowed atmosphere, though words be few, or unspoken altogether, Communion becomes complete.

The yearning spirit, rising from this world of sense, meets and unites with that hallowed Spirit descending from that purer sphere, and in the sanctifying mingling of desire—He with us ; we with Him—we feel ourselves encouraged, enriched, and enlarged. We take from Him new strength and satisfaction for our needs ; He takes from us our Sacrifice of Praise, and presents it enriched with His own Righteousness to Him who dwells in Light unapproachable.

How grievously we often seem to fall short of this "other-worldly" contact in our seasons of "coming together". How easy it is to fail to sense the Atmosphere which that Presence brings ; how lightly we can seem to gravitate to earthly things, and mar the hallowed influence proceeding from the "Sanctifier" Himself. It needs but little more than the thrust and parry of the "keen debate" ; the too-keen intensity of question and reply, then as the passions rise, and the "intellect" takes control, a canopy of earth-born things spreads itself above the scene, and (if we take not care) the link between is snapped, and Communion with Him is at an end. Thenceforth the "study" may proceed, but the Worship may be at an end ; the discussion may be prolonged, but the "Communion" may have ceased. We may, to our best understanding, have defended our abstract truth, but our very exuberance may have dammed the flow of Living Truth. We may have stood defensively for "IT", but have overlooked our need for "HIM"! We may have called upon our memories in defending or defining long-established doctrine, and have forgotten that our needs can be supplied by Him alone.

In the "study" atmosphere one may, by long experience, become established (and even stuck in the rut) ; in the atmosphere of "Communion" the memories are of the heart, and may often be quite outside the range of tabulated doctrine in the realm of Providence, that realm of living experience wherein the Great Dispenser makes provision for the daily needs of every moment of the day—of all who live their lives warmly unto Him ; and from which, of his own accord, no true child of God can afford to absent himself, when opportunity presents.

Thus we may "come together in one place", but oh! how diverse the results. One may come and find communion with his Lord, another may come and find communion only with his brethren! Experience and observation over many years prove that statement true ; broken and ruptured fellowship in many lands is all the evidence we need in support thereof!

What more can one really say? Surely it will be admitted on every hand that every time we "come together" in the Church it should be an occasion

for the most devout worship of our Great God ; an occasion when the veil between earth and heaven can become very thin, and the Light from the other side can filter through into our waiting souls! Ought we not to be more ready (than we often are) to "come together", if we were more surely blessed with the "eye" that can see and sense the "Blessed Presence" in the midst, and if we had a keener hunger of the soul which none but He can satisfy? Could we ever come to think that we were so well-established in the Truth that we could live without this Spirit-knit Communion with our Father and our Lord, and that our need for the "coming together" was not so great or urgent now? Or, if our eye and heart has learned to see Him ever present, who is invisible, could we ever meet our brethren just to become engaged in the thrust and parry of debate, and then depart thinking we had experienced all there was to have?

If, on the other hand, we have learned the secret of "finding Him" behind and above every gathering, then we shall find that lovely thoughts and well-chosen words will add fragrance to the atmosphere, and bring enchantment to the "inner man", and make the occasion sweet as an oasis on a desert road. Lacking the secret of "finding Him" even beautiful words and lovely thoughts can diffuse only an odour of the flesh—mere intellectuality, or gleanings from philosophy.

Let us illustrate. One day, two brethren met in a city street. The previous night had been "the Meeting Night". One had been present, the other had not. "Well, brother," said the absent one, "how did the Meeting go ; did you get any new thought?"

"Indeed, yes", the other replied. "I learned that my Lord was present there with us in that cold, dark hall, and for me, it altered everything. It transformed everything. The hymns we sang were hymns of praise to Him. The prayers we said and sanctioned with our 'Amen' were raised to Him and to our God."

"You learned the Lord was there? Why, of course! that is what the promise says, isn't it? You know—where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst."

"Yes", was the reply, "but those words came alive last night. It is a living text, and a living thought to me now. It was 'new' to have it come alive that way. That thought gripped me all through the night ; it is with me all through to-day ; I can't forget it now."

Good would it be for everyone if this thought could come alive every time we "come together" in the Church! Every word would be spoken as

under His Eye; every word would be heard as though from His Lips, and that would alter everything.

But there is a little more in it than that. This ability to see and sense the Blessed One at all such times is part and parcel of a larger thing. It is only when this sensitivity is part of the whole life that it becomes easy and natural when in the Church. To those who cultivate and practice the Presence of the Lord everywhere, all the time, this is the obvious thing when the hour of fellowship arrives. It is not for them an experience that needs to be conjured up, by effort of the will, but is one that rises spontaneously out of a life of unbroken Companionship, by day and night, with the dearest Object of the desire.

Permit another illustration. Some years ago, after a little group of brethren had been obliged to separate from a former fellowship, one dear Sister made remark, "Well, we came apart from our

brethren to seek something they did not seem to have. But I have not found it yet, that I came out to seek. What more can I do?"

"You have not found 'IT' yet, that you came out to seek?" was the response. "Surely it was not 'IT', but 'HIM' that was the object of your quest. And you must find 'HIM' in your home and in your private life, and then bring your sense of 'HIM' with you as your contribution to our common need." That was enough.

If we seek for "it"—that is, for just a better definition of our creed, we can strive and wrangle our way through life, and still not obtain the best, but if we seek for "Him" behind doctrine, behind experience, behind Providence, behind everything, then we shall find rest to our souls, and salve for every sore. The highest truth is "Him" not merely "IT"—Truth is not an abstract thing—"HE" is "IT". To know this is to know the secret of the Lord in the art and act of fellowship.

### THE POISON WIND

Professor David Brunt, F.R.S., in "*Climate and Human Comfort*" makes an observation which throws an interesting sidelight on the "vehement east wind" of Jonah 4. 8. He says: "If a man is exposed to wind of just over 11 m.p.h., at a temperature of 110 degrees F. and relative humidity 42 per cent., his body temperature can remain normal so long as he sweats at the rate of 2 pints per hour. If he stops sweating, he will thus be exposed to conditions in which radiation and convection heat the body, while there is no evaporative loss of heat from the skin. His body temperature will then rise, and he will die of heat-stroke. This appears to be the explanation of the deaths from the Simoom, the hot dry Poison Wind of Arabia, in which whole parties of men have perished together."

These climatic conditions are just those which are experienced in Mesopotamia. The account in the Book of Jonah states that a "vehement east wind" sprang up, and the sun "beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die." No dweller in the cooler hill country of Palestine could have imagined such a technically accurate incident as this, for there is no "poison wind" in Palestine. This is but one of the many unnoticed details that confirm the historical accuracy of the Book of Jonah.

The Rev. Wigram, who lived in this same locality not many years ago as the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Nestorian Church, adds parallel testimony in his book "*The Cradle of Mankind*" (1936), page 340. He says:

"On the road from Amadia to Mosul in the summer it is often 120 degrees in the shade. By day the heat is very trying, and there is a real danger occasionally of that strange phenomenon, the 'Sam'. This is apparently a very small whirlwind, akin to those which cause the 'dust-devils' common enough in the land at all times, but composed of intensely heated air, flavoured often with sulphurous fumes. A man struck by it simply collapses, and unless prompt attention can be given to him he dies in a few minutes . . . . The natives not unnaturally refer to it as a poison wind. . . . A British Consul has told the writer how on one occasion, turning to speak to his kavass who was riding a few yards behind him, he suddenly felt the hot blast and smelt the sulphurous fumes; while the kavass collapsed, and fell from his horse as if he had been shot."

The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, who travelled these lands in the year 1296 A.D., tells of this same type of wind suffocating sixteen hundred horsemen and five thousand footmen belonging to the King of Kirman (a district of Persia). "Not one escaped", he says, "to carry the tidings to their lord."

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*Soon with Thee in glory seated,  
Fears and trials passed away;  
Looking back to earthly shadows,  
Looking on to endless day;  
I shall see how true and tender  
Was the Hand that led me home,  
Was the Voice that whispered ever  
"Come with Me, My bought one, come."*

## THIS CHRISTIAN WITNESS

*This word of exhortation has been penned by one of the friends concerned in the evangelical activities referred to, and is reproduced here by way of encouragement to others whose thoughts may be tending in this direction.*

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The brethren gathered together in Christian fellowship during the past fifty years have one real bond which unites them in heart appreciation. The beautiful truths gleaned from the pages of Holy Writ have been handed down to them by a noble company of truth lovers who have themselves realised their worth and have passed on the message. All attribute the light enjoyed to the gifts which come from above, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, which guides us into all Truth.

Circumstances in past years have not been favourable to the prosecution of the message of "Glad Tidings which shall be to all people". Christian people have always witnessed to the Lord and to His purposes, and will continue so to do whilst instructed by the Master that this gospel of the Kingdom must be preached throughout the world, till the end, as recorded in Matt. 28. 19 "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." With the realisation that this commandment is being observed by His disciples comes the added appreciation that the witness for Christ is identified with the Lord by confessing His name before men. For many years some of the brethren have been silent in giving public expression of their faith, but now the indications are more clearly manifest that they are being called upon to join hands and hearts in a collective endeavour to manifest to others that they have been brought out of darkness into His marvellous light!

A few brethren in the North-West have been inspired by this realisation to band together and see what might be done to lift up a standard to which those of sincere mind might rally and identify themselves with the Lord's Cause. These efforts have met with signal success and from a small beginning are gradually increasing in support and volume. Every month gives added evidence that the brethren recognise this to be of the Lord and worthy of their best encouragement. We anticipate the gradual re-awakening of that zeal which is peculiar to the people of God. We expect to see manifest amongst ourselves that hall mark of genuine sincerity, the true love of Christian Brotherhood, which characterised the assemblies of Truth fellowship in earlier years. *Such an outlook combines Christian*

*toleration, and the subordination of private opinion, with the more generous expression of unselfish regard to the Household of Faith, and to the good of all. Surely the Spirit of Christ will thus permeate the assemblies, and with it there will cease all rancour and suspicion, and in the place of these works of the flesh, there will be developed the graces of the Spirit.*

The world is in great darkness. Troubles afflict mankind on every side. New and terrible fears beset the path of the unwary. In the very midst of these calamities, and during the change over from the domination of Satan to the rulership of Christ, God's true Witness speaks to humanity, pointing to the rainbow of promise in the storm of human passion and bewilderment.

*The following points may be of some practical value in the consideration of a plan of action. Choose carefully the district where an effective witness is desired. If there are a few friends living in the locality and sympathetic to the project, their active participation in the endeavour will be invaluable. Choose a good hall, not too large but of attractive amenity. Well advertise the meeting with leaflets and large posters. A series of lectures will draw the interested together, and a new study group may result. When fixing the meetings the first two or three need special advertisement. The follow up meetings may well be held in Committee Rooms or the like. This procedure produced the hoped for results at Macclesfield. After four lectures a hall was taken, and a dozen or more friends now meet every Sunday in this way. The group advertises the Sunday lectures in the local news. It is now their ambition to support a public witness in their local nearby village of Bollington.*

There is no reason why this form of activity should not be steadily developed in fields apart, and in the Lord's Providence occasion might be arranged for the meeting in these districts in one combined effort in some town of notable size, and together with the customary gathering in Convention, a Public Meeting could be organised. If a quiet and determined will to do this work for God is maintained there will be scope for much zealous activity. Brothers and sisters will want to do all possible to assist in giving these lectures, in helping at the meetings, and in making known to others that way of life which has brought so much happiness of mind and peace and rest of heart. Surely the evidence of the Lord's blessing on the activities of the consecrated will be an added means of promoting that unity of spirit enjoined by our dear Master.

A. O. Hudson

## The Parable of the Good Samaritan

"A certain man went down to Jericho, and fell among thieves . . ." (Luke 10. 30.)

The simple story stirs the emotions. The lawyer's verdict, given in response to Jesus' question, has been endorsed by countless voices throughout this Age, so much so that the unknown benefactor has become the symbol of neighbourliness and disinterested kindness. Often is the phrase "good Samaritan" used by people who have no idea of its origin. Proof positive is this that deep down in every human heart there lies consciousness that the attitude taken by that traveller on the Jericho road represents the true duty of man.

Who is my neighbour? The story was given that the answer to that question might be thrown out in bold relief. It is the natural question of any man who wants to serve God in God's own way. It is a tacit admission that there is a "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" which ought to influence and guide all human relationships and actions. And this is a right feeling. The plans of God provide for a world in which all men are brothers and each willingly takes upon himself the responsibility of his brethren's welfare. The work of the Millennial Age is to lead men to this appreciation, and it will only be as a man comes willingly and intelligently into harmony with such attitude of mind that the old processes of sin, working in his members, will be destroyed and he receive new, and everlasting, life.

In that day two principles of the Divine Plan will be brought to light and will be written in the hearts of men who respond to the "gospel preaching" of that Age. Both of these principles have been enunciated by the Apostle Paul. Speaking to the Athenians, he said of God "*In him* we live, and move, and have our being" and writing to the Christians at Rome he declared "no man liveth to himself". Both these principles have been rejected by men to-day, and the measure of that rejection, both in the affairs of nations and the lives of individuals, is revealed by the chaotic state into which the world has fallen. Not until men live *in* God and *for* each other will they find the peace, the security and the happiness which is so persistently sought, and so vainly sought, to-day. The attainment of those blessings demands the payment of a price, and that price is assessed in terms of service for one's fellow-men, and no one will find the rest for which his soul longs until he has come to that knowledge and paid that price.

If this is true of the world of mankind in the next Age, the Age which is characterised by God's personal intervention in human affairs, it must also be true of this present Age in so far as the followers of Christ's teachings are concerned. Each one whose life is given to the Lord Christ in consecration is vitally concerned with the principles underlying the story of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus was suddenly confronted with a "lawyer". We must not take the term to mean that this man was a kind of First Century practising solicitor or barrister, such as would be indicated by our present usage of the word "lawyer". It means that he held the position of a "Doctor of the Law", an ecclesiastical distinction which placed him upon a higher level even than that of a Rabbi, and implied that he was qualified to pronounce with authority on matters concerning the laws of God. We are apt also to draw the wrong inference from the statement that he stood up and "tempted" Jesus unless we remember that this word in the New Testament has the significance of "proving" or "testing". It is very clear that this man came forward with the express intention of putting the principles of Christ's teaching to the proof, or as we would say, applying the "acid test", of Mosaic law, to these new and revolutionary tenets which were being advocated by the prophet of Nazareth.

The lawyer may or may not have been sincere in his interrogation; the narrative does not make that aspect of the matter very clear, but the fact that his further questions showed him to be a man amenable to reasonable argument may justify us in concluding that his attitude was that of an ordinarily honest and sincere man who had been brought up and indoctrinated in the elements of the Mosaic law until that law had become the background of his mental processes. This new teaching, perhaps, intrigued and interested him; he was not at all sure how it would work out in practice but if it could be shown as a logical development of the Mosaic code then he would be prepared to give it further consideration.

And Jesus shattered this whole meticulous intellectualism by returning an answer that compelled the lawyer to admit ignorance of one of the principal features of that law in which he, with others, imagined himself to be expertly familiar. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with*

*all thy mind*", said Jesus, "*and thy neighbour as thyself.*" A most familiar passage and one that this Doctor of the Law must have expounded to others times without number. But under the keen gaze of those searching eyes he was compelled to admit his lack of real knowledge. He had to assent to the truth of the answer; he had had his own law, the code in which he trusted, quoted to him; and yet he still had not the enlightenment he sought. *With his mind still bemused by the tortuous arguments with which his training had made him familiar, he tried to steer the conversation into the more familiar channels of debate, and "willing to justify himself", anxious to hold the advantage in argument with this unlearned Nazarene, put the supplementary question in appropriate form for argument. "Who is my neighbour?" he asked.*

Jesus answered that question by telling a story. To what extent the lawyer benefited by this unorthodox method of teaching truth we do not know; certain it is that many of the bystanders, men and women in humbler walks of life, must have gained enlightenment and inspiration thereby. "*Truth, embodied in a tale, may enter in at lowly doors*", wrote Tennyson, and the profound wisdom of that remark is well worthy of serious consideration by those whose privilege and responsibility it is to teach Divine truth . . . .

A certain man went down to Jericho. On the lonely mountainous road which has only recently lost its dangers he was set upon by robbers who, from behind the rocky crags towering high above the winding track, descended silently upon him, robbed him of his possessions and clothes, beat him savagely into unconsciousness, and departed leaving him to die. Travellers were few and far between, and quite possibly before the next one came that way the vultures would have had their feast. But it was not so to be this time. By chance, said Jesus, while *his listeners sat enthralled, there came a certain priest that way, who, when he saw him, passed by on the other side.* The lawyer must have shifted uneasily at this. He was not himself a priest but his interests and theirs lay in the same direction and he was not certain just how far the implied rebuke was going to point to his own self. But he could not but listen as Jesus continued; and Jesus must have put much more detail into the story than is preserved for us in the Gospel narrative. The priest would of course justify himself in his action. The man was probably dead, and he, a priest, must not defile himself by touching a dead body. His consecration to God required that he keep himself ceremonially clean for the Divine service. And perhaps this man had committed some crime for which this was God's retribution, and he

must beware lest by relieving the man's distress he be found to fight against God. So he might have reasoned, as he hurried on his way, casting furtive glances at the beetling crags above him and trusting that the robbers were by now well away from the vicinity.

Not long, perhaps, after the figure of the priest had disappeared in the distance fresh footsteps sounded on the road, and another traveller appeared, proclaiming himself by his dress to be a Levite, a man devoted to the service of God just as was the priest, but in matters that in everyday life did bring him perforce into closer contact with ordinary people. He might quite possibly have been possessed of some degree of medical skill, for that was a not uncommon function of the Levites, and in any case his daily duties would have certainly given him many opportunities of relieving human suffering. At any rate, he did cross the road and stand *over the injured man, looking down upon him.* Here was clearly a case within his own province. The man was a son of Israel, he was afflicted and in distress, and the Levites' traditional duty was to succour and assist the people, among whom they were to have their dwelling and from whom they were to draw their sustenance. His first impulse might have been to render first aid and do something to set the injured man on his journey again, but even if so, other and more selfish counsels came into his mind. The robbers *might still be about* and the longer he stayed in that place the greater was the risk of becoming another victim. His efforts to help the unfortunate traveller would be quite useless in that case. Moreover he had a duty to his own people not to bring himself into a position where he might be rendered physically incapable of *servicing them on his return home*; this man might be an Israelite, and in distress, but he was not of the Levite's own parish, and "*charity begins at home*". After all, the man should have taken precautions against robbery if he intended travelling with possessions in such a notorious place; he should have waited until he could join a company of travellers. A Levite whose profession forbade him to accumulate property could hardly be expected to defend the rights of property in others and the man *had really only got what he deserved.* So he might have thought, unctuously, as he left the unconscious man, with a couple of backward glances, and went his way.

We can be quite sure that the world has never known a better story-teller than Jesus of Nazareth. His listeners must have seen, quite plainly, that desolate road, the unfortunate traveller lying outstretched by the wayside, the pitiless heat of noon-day pouring down on the sun-baked rocks, the still

air hanging lifeless and heavy, and high up in the blue sky, a pair of vultures hovering, waiting their time . . . and then, sharply, breaking the stillness, the "clip-clop" of a donkey picking its way among the stones of the road.

The vultures disappeared; the donkey and his rider came into sight. The newcomer betrayed, by the cast of his features, his non-Jewish blood. He was a Samaritan, a member of that mongrel race which had descended from the Assyrians and Babylonians with which Samaria had been colonised in the days of Sennacherib, the apostate Israelites, the Phoenicians and the Canaanites who had occupied the land during the time of the great captivities. As Jesus came to this part of His story, more than one of His listeners turned and spat on the ground in disgust at mention of the hated name; but they turned back to listen again.

The stranger took in the situation at a glance. Without hesitation he stopped his beast, alighted and went across to the injured man. With a dexterity that betrayed complete familiarity with this kind of thing and revealed that he must have acted thus before, he bound up the man's wounds, pouring in oil and wine, set him upon his own beast, and, supporting him thus as he himself walked beside the donkey, took him to the *khan*, the wayside rest-house halfway between Jerusalem and Jericho. There his interest might well have ended; the man would be safe, and would recover in a few days, and could reasonably be expected to arrange for his own welfare; but no, the Samaritan produced money from his own pocket—the "two pence" were two *denarii*, adequate for several days board and lodging—and gave assurance that he would be responsible for whatever further expenditure was necessary to restore the man to health. And he was not one of the Lord's chosen people! He was not a member of the consecrated nation! He was a man of the world, a Samaritan!

*And this man, says Jesus, is the man that has kept the commandments and is worthy of eternal life.* We miss the whole point of the story if we take it as merely a commendation of the man who does do good works. It is nothing of the kind. The lawyer wanted to know what he must do to gain eternal life; what was the commandment that really mattered; what obligation did this new teaching that Jesus brought propose to lay upon man. The story was the reply, and the lawyer readily saw, as Jesus meant him to see, that the Samaritan was the one who had rightly interpreted every man's duty to his fellowmen and to his God. The men whom Jesus wanted for followers and disciples were to be as this Samaritan—prepared to demonstrate their essential harmony with God Who "so loved

the world that He gave " by rendering such service as they are able to a world in distress, instead of, like the Priest and the Levite, making excuse of their spiritual mission and calling to avert their heads and pass by on the other side. The Samaritan did not stay with the man; having done what he could, he proceeded upon his own business, but he had notwithstanding challenged, and overcome, the powers of evil in the world by working some positive good.

This is the issue before us, the consecrated of to-day. It is so fatally easy to close our eyes to human distress and take refuge behind the knowledge that God has provided the Kingdom work of the Millennial Age to "wipe away tears from off all faces". We know quite certainly that in no event shall we be able to effect any substantial improvement in the world's affairs, and that time and energy spent in the endeavour is worse than wasted. The Scriptures are definite, and so, too, are the signs of the times, that this world is incapable of self-reformation and that its only hope lies in the coming—and the speedy coming—of that Kingdom whose interests we serve and to whose Ruler we are consecrated. But when we have admitted and said all this, there remains the fact, the solid, inescapable fact, that Jesus tells us plainly it was the Samaritan, and not the Priest, who was the true son of God. And we as Christians have to find the way, as the Samaritan found the way, of continuing the work our Lord did on earth, by "doing good to all men as we have opportunity", interweaving this with our supreme mission of undergoing training and preparation both by study and experience for our future commission of world conversion in the days of the Kingdom.

The Samaritan was able to render this good deed and still go about his business. We can do the same, and in the effort find that our sympathetic outlook upon human distress, our closer contact with the infirmities and failings and sorrows of suffering humanity, will of itself shape our characters surely and definitely into the likeness that God desires for us. And this is something which each of the consecrated can do. It is not given to all to expound from the platform, to speak with ready tongue to those who as yet "know not God", to spread abroad the knowledge of the Divine Plan. It is possible for each of us to perform little deeds of kindness, unselfish acts, to be known as one who, being a Christian, interprets that Christianity as did its Founder, in "going about doing good", and so bring glory to His Name more certainly and more whole-heartedly than any amount of platform intellectualism can do.

The "Inn of the Good Samaritan" is still there, on that road between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Travellers still stop there in passing, and perchance stay for the night. Scholars say that there is every reason for thinking that the present inn stands on the site of the one that existed in the time of our Lord, and that that inn must have been well known to the men and women who listened to His story. *The inn is still there; is it a witness and a reminder?* There is no sepulchre of Jesus with marbled or crystal coffin containing His remains to which people may make pilgrimage, and before which they can adore. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem most certainly is not the true site of the garden tomb. Jesus our Lord desires no empty homage of that nature. But the Inn of the Good Samaritan is there, a building and a courtyard upon

which men may gaze, and, gazing, remember the story of old that enshrined the whole teaching of Jesus regarding the duty of His disciples to their fellow men. "*Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me.*" That is the law of the Millennial Age, as we know full well from our understanding of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. It is no less true to-day. We, now, must needs practice that principle in our lives if we are to urge it upon men in the coming Age. We must be able to tell men, in that day, that we did put it into operation now, and, having done so, did find that, even as Jesus said, *this* is the answer to the question "Which is the first and great commandment".



## THE THREE HEBREWS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

A. P. Hudson

A STORY  
FROM THE  
BOOK OF  
DANIEL



The story of the three Hebrews who were cast alive into a fiery furnace on account of their refusal to fall down before a pagan idol is one of the classics of Biblical literature. The miracle is so apparently marvellous that men have not hesitated to put the story down as nothing more than a figurative presentation of Israel's faithfulness to the one true God in all the afflictions suffered at the hands of her Greek and Roman oppressors. But the story in Daniel is older by far than the empires of Greece and Rome. It bears within itself the evidence of its own authenticity. This thing did really happen. These men were really cast into a burning fiery furnace, and did come out unscathed.

The third chapter of Daniel records the story. It does not give any indication as to when it happened. It is probable, however, that this was after Nebuchadnezzar had ended his wars with Egypt and turned to the city-building and other peaceful pursuits which occupied the last twenty years of his reign. In that case it would be after the dream of the great image which had been the means of Daniel's advancement, but before the king's madness. It must have been after Daniel had been elevated to the position of Chief of the Magicians, for only so could he have been exempt himself from the obligation to do homage to the Image.

This third chapter is written in a style quite unlike that of the rest of the book. There is a fulsomeness and exaggeration in the use of words, a grandiloquent and somewhat monotonous repetition of phrases, which is not at all characteristic of the

reverent, straightforward literary style of Daniel. This story reads for all the world like the native Babylonian literature of which so many examples are still in existence. It might be that here we have the Babylonian official record of the happening, originally written in cuneiform characters on a clay tablet, and copied from the official archives by Daniel for incorporation in his book. There is a strong argument here against the assertion of those critics who brand the book as a kind of "historical fiction" written several centuries after Nebuchadnezzar's time.

We do not know the precise nature of this image of gold which the king set up in the plain of Dura. It has been suggested that it was a replica of the metallic image seen previously in the dream which Daniel interpreted. That is improbable—had it been so, the king would have been much more likely to have constructed it of the four metals he saw in that dream; gold, silver, bronze and iron. There is greater reason for thinking that it was an image of Nebuchadnezzar's favourite deity Bel. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus says that there was a golden image of Bel forty feet high in the Temple at Babylon, and Herodotus also mentions a similar image. Such images were usually hollow, for the ancients were experts in casting hollow statues in metal. The sixty cubits height of the Biblical image is equivalent to an English measure of fifty-five feet, all objects in gold being measured by a special cubit of a little under eleven inches, and since the width is given as six cubits, or five

feet six, and the height of a human figure of that width could not exceed about twenty-five feet, it would seem that the figure was placed upon a lofty pedestal so that it could be seen at a distance, and *Daniel records the full height.*

It is thought that the Plain of Dura was on the south side of the city, alongside the river. Such a site for this colossal statue would render it a prominent object to be seen by seamen and travellers as they came up the river from the sea, creating an impression something like that now afforded by the sight of the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York Harbour. In this fashion Bel, the patron deity of Babylon, would be honoured in the eyes of all men in front of his own city. The proclamation to "all peoples, nations and languages" to fall down and worship at the sound of the music must be understood, of course, as *applying only to the vast concourse of people that was attending the ceremony.* Since Babylon always held numbers of people from other nations, gathered there in connection with their trading enterprises, the proclamation was literally true. The sun would be blazing down from the clear sky over a vast crowd including members of almost every known nationality on earth. Native Babylonians, city dwellers and country labourers, would be in the majority; captives from other lands, Jews and Syrians and Elamites, free-roving sons of the desert, Arabs and Sabeans, traders and merchants from Phoenicia and India; an assemblage of black and brown, yellow and white skins; the whole would make a colourful mass of humanity. Near to the image there would be the governmental officials and the various orders of priesthoods, among the former being the three Hebrew men who, according to Dan. 2. 49, had been appointed to positions of authority in the province—*more properly the city—of Babylon.* In all that vast concourse there were two, and two only, who were not expected to bow down when the signal was given. One was Nebuchadnezzar, the Head of the State, and the other was Daniel, the Chief of all the priesthoods and wise men. According to Babylonian mythology, these two men between them represented the heavenly powers, and should not be called upon to participate in an act of obeisance which was incumbent upon all others.

The dedication ceremony proceeded, the herald cried his announcement, and doubtless after a long succession of prayers and incantations in which the *priests of all the leading gods had their parts, the climax of the ritual was reached.* Music rose upon the air and the whole vast concourse, taking its cue from the officials nearest to the image, prostrated in adoration. It must have been a peculiarly gratify-

ing moment for the king, for Nebuchadnezzar is known to have been especially interested in the introduction of public congregational worship amongst his subjects—a thing unknown in previous times.

Three men remained standing—three men who, although high in rank in the national government, would neither serve that country's gods nor worship the image the king had set up. It is evident that *their defection had passed unnoticed by the king—three men in that vast assembly could easily have gone unperceived—but others were on the watch.* Some of the Chaldeans, men of the priestly caste, jealous of these three Jews' position and resentful of their scorn of the Chaldeans' gods, saw that this was their opportunity and quickly acquainted the king with the facts. It is noteworthy that they added a crime which was not included in the herald's announcement. "*They serve not thy gods . . .*" It is here that we perceive evidence of the king's growing pride and arrogance, which later was to plunge him into such terrible humiliation. He would brook no opposition to his demands, and, we read, "*the form of his visage was changed*" against these three who had dared to flout his will.

It is not necessary to assume that the dedication ceremony was broken off whilst the three men were being dealt with. Probably the complaint itself was made when the ceremony was over and the crowds were beginning to disperse. The complainants could hardly have left their places to accost the king at a time when he was the central figure in an important religious ritual. We can imagine, therefore, the subsequent scenes being enacted within a smaller circle composed of Court officials, priests and the military guards.

The option was brutal. The three Hebrews could either bow down and worship at the sound of the music, or be cast alive into the furnace. "*And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*" (Vs. 15.) The passionate and ungovernable nature of the king is well displayed in these few verses. By contrast the calm declaration of the threatened men is inspiring. "*We are not careful (i.e., we are not possessed by anxiety) to answer thee over this matter.*" If God wills to deliver us, He will do so; and if He wills not to deliver, we are His servants. We will not worship.

So they were bound in all their official robes and insignia of office and cast immediately into the burning fiery furnace; and the heat thereof was so great that the men who cast them in themselves died from the flames and heat to which they had perforce exposed themselves.

This furnace was evidently one that was normally used for the smelting of iron or copper from crude

ore, differing very little from a modern blast furnace. The extraction and working of metal goes back very far in the history of man, the Bible telling us that it was practised by the antediluvians, for Tubal-cain, of the race of Cain, in the eighth generation from Adam, was the first man to work in copper and iron (Gen. 4. 22). The blast furnace, in which metallic ore is smelted by intense heat in order to extract the pure metal, is a very old invention and relics of such furnaces dating back two, three or four thousand years have been found in Mesopotamia and India, and were evidently in use in Egypt, for they are depicted on certain tomb wall paintings there. Reference to Egyptian blast furnaces is made in three places in the Old Testament (Deut. 4. 20 ; 1 Kings 8. 51 ; Jer. 11. 4).

Such furnaces were built of thick brick walls faced with clay treated so as to withstand the intense heat, with an opening at the top through which the flames and heat escaped, and another opening at the bottom closed by a door, through which the molten metal ran out into prepared moulds, and the clinker and refuse could be periodically removed. Huge bellows worked by a number of men provided a forced air draught to maintain the high temperature. The fuel used was charcoal, or more probably coal, for timber was not plentiful in the Euphrates plains, whilst coal was, and is still, easily worked from surface seams in the northern mountains.

An indication of the extent to which such furnaces were then in use is afforded by the fact that when Khorsabad, a suburb of Nineveh, was excavated during the nineteenth century, a stock of one hundred and fifty tons of iron ingots ready for working up into articles of commerce was discovered. They had lain there since the destruction of Nineveh, just before Nebuchadnezzar's own day. There is in existence also a clay tablet invoice from an unknown Babylonian blacksmith of several centuries before Abraham, setting out his account for the forging of certain bronze weapons.

The accuracy of the narrative is very striking here. The furnace was heated to seven times its usual heat. One can picture the bellows men straining at their levers and blowing up the white-hot mass to a temperature far exceeding the usual. From the top of the furnace, probably fifteen or twenty feet above the ground, the flames streamed out with a deafening blast. The Scripture says "they fell down bound into the midst of the furnace". They were carried up to the platform around the top and thrown into the yawning opening, falling down to the bed of burning fuel beneath. But, say our translators rather quaintly, "*because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men*"

who cast them in. Either they were overcome by the excessive heat at the furnace mouth, and fell in after their victims and were destroyed, or, what is perhaps more likely, the flames as they streamed out ignited their clothing and they were burned to death before help could be brought.

The lower door had evidently been opened and the king had stationed himself at a respectful distance in order to observe the execution of his sentence. What he did see gravely disturbed him and he rose up from his seat in some agitation. He had expected to watch three bound bodies fall into the fire from above and be quickly consumed. He saw, instead, four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire—and, said he in a hushed voice to his courtiers, who evidently were not placed so that they too could see into the furnace "*the form of the fourth is like to a son of the gods*".

It is a pity that our translators rebelled at this piece of unadulterated paganism and rendered the phrase "the Son of God", using capital letters into the bargain, so that the English reader instinctively thinks of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and pictures His presence with the three Hebrews in the fire. Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing of Jesus Christ—and, at that time, very little of the true God. The Hebrew phrase is "a son of the gods" and by this term the king meant one of those guardian spirits in Babylonian mythology who were thought to be the special messengers of the gods in their dealings with men. No wonder that he was awe-stricken. The very action by which he had sought to demonstrate his personal loyalty to the gods had been reproved by them, and a special messenger sent to preserve alive the three men he had condemned to a cruel death. That was the interpretation King Nebuchadnezzar must have placed upon this amazing happening. And in a swift revulsion of feeling he called to the three men to come forth from the furnace. So they came forth, climbing out through the open door as though no furnace raged within, and stepped to where the king stood, without so much as the hair of their heads singed, or the smell of fire upon them (Vs. 27).

How the story must have run like wildfire through the Jewish communities in Babylon and at Tel-Abib, fifty miles to the south, where the prophet Ezekiel was still conducting his own mission. What a wave of renewed confidence must have swept over the exiles as this great manifestation of the power of their God was added to the signs and wonders which had gone before. The king's decree must have followed very quickly, proclaiming penalties upon any who spoke against the Most High God, the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, for, said the decree somewhat wonderingly "*there*"

*is no other God that can deliver after this sort"* (Vs. 29).

At just about the same time that this stirring incident was being enacted, or at most but a few years later, Ezekiel, by the river of Chebar fifty miles away, was seeing that glorious vision of the Millennial Kingdom so wonderfully symbolised in the description of the great Temple with its river and trees of life (Ezek., chaps. 40-48). There is something very fitting in this contrast between the massive image, symbol of the pomp and majesty of this world and its false gods, with all men bowed down before it in abject homage, and the saintly prophet of God, quietly sitting upon his mountain, viewing the calm beauty of that coming Kingdom which shall never pass away or be destroyed. The image of Bel has long since crumbled into dust and been forgotten and no man now knows what it was like, but the glowing words of the prophet live on, and before our mental vision there stands out plainly the vista of that fair city whose name shall be "The Lord is there" (Ezek. 38. 45). "*So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but the name of the righteous shall endure for ever.*"

There is a New Testament parallel to this story. It is enshrined in the imagery of the Book of Revelation, where the seer tells of the whole world united in the worship of another image, the "Image of the Beast". All who do not worship the image, he hears, are to be put to death. The only ones to refrain from such worship are the "servants of God", who have been "sealed in their foreheads". In the outcome, as in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is intervention from Heaven. A Rider upon a white horse comes forth and gives battle to all the powers of evil, and the Image, now branded a False Prophet in the eyes of all men (compare Rev. 13. 14-16 with Rev. 19. 20) is cast into the fiery lake and destroyed. There are various detailed interpretations of all this symbolism but the main tenor of the vision is commonly agreed. In the end of the Age there will arise to challenge the incoming Kingdom of God a final and supreme system of power to which nearly all the world will ignorantly give support, the only exceptions being those who have been "sealed" with an intelligent understanding of the Divine Plan, particularly as regards the significance of these events, and who are earnest and devoted disciples of the Master. These will pass through fiery experiences and may suffer loss and even death but even so will emerge spiritually unscathed. And in the next scene they are shown as riding forth behind their Leader and Captain to establish upon the ruins of that system of which the Image has been the head a new one based upon love and righteousness, speak-

ing peace to the people and ruling the nations with a shepherding rod. The final defeat of the enemies of righteousness at the end of this Age is shown here, and we can as readily accept the assurance of Divine intervention in the world's extremity at this time as the fact of Divine intervention on that momentous day in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar.

"*At that time*", says Daniel (12. 1), "*shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation . . . and at that time thy people shall be delivered.*" Daniel's reference clearly is to Israel's expected King Messiah, standing up for the overthrow of all evil and the restoration of Daniel's people, and finds its fulfilment in the long promised Second Advent of Jesus Christ, in the midst of a great time of trouble "such as was not since there was a nation". Jesus used the same expression when Himself talking about His Second Coming. There may be some very definite prophetic truth, therefore, in that sight that met the startled eyes of the Babylonian king. There may—nay, will—come a time in the final phase of this great distress which is now upon all nations when the great men of the world, the kings, politicians, financiers, industrialists, confident that they have given the final death blow to those forces that are heralding the New Order of Christ's Kingdom, will say "Did not we cast *three men bound* into the midst of the fire?" And the multitudes, submissive as ever, will reply, "True, O King". Then will those kings and politicians and financiers and industrialists tremble exceedingly as they look into that fiery furnace of the world's trouble and they will say "Lo, we see *four men, loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God*".

And at that breathless moment in the world's history the kingdoms of this world will pass under the sovereignty "of our Lord, and of His Christ", and men will know without any possibility of dispute that the Son of God has returned in the glory of His Kingdom.

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A Whitsuntide Convention will be held, D.V., on Saturday and Sunday, June 8th and 9th, in the Large School Room, Digbeth Institute, Digbeth, Birmingham, near bus terminus and main line stations. This gathering is convened by the Midlands Group, comprising Leicester, Rugby, Blaby, Coventry, Warwick and Birmingham. For programmes and information please write Bro. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, and for accommodation, please write *early* to Bro. H. W. Burge, 46, Tillingham Street, Birmingham 12.

# Balaam and the Arab Question

Light on the last days from a seer's vision of old

*"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of tumult. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession of his enemies, and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city."* (Num. 24. 17-19.)

These dark sayings, uttered so long ago, are beginning to have their fulfilment to-day, for the Arabs who are causing so much trouble in the Holy Land at the present time are the modern counterparts of Moab and Edom. Balaam was a seer, and the narrative in Numbers 24 leaves no room for doubt that he saw, in vision, the things that he described in such tense words. As he lifted up his eyes at the behest of Balak, King of Moab, and beheld the host of Israel encamped in the plain, intent upon their purpose of going forward into the land which God had promised them, the Spirit of God came upon him and the scene changed into one which was not to be enacted in reality for another thirty-four centuries. He saw that same land, but he saw it as it appears to us to-day. Balak and his followers, Moses and his hosts, were there no longer. Instead he saw the modern descendants of those people and he saw that the same conflict between them was still proceeding, and with that superhuman sight which is the special gift of the prophets he saw also an irresistible tide arising from the four corners of the earth, the people of Israel, coming from all quarters to take possession of their inheritance. And above the advancing host he saw a star, arising for the blessing of Israel and the destruction of Israel's enemies, and below the star a sceptre, a ruling authority that would assume control and confirm Israel in the possession of his own land. After these things, most awe-inspiring sight of all, he beheld the arising of One "Whose right it is" to take the dominion and rule in righteousness over all the earth for ever and ever.

The vision of Balaam still belongs to future times; the very near future, we hope and believe, but future nevertheless. We do well, though, to watch passing events in the "Land of Promise" and note the beginnings of fulfilment. The present Arab opposition to Jewish development in the land has a direct connection with that portion of the prophecy

which is quoted above, and we can take confidence for the future outcome of the existing situation by realising what it was that Balaam saw on that memorable day over three thousand years ago.

The kings of the countries around Canaan at the time of the Exodus, the kings of Edom, of Moab, of the Amorites, of Ammon and of Bashan, were all apprehensive of the new power that had come into their vicinity. Israel did not really threaten their existence, for their lands lay outside the territory promised to Israel, but all the same they were determined to prevent the passage of the Israelites to the latter's own inheritance. Notwithstanding that opposition, Israel passed them by and ultimately gained possession of the Promised Land. And the significant thing is this, that the Amorites and the inhabitants of Bashan, who were not of their own race, were fought and overcome, whereas the Edomites, who were of kin to Israel through their progenitor Esau, were not embroiled in conflict with Israel. Upon the refusal of the Edomites to allow the newcomers passage through their territory the Israelites turned aside and attained their objective by another route. Moses' acknowledgment of the relationship is remarkable. Writing to the king of Edom, he said "*Thus saith thy brother Israel, 'thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us' . . . but Edom replied 'Thou shalt not come by me, lest (or else) I come out against thee with the sword'*" (Num. 24. 14-18). It is evident therefore that Israel was peaceably disposed although these feelings were not shared by Edom.

History repeats itself. The peoples of the lands around Palestine have formed themselves into an "Arab League", a federation of all the self-governing Arab states of the Middle East. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are members of this federation, the principal object of which is to consolidate Arab power over the whole of the Middle East. Palestine alone is outside the League. Although the land is not yet a self-governing state, it is the strategic centre of the whole territory covered by the League and until it too is included the Arab States will not rest. Even were there no Jews in Palestine, the demand for its incorporation into the federation would remain, and with it an insistence that non-Arab Powers should cease to administer or control the land.

But the immigration of the Jews and the development of the land as a Jewish National Home is a serious impediment to Arab plans, and if continued will frustrate their schemes. Therefore, like their progenitors of old, the Arabs are determined to refuse passage to Israel, and will resort to any means by which they can implement that refusal. The happenings of recent years, and the vacillating policies of the great Powers at present responsible for, and interested in, Palestine, show how apparently serious is the threat to Jewish hopes.

At this juncture we may turn to the foreview of this day which was granted to Balaam. We can visualise only dimly the things which he described, yet what we do learn from his words should give us encouragement. He saw Israel faced with this apparently hopeless checkmate to their onward passage, and he saw a "*Star arise out of Jacob, and a Sceptre out of Israel*", to "*smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult*". ("Sheth" should not have been translated as a proper name.) The emergence of a star, in such a connection, signifies the appearance of a new power exercising influence on human affairs, as in the case of the "star in the east" which heralded the birth of Jesus. The sceptre signifies visible ruling power, and in Balaam's foreview came prior to the appearance of "he that shall have dominion". Is it possible that the prophet here speaks of that event which takes place before the ending of the Time of Trouble and before Israel's troubles are finally settled, the restoration of the Ancient Worthies? From Zech. 12. 5-6 it seems that these men must be installed in power before the final onslaught on the "land of unwalled villages" which is generally referred to as Jacob's Trouble. The expression "sons of tumult" fitly describes the Arabs of to-day, and the Trans-Jordan Arabs, who occupy the land which was formerly Moab, are among the Jews' bitterest enemies.

The result of this appearance of a Sceptre is that "*Edom shall be a possession, and Seir*". The territory of the adversaries passes under the control of Israel! This is to be expected when it is remembered that the land promised to Abraham was to extend from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, west to east, and from Lebanon to the Arabian desert, north to south, thereby covering a considerable portion of the territory of the present Arab League. It may be, then, that such an extension of the land will come about under the rule of the Ancient Worthies before the Kingdom is established.

Lastly comes "*he that shall have dominion*" to destroy "*him that remaineth of the city*" (walled or fortified place). This must surely refer to the

taking of kingly power by the Lord Jesus and the time when He reigns "in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously" (Isa. 24. 23). The great invasion of the hosts of Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38) is to be frustrated by God "coming out of his place" and hence we can well apply this phrase of Balaam's to that same event, the destruction of the last remnant of this "fortified place", the citadel of evil of this world and Age. From then on, Israel shall dwell safely.

From this prevision of the prophet, then, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the "Arab question" will only be finally solved by the emergence of that new power in the Holy Land which is associated with the rule of the Ancient Worthies. Their appearance in Israel must be well before the Time of Trouble has run its course for they will have taken control by the time that the hosts of Gog and Magog commence their onslaught. Is it too much to expect that when the common ancestors of Israelite and Arab reappear in the midst of their descendants, and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob look upon their contending children, there will be a solution to this vexed question which is quite outside the range of practical things to-day? It was promised that Ishmael also should become a "great nation" and that he should dwell "in the presence of his brethren". Perhaps what all the worldly diplomacy of the Great Powers cannot do, one or two men, restored from the grave, will do very quickly. Thus the way might be cleared for the final conflict in which the forces of the North are concerned, the sequel to which is the Kingdom.

It is noteworthy that the catalogue of Israel's enemies at that last day, as given in Ezek. 38, does not include the Arab nations. That fact at least would seem to indicate that at that late hour the "Arab question" is a question no longer.

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"He answered all my prayer abundantly,  
 And crowned the work that I had brought,  
 With blessing more than I had thought—  
 A blessing undisguised, and fair, and free.  
 I stood amazed and whispered, Can it be  
 That He hath granted all the boon I sought?  
 How wonderful that He for me hath wrought.  
 How wonderful that He hath answered me.  
 O faithless heart. He said that He would hear  
 And answer thy poor prayer, and He hath heard  
 And proved His promise. Wherefore didst thou fear?  
 Why marvel that thy Lord hath kept his Word?  
 More wonderful if He should fail to bless  
 Expectant faith and prayer with good success!"

## THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

Words of Jesus illumined by the Old Testament

A. O. Hudson

*"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* (Matt. 16. 19.)

Strange words, seemingly giving to Peter greater power than has ever at any time been given to any other man! What was it that Jesus saw in this simple fisherman which led Him to repose such confidence in Him? What was the nature of that commission whose terms extend beyond this earth and its span of time into the heavens and into eternity?

There is evidently some connection between these words and those given by the resurrected Jesus to John on the island of Patmos. *"These things saith he that hath the key of David; he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."* (Rev. 3. 7.) There is an air of finality about these words which marks them as having reference to some very decisive aspect of the Divine Plan, and that the kingly power of Jesus is involved is very evident. Fully to understand the allusion, however, it is necessary to go back to the Old Testament, and it is in the eloquent words of Isaiah that we find the source of this theme.

In Isaiah's twenty-second chapter the prophet speaks of one Shebna, who is treasurer over the royal house and therefore responsible to the king for the welfare of the nation. He is an unfaithful steward, for he has sought his own advantage, and that of his personal friends, to the detriment of the people and the national welfare. On this account the prophet is commissioned to pronounce Divine judgment upon him. His office is to be taken away and given to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who will be a true father to Jerusalem and Judah, and discharge the duties of the office faithfully. On the shoulder of this man is to be laid the key of the house of David, so that he shall open, and none shut; and he shut, and none open. Here then is the prophecy which gave inspiration for our Lord's words to Peter and those concerning himself.

Shebna and Eliakim are known to history only as Court officials in the time of King Hezekiah (2 Kings 18. 18-37). They were probably men of some note during Isaiah's life but their only place in Divine revelation was that of actors in a drama which was to be a foreview of a greater thing. One

chapter in Isaiah's writings tells us all we need to know about them. Six verses of that chapter are sufficient for our immediate purpose. *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David I will lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place: and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off; for the Lord hath spoken it."* (Isa. 22. 20-25.)

The "key of the house of David" is obviously the Divine authority vested in the royal line of David. The Davidic dynasty was the only one recognised by God as enjoying the right to rule on the "throne of the Lord" in Jerusalem over Israel. David was promised that he would "never want a man to rule over Israel"; i.e., the Davidic line would never become extinct and God would never recognise a king of any other line. True to all this, Jesus Christ, Who is to be the King of all the earth during the Millennial Age, was of the line of David. And Israel was the chosen people of God, made so that they might be His missionaries to all nations when the time comes. Hence the man upon whose shoulders was placed the "key of David" occupied a most honourable and responsible position. He was in a very real sense the Executor of the Divine Plans, and in the days of natural Israel such a man, more than any other, could haste or hinder the accomplishment of God's purposes.

Shebna was an enemy of God, and God removed him. He was "tossed like a ball into a large country" (Isa. 22. 18), that is, he was stripped of all his glory and honour, his ill-gotten gains and robes of office, and flung out into the wilderness to

perish. He, previously to Eliakim, had held the key of David. He, previously to Eliakim, had been a "nail in a sure place" upon which everything in the house depended. But now the Divine decree had gone forth and that nail which had been fastened in a sure place had fallen, and the burden that had been upon it had been cut off, "*for the Lord hath spoken it*" (vs. 25). The rule of Shebna had given place to the rule of Eliakim, and all the glory of the house of David was to find its focus and its centre in the person of this, the Lord's anointed.

There is only one time in history to which this language respecting the glory of the house of David can be applied in symbol, and that is at the setting up of Christ's Kingdom, when the Lord Jesus Christ, as the personal representative of the Father, will rule the world in justice and equity (Isa. 11. 4) and all things will depend upon Him, things small and great, "vessels of cups to vessels of flagons" (vs. 24). Jesus Himself knew that He was the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy and therefore He could say with truth that He had the key of David. Upon Him is to depend "all the offspring and issue" (vs. 24) for all who enter into life during the Millennial Age will receive it from Him. "He shall see his seed" (Isa. 53. 10). "I am come that they might have life" (John 10. 10). "His name shall be called . . . the Everlasting Father" (Isa. 9. 6). And that glorious "throne to his father's house" spoken of in vs. 23 finds its reality in the Great White Throne of the Millennial Age (Rev. 20. 11), before which all the nations of the world, dead and living, will be arrayed to receive judgment, and, if they will, blessing and everlasting life.

The robe and the girdle of vs. 21 are terms associated with the priesthood. There is more than a hint here that the One whom Eliakim prefigured is both a priest and a King, a priest upon his throne (Gen. 14. 18). The 11th chapter of Isaiah describes the kingly work of Christ during the Millennium. "Of the increase of his kingdom and government there shall be no end" and the noble words of Psalms 110 come to the mind "The Lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool". The rule of Christ during that Age is one that will bring blessings of health and everlasting life to those who are truly converted to Him, but at the same time will firmly repress evil and all attempts to commit evil. Hence it will be true that earth's new King will "open, and none shall shut" and "shut, and none shall open". Those who willingly come into harmony with the laws of the Kingdom will enter into life, and none will be able to take away from them that life; and those who persist still in attempts to do evil, and will not come to Him that they might have

life (John 5.40) will eventually pass into that death which is the inevitable result of wilful sin; and no one will be able to deliver them from that death.

Now these are the thoughts that Jesus must have had in mind when He spoke to Peter. Just as He Himself had received the "key of David" and had thus become the representative of the Heavenly Father in the execution of His Plan; just as to Him had been entrusted the oversight and control of all mankind and of all the earth for the purpose of bringing both them and it into full conformity with the Divine intentions, so Jesus was now appointing Peter as His representative to take the lead in initiating the work which was to commence at Pentecost and continue for two thousand years, until the Lord should come again. That the disciples understood it this way is shown by the fact that Peter remained the acknowledged head of the little band through all those early years when the Church was gaining its foothold in the earth. It was Peter who at Pentecost preached the first Gospel sermon. It was Peter who received the first Gentile convert—Cornelius—into the Church. It was Peter with whom Paul, the next great leader given to the Church, conferred preparatory to taking up his own place in the ministry. The whole of the work and fellowship of the Jewish Church of the generation that knew Jesus in the flesh bears the impress of Peter's mind, just as that of the Gentile Church of a little later is characterised by that of Paul. Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom, that Kingdom which his Master had preached, and Peter it was who opened the door through which others, Paul included, were to follow when their time of service had come.

So we can picture this grand disciple laying down the standards of the Kingdom just as he had received them from His Master. His mind was clear now; there would be no further hesitation or denying. As the years went by he became more and more confident, so that he could say at last "we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1. 16). The truths that Peter taught were the truths of heaven; the things that he promised were things that must surely come to pass, and therefore it was that whatever he bound on earth was bound in heaven; whatever he loosed on earth was loosed in heaven, for no man could gainsay or set aside what he said or taught. Heaven's confirmation was upon his work, and in the power of that authority he was able to go forth and do mightily in the service of his Lord.

Paul was the theologian, but Peter was the man of faith. In the long run it is faith rather than theology that will gain us the Kingdom, and hence

it is that Jesus' words are still true. The stirring exhortations to Christian living and steadfast faith which form so large a part of Peter's epistles still define the way by which we must walk to be over-comers. "By these", says Peter, "*ye may become partakers of the Divine nature . . .*" There is no

other way; and what Peter has bound for us, and loosed for us, in the teachings he has bequeathed to us, are recorded as bound, and loosed, in the archives of Heaven, and stand for all time as the gate through which we may gain access to the Heavenly City.

## "In the third day He will raise us up"

A VIEW OF THE DISPENSATIONS

One of the most striking features of the Divine Plan is the orderly development of its features, each successive step advancing the work of the overthrow of evil one stage farther. There are three main phases of this development, each having its own special time and place, each preparing the way for its successor and waxing old and passing away when its work is done. One might almost trace an analogy between these successive phases and the account of the creative week in Genesis when at the end of each period of time, or "day", devoted to some specific development, God looked upon what had been achieved and pronounced it "good". At the close of the sixth day, when He had created earth's crowning glory, man, and placed him in his home, God looked upon all that He had made, and pronounced it "very good". So we might imagine Him as looking upon the finished work of each Age in history, and approving the progress toward ultimate redemption from sin that has been made, and then, at the end, when Christ the King has delivered up the Kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15. 24-28) viewing with serene satisfaction the triumphant outcome to His great plan of salvation and endorsing it "very good".

We know to-day that there are two "salvations", two ultimate destinies, provided for in the Divine plans for men. The Early Church saw this matter more clearly than did the ecclesiastical systems of later times. The influence of the great theologian Augustine has profoundly affected the beliefs of Christendom and since he set his face resolutely against the earlier beliefs, founded upon Scriptural teaching, of an earthly salvation upon a restored and perfected earth, the doctrine of the Millennium, or "Chiliasm" as it has been called, has almost completely disappeared from ordinary Church teaching. And yet for the first four centuries of Christianity this understanding, that God willed an earthly salvation for some and a heavenly salvation for others, under the terms and conditions set out in the New Testament, was never questioned.

The vital principle behind God's intention was this: the earth had been created, and man placed upon it, to be an everlasting feature of Divine creation. What forms of spiritual life existed before this earth came into existence we do not know, and Scriptural revelation on this point does not tell us much. What intentions God has regarding other spheres of material life akin to the human, on other worlds, we do not know and the Scriptures are even less clear as to this. They do seem to indicate, however, that the human race has been created to live on and to enjoy this earth in all perpetuity, and that the power and commission given to man to increase and multiply is in order that the planet may be adequately populated. When this end has been achieved it is expected that such powers will lapse and cease, and this is perfectly in harmony with the Scriptures as they are at present understood.

Now out of this human race, and whilst it is still in process of learning for itself the dire results of sin, God is calling to Himself those who are prepared to yield up all they are and have, even to life itself, to become co-workers with Him in the execution of this Plan. The significant thing about this is that all who accept this invitation and devote themselves to the interests of God and His Kingdom do become His representatives and missionaries among men, and will be appointed to positions of authority in that Day when His Kingdom is established over all the earth; but they will not all serve in the same sphere. It would seem that the faithful ones of the ages prior to Christ will be of the earth, human beings, resurrected to a human perfection such as they will have never previously known, and that those of the days since Christ came will inherit the heavenly salvation and become members of the spiritual world, forever associated with the Lord Jesus Christ in His work of reigning over and blessing the nations. Why there should be this distinction made between men and women who, although separated in historical time, are yet one in their devotion and loyalty to God, it is not our province to enquire. Without doubt there exists good reason

for the Divine arrangement, and we may well expect, as we come to comprehend more and more clearly the mysteries of God's ways, to discern something of the reason for this differentiation.

The selection and preparation of these two companies of "workers for God" has been and remains the principal work of the Divine Plan and will continue so until the heavenly company, the "Church" of this Age, is complete. The time will then have come for God to turn His attention to the world of men in general and, with His two companies of trained workers at His command, to set about the final phase of the elimination of evil by the conversion of all mankind—"whosoever will".

Of the three phases of this Plan, therefore, two—the first two—are concerned with the selection and preparation of these two companies, and the third has to do with their appointed work of reconciling the "residue of men" (Acts 15. 17) to God and undoing the effect of sin in their lives. The first phase has to do with the preparation of the earthly people and the Old Testament reveals an interesting chain of development in this connection.

Two thousand years before Christ, God called Abraham, a Hebrew living in the Sumerian city of Ur, and, finding him responsive to His leading, eventually told him that in him, and in his seed, all families of the earth were to be blessed. This promise marked the beginning of active measures for the development of the "chosen peoples". Abraham became the progenitor of a line of patriarchs whose loyalty to God was unquestioned, and of a family the descendants of which, six hundred years later, became a nation, the nation of Israel.

There can be no doubt that God saw in Abraham and Sarah his wife qualities which, reproduced in the nation that sprang from them, rendered that nation particularly fitted for the duties it was afterwards called upon to perform. The claim of the Israelites to be the "chosen nation" is a perfectly correct claim; the authority of the Old Testament can be invoked to support it; but it will be only those members of that nation who have entered fully into sympathy with God's design for mankind, and have devoted themselves to the Divine will for them, that will eventually be brought together as an earthly missionary nation for the execution of God's work on earth. The fact remains, however, that by the time of the First Advent a goodly number of faithful men and women had been laid aside in death waiting for the time that God would call them forth to enter upon their destined work.

For two thousand years longer, a second "day", a second phase of the Divine Plan, God has worked in the world calling men and women to come to

Him by faith in Jesus Christ that He might fashion and conform them to the likeness He has fore-ordained, conformation to the image of His Son. This calling is a spiritual calling, and the standards to which the Christian is called to attain are higher than those which were set before the pre-Christian "saints". His calling is to a higher sphere and his training for a greater work. Whereas the earthly people are to administer affairs in the Kingdom of God upon earth and stand as the permanent visible representatives of the spiritual government of Jesus Christ, the heavenly people are to be associated with Him in the government (Rev. 3. 21), and will direct the work of the Kingdom, causing life and blessing to flow to those who are coming willingly into harmony with God through faith in Christ, and bringing to bear all Heaven's powers of persuasion upon those who still exercise their prerogative of free will to remain in sin.

The first phase ended at our Lord's First Advent. The second ends at His Second Advent, which is designed in the Plan for the dual purpose of completing the gathering of the Church and so bringing this "Gospel Age" to an end, and introducing the "Millennial Age" with all that it holds of life and blessing for every man.

The third phase is the Millennium, the Kingdom of God upon earth. That day is to be prefaced by the General Resurrection, in which the earthly people of God will be restored from their graves and established in their own land, the Holy Land, from whence the Law of the Lord will go forth (Isa. 2. 3). The Church will have been completed and gathered to spiritual conditions, ready for its own work. The Devil will have been bound, that he might deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1-3). By the end of that Age it will be true that "everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord". The inevitable result of sin will have come upon any who may refuse to turn from sin to serve the living God, and with the final and irrevocable death of such, the earthly creation will have been purified and perfected. Sin will not again invade the habitation or the heart of man. Humanity will have entered into eternal life, realising at last that it is in God that they live, and move, and have their being (Acts 17. 28).

"In the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (Hos. 6. 2.) The words were spoken of Israel, but they are a fitting commentary upon the three historical stages of the Divine Plan.

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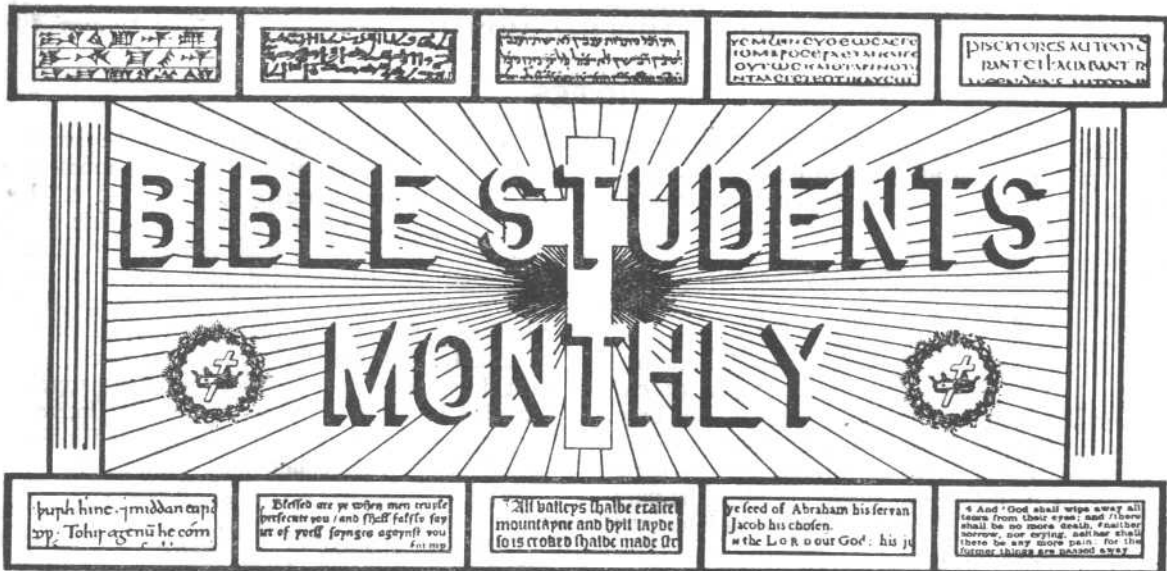
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## NOTES

Brother Albert Cribbett, of Yeovil, well known to many of the older friends, finished his earthly course on May 4th last after years of poor health, patiently borne. He will be greatly missed by his friends with whom he worshipped. The funeral service was conducted by Bro. T. Stracy, of Yeovil.

\* \* \* \*

Word is received that the series of public meetings held at Wigan during May has shown very encouraging results. Quite good interest has been shown and the friends who have participated in the various services connected with the endeavour have, to quote the report, been "richly repaid in the pure joy that comes from all who have given disinterested service in the cause".

\* \* \* \*

The scarcity of paper and ruling high prices has made it very difficult of late to make available useful "public witness" literature at a reasonable cost. In an endeavour to meet a need expressed by quite a few friends we are introducing, as an experiment, a new series of "two-minute tracts", in sixteen different titles, each one dealing with one feature of our faith in condensed form so that a minimum of paper is used. The tracts are small, can be read through in two minutes, and are attractively printed in blue ink. There is a space on the back where may be impressed local address or name of local meeting place, by means of rubber stamp. For the sixteen titles now available, please see back page. The price is 1/6 per 100 or 10/6 per 1,000, post free, assorted as desired. If no wish is expressed an equal number of each title will be sent. Since these leaflets measure only 4 inches by 2½ inches when folded, they will be useful for carrying in pocket or handbag to be ready for use upon any occasion. Rubber stamps can be supplied; prices upon receipt of details.

We would like to announce that the series of articles on the Book of Jonah which appeared in the B.S.M. during the early part of 1945 has been published in book form under the title "The Mission of Jonah". Copies are now available in stock and can be supplied in paper dust jackets at 1/8 post free and bound cloth boards at 2/9 post free. This 80-page exposition would probably be a useful gift for Christian friends; and dealing as it does with one of the most amazing happenings recorded in the Bible is likely to be of interest to young people. The edition is limited and it is suggested that friends obtain their copies now.

\* \* \* \*

Attention is directed to sundry new items of literature obtainable from Brother E. Allbon. Details appear on back page.

\* \* \* \*

In order to avoid possible misunderstanding, we would explain that the "limp" edition of the Hymnal advertised for the first time in our last issue is not the same as the original green flexible cloth-on-paper edition which was abandoned some years ago. This present limp edition consists of full blue cloth on board similar in appearance to the standard blue cloth board edition, but in order to produce at a low price the board is considerably thinner and therefore semi-flexible. Whilst the resultant production is not so good as the standard blue book, it is quite suitable for meeting-room stocks, for which purpose it has been specially designed, and is appreciably cheaper than the latter.

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Friends changing their addresses are reminded that we cannot send the Monthly thereafter unless they notify us of the new address. Several B.S.M.s have been returned lately—"gone, leaving no trace".

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## The Hundredth Psalm AN EXPOSITION

This psalm is one to be sung before the Throne of God. It is an expression of worship designed to be uttered in the Divine Presence. It is not given to us, as it was to Isaiah, to see in vision the Temple of God opened in Heaven, and to behold the Lord, high and lifted up, His glory filling the sanctuary. It is given to us to approach and worship Him in the beauty of holiness, to draw near in spirit and behold Him by the eye of faith. This Psalm is one of those "spiritual songs" written aforetime for our encouragement and strength, and it is in the spirit of songs such as this that we can, each one of us, "appear before God in Zion".

Now it is because this is a Psalm to be sung in God's presence that it opens with praise; and more than that, with jubilant praise. No restrained, subdued harmony of quiet notes, this. No softly sung solo, audible to the ears of the faithful few and reaching no farther. This is a universal acclamation of joy, resounding to the ends of the earth. "*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with thanksgiving*". The call is a general one; all peoples, nations and languages are bidden to join in this anthem of praise. Gladness and thanksgiving is the keynote; it would seem that sorrow and sighing have fled away. In this we have the key to the application of the Psalm dispensationally. It fits no Age so well as the Millennial Age, the day of the Kingdom of God upon earth, the day when "the trees of the wood shall rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth". (Psa. 96. 13.) Then will be fulfilled the words of Isaiah "It shall be said in that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation'" (Isa. 25. 9). That day is to be one of universal rejoicing and the words of this Psalm will find their richest fulfilment in its light.

But although the words are thus shown to be specially applicable to that future day of blessedness there must be remembered that they can have and do have a rich fulfilment now. True, the nations do not now make a joyful noise unto the Lord neither do all peoples come into his presence with thanksgiving. It would be more correct to say of them that they make a discordant noise unto the god of this world and enter into his slavery with lamentation. But in this world of to-day, dark and

evil as it is, there do exist outposts of the new Kingdom, little communities of God's ambassadors, ministers of reconciliation. Because those ambassadors represent the new world that shall be, they must needs accept the obligation and privilege of fulfilling the exhortation in this psalm, of making a joyful noise before the Lord and coming into his presence with thanksgiving.

In the literal sphere audible praise occupies a very important place in Christian worship. There are many who cannot take place in discourse and study, or cannot offer and lead in prayer, who can join with all their heart and soul in the voicing of praise. What is usually termed a "praise service", one in which the entire congregation joins in the singing of one favourite hymn after another, is occasionally despised or spoken lightly of, by some, but it is in reality a very important and profitable form of corporate worship and fellowship. Such a service, well conducted, is a spiritual stimulus to many devoted souls whose voices are otherwise rarely heard in the assemblies. And if those voices are sometimes a little out of tune, or grate somewhat harshly upon the ear of one who has been trained to appreciate the technique of good music, of what real consequence is that? We may be sure that by the time those imperfectly rendered songs have mounted the heights and echoed through the halls of Heaven all the harshness and lack of tune has been smoothed away and only the perfect rhythm of pure praise remains.

We need not be afraid of heartiness in our songs of praise. There is a dignity about the Truth but it is not the dignity of a cold, lifeless statue. It is the dignity of a warm, vibrant, living thing, animating all with which it comes in contact and ennobling all that it touches. So when the situation calls for praise to be loud, then let the praise be loud. "Praise him upon the loud cymbals" said the Psalmist, and then, upon reflection, decided that he was not being thorough-going enough, and so "Praise him upon the *high-sounding* cymbals" he concluded (Psa. 150. 5). It was something of this that the Apostle must have had in mind when he spoke of our "singing and making melody in your hearts unto the Lord" (Eph. 5.19) for there are high-sounding cymbals in our hearts too, and even although they are of the kind that only God can hear they are there to be used.

It is now that a new note of urgency appears in the Psalm. "*Know ye*", cries the singer, "*know ye, that the Lord, he is God. It is he that hath*

made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture". These sentiments do not command general acceptance to-day. To an increasing degree men endeavour to persuade themselves that they owe nothing to God, no meed of gratitude for the blessings of life and intelligence, no acknowledgment of the rightness of His laws, no service and no praise. They will not know the Lord, that He is God, and as they gather together to worship at the shrine of Darwin they chant in unison "it is we that hath made us, we ourselves". God looks down from His Heaven upon them. Who can doubt that there is a gentle, indulgent smile of tolerance as He watches these self-opinionated and so ignorant children whose whole world revolves around their own constricted circle of vision. They will know better one day, and God is quite content to wait.

These verses, also, then, point to the future Age as the time of their application. It is then that men will know that the Lord is God; then that the man-made theories of modernism and humanism and every other "-ism" that at present "darkens counsel without knowledge" will dissolve and vanish away like the early morning mists before the sun, and men come to realise at last that they live, and move, and have their being, in God. Then it is they become conscious of the great truth that they are the sheep of His pasture. The symbol of the shepherd is the predominant one of the Millennial Age. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd . . . and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40.11). Men will realise that relationship between themselves and their God, and will, for the most part at any rate, come willingly under that rule of the iron rod which is the rule of the shepherding rod, a firm and wise, and yet a loving and benevolent guidance towards God's way of life.

What wonder then that the Psalmist, seeing these things, sings exultantly "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise. Be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the Lord is good, and his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations". There are several "gates" into which, in a metaphorical sense, man may enter and come face to face with God. In the days of Israel there was a Tabernacle, a tent of curtains with a surrounding enclosure, and at the eastern end of that enclosure a "gate", a way of entry to the sacred mysteries that lay within. But not any man of Israel could enter by that gate; only the Levites. Thus was pictured the great truth that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11. 6). That gate represented the entrance to the condition of justification by faith

enjoyed by those who have accepted Jesus as their personal Saviour. To such the world has commenced to be left behind; they are pressing forward to a life of service for God. It is with thanksgiving and praise that the advance is made and such can very truly "enter into his gates" in that attitude of mind. But inside the "court" of the Tabernacle another "gate", the "porch" or "door" of the tent itself, stands before the believer, and entrance through that door denotes consecration unto death, a presenting our whole selves living offerings, holy, acceptable to God, our reasonable service (Rom. 12. 1). Even here the progress is not ended, for the sequel to that consecrated life is entrance into "Heaven itself" through yet another door, the "veil" which in the Tabernacle divided the Holy from the Most Holy. The believer, progressing from sin to righteousness and from time to eternity, must pass these three "gates" in succession, but he has good reason to pass through them all with thanksgiving and praise.

There are gates, too, through which mankind will be invited to pass, when the due time has come. "Open ye the gates" cries the prophet (Isa. 26. 2) "that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." What gates are these? They are the gates of the Millennial Age, the portals through which men will pass from the darkness of this present evil world to the light and warmth of the future Kingdom. John the Revelator in his vision saw the new Jerusalem come down to earth and those gates flung open that all of mankind—save the unclean, the wilfully wicked—could enter in. They will enter with thanksgiving and praise. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35. 10).

So, at long last, men will realise that "the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting and his truth endureth to all generations". Goodness, mercy, truth; these are the distinguishing characteristics of the Divine dealings with men during the Millennial Age. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other", sang the Psalmist (Psa. 85. 10), and Isaiah, foreseeing the eventual outcome of the Divine Plan, cried ecstatically "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32. 17). One great song of universal praise and thanksgiving will ascend to the Father when at length all men have tasted of His mercies, all sin has been driven far away, evil doers have perished from the earth, and the Lord Jesus has said to His redeemed ones "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world".

## The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

If the parables of Jesus were to be gathered together and published in book form, they would be sufficient to justify us in saying that Jesus could have been a great literary artist. The parables are really great pictures, skilfully described in simplicity of utterance, conveying deep spiritual instruction concerning the Kingdom and the correct attitude of its members toward God, each other, the world of mankind, and earthly possessions, among other things. Although others have used this method of instruction, yet there is nothing to compare with them anywhere. They are unique and invaluable. Their teachings are symbolic, moral and historical.

The titles are not mentioned in every one of them, neither do the titles we sometimes give to them prove to be strictly accurate. The parable of the Sower is so called by Jesus himself, but the parable of the Prodigal Son is not given a title. Some have thought this should be called the parable of the elder brother, containing instruction to the Pharisee, of whom he was a symbol. Others have described it as the parable of the love of God as a Father. Similarly with the parable of Dives and Lazarus; this was not a title given to it in the Scripture itself.

Some have objected to the name Dives because the rich man's name is not given. Legend says his name was Nimeusis, but the gospel does not so say. The Bible in the earlier days of Christianity in Britain was in the Latin tongue, and the Latin word for "rich man" was "*dives*". It was only subsequently that the word was thought to be his proper name. It is better therefore to say, "the rich man and Lazarus". As a matter of fact, Lazarus is the only one named in the parables in this sense.

Another question arises here: is this a parable? May we ask first of all, what is a parable? Its simplest definition is a comparison, not necessarily an earthly story with a heavenly meaning nor a heavenly story with an earthly meaning. The proper significance must be obtained from the parable itself in connection with all the circumstances of the case. It is objected then by some that this is not a symbolic story, but a statement of historic fact: "there was a certain rich man" (Luke 16. 19). But if that is a correct interpretation, then the previous parable should not be so called, because it begins with the same words (see verse 1). Then take the expression "Abraham's bosom". That

could not be literally intended. Indeed it is a Jewish expression signifying *Happy rest of the faithful*. It is worthy of note that the Greek reads *Abraham's bosoms* (plural) and both Wilson's Diaglott and Farrar say that it means "the folds of his garment". Another point is that this story occurs as a parable in various forms in Jewish writings and the Babylonian Talmud. We shall refer to this a little further on.

A peculiar feature of this parable is its Jewishness. Neither God, Jesus, Heaven, nor the atoning blood of the Redeemer are mentioned. Lazarus ascends to Abraham, and it is to Abraham that the rich man appeals, and he is told to refer his brethren to Moses and the prophets. As to its morality, it should be noted that it is not about the blessing of poverty and the evil of wealth. Genesis 13. 2 and 14. 3 tell us that Abraham himself was rich; so also was Joseph of Arimathea. The rich man's sin was the misuse of his stewardship and his indifference to the needs of others. To this it has been objected that the rich man did not necessarily know that Lazarus was at the gate. But it seems evident that he knew Lazarus when he saw him, saying "send Lazarus to me", and may have indicated the nature of his sin when he wished his brethren to be visited by Lazarus, in order that they should repent. Neither was poverty the virtue of Lazarus. Possibly his name indicated his trust to be his true virtue, like that of Job when he said "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him". Lazarus means "God is my help". We must remember that this parable was addressed to the COVETOUS Pharisees (verses 14 and 15, where this parable really begins). The Babylonian Talmud's account says the Pharisee was beatified and the Publican tormented with thirst! Our Lord reversed the position, and the Pharisees, who were lovers of money (*Revised version* verse 14), must have felt keenly the words of Jesus, whom they had "derided", or as Edersheim renders it "turned up their noses at him".

This parable has been used with great force to preach the doctrine of eternal torment in hell fire. Having given much cumulative evidence that this is a parable, it should be sufficient to say that this feature is symbolic also, but we will deal with it in greater detail. We read in Luke 16. 23 and 25, "*and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, . . . and send Lazarus, that he may dip the*

and finally the king's own acknowledgment of the justice of the infliction and of the omnipotence of God (34-37). It is highly probable that we have here an official document, prepared by the king after his recovery, and intended to place on record for all time his consciousness of his great sin and the mercy of God.

So far as history goes, the last eight or nine years of this king's life are blank. There is nothing recorded concerning him. It would seem that he did not live long after his recovery, probably no more than a year. During his affliction he would be well guarded from harm—in all probability those same Hanging Gardens which he had built in the day of his pride became the place of his wanderings. There he could roam at will, dwelling with the animals and birds with which it had been stocked, drinking at its streams, sleeping at night in its arbours or on its grassy slopes, free to indulge his disordered fancy but in no danger from wild beast or human enemy. And then, one morning, as the rays of the rising sun lightened the sky and the birds gave their voice in chorus, that unkempt figure crawled forth from its lair with eyes a little less wild; perhaps with face turned up to heaven in mute entreaty; and in a little while "*I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever*" (vs. 34). "*At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me*" (vs. 36).

So long as the king lived, even although imbecile, no move could be made to replace him. The queen probably governed as regent, with the aid of Daniel as Chief Minister. Berosus plainly states that in fact she did so, assisted by her counsellors. The affliction was looked upon as from the gods and their will must not be interfered with. The kingdom must needs wait, either for the king's recovery or his death. Upon the return of his reason, therefore, he was quickly re-established in his accustomed place, restored to the circle of his family, presiding once again over affairs of state, wielding once more the majestic power of the "head of gold".

But this time there was a difference. The last verse of chapter 4 shows us an utterly humbled and chastened man. The words are majestic and striking, "*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase*".

They are his last recorded words. The Scriptures tell us no more about King Nebuchadnezzar. They leave him where we would fain have him left, in humble submission to the One eternal God, a better man for the experience.

Was this conversion a lasting one? We do not know. It is worthy of note, however, that these words of his are not only the last the Scriptures record; they are also the last words of his in any records so far discovered. The extensive and voluminous inscriptions written by the king or at his instigation concerning himself and his works stop short about ten years or so before his death. At that time he is still a devoted adherent of the gods of Babylon and a faithful servant of Bel. But this word in Daniel 4, coming from the pen of the king himself, is by ten years the latest personal testimony history can offer. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary we may perhaps be justified in concluding that at the very end of his life Nebuchadnezzar came to see something of the glory of the One true God, the emptiness and vanity of the idols of Babylon, closing an eventful life with more of true peace than perhaps he had ever known.

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The family discipline is the discipline of wisdom. He who administers it is the God only wise. What deep wisdom there must be in all His dealings; He knows exactly what we need and how to supply it, He knows what evils are to be found in us and how they may best be removed. His training is no random work, it is carried on with exquisite skill. The time, the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God.

\* \* \* \*

The giving of our bodies is an infinitesimally small thing. The presenting of ourselves is an infinitely great thing.

\* \* \* \*

Fellowship implies a joint interest. Communion implies a common possession.

\* \* \* \*

All things are yours. You cannot add anything to that—except troubles.

\* \* \* \*

If the ancient ones of Hebrews II had merely discussed and argued about faith, they would not have been "faith lovers."

\* \* \* \*

Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers but for powers equal to your tasks.

\* \* \* \*

Some appear steadfast and nothing moves them. Some are excessively active and nothing concerns them.

*tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*", and in verse 28, "this place of torment" with the expression in verse 26, "between us and you there is a great gulf fixed". There are four points here to be considered: "hell", "torments", "are they physical?" and "the great gulf fixed". First, the word here rendered *hell* is correctly rendered *hades* in the Revised Version, for that is the Greek word. It is important to note this fact, for the word *hell* is not always translated from this word in the New Testament. The importance lies in this, that the Bible definitely assures us that *hades* (*sheol* in Hebrew) is a temporary arrangement, and will be destroyed. "O grave (*sheol*; *hades*) I will be thy destruction." (Hosea 13. 14.) "And death and hell (*hades*) delivered up the dead which were in them . . . and death and hell (*hades*) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20. 13, 14.) We are not ignoring the subject of the lake of fire, but point out that it is not referred to in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and that *hades* is not a permanent condition in New Testament teaching. Moreover Jesus went there and did not remain. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (*hades*), . . . he (David) spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell (*hades*)." (Acts 2. 27-31.) Here let us ask for a definite answer to the question: when Lazarus was raised, did he return from heaven or hell? This is, of course, a question to those who believe that at the death of the body, the soul goes either to heaven or hell, and then and there the destiny and the destination of the soul is permanently settled.

From this we may proceed to the question of the fixed gulf in verse 26. The word *gulf* may convey the geographical idea of a portion of sea partly surrounded by coast, but the real word in the Greek is "*chasma*" (ch. sounded hard) from "*chaino*", "*I yawn*", and means an intervening space or a chasm as we could say now, for the word "*chasm*" was not known to theology in the days when the Authorised Version was made. The general idea is that because this chasm is fixed, it must signify the final condition of things, but as Hades itself is not the final state, and this chasm is associated with Hades, neither is the fixed chasm a final state. The word *fixed* does not indicate whether the period is temporary or everlasting. It should be observed that the words everlasting and eternal are not used in this parable.

Coming now to the word torment; it is used four times in this parable: "*basanos*" in verses 23 and 28, with "*odunomai*" in verses 24 and 25. When the parents of Jesus found the young boy with the doctors of the law, Mary said to him,

"behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing". (Luke 2. 48). The Greek word for "sorrowing" is "*odunomai*", one of the two used in the parable under discussion. It is the word used too in Acts 20. 38, "sorrowing most of all". (Compare also Rom. 9. 2 and 1. Tim. 6. 10.) It means acute pain or sorrow. "*Basanos*" in Greek means "touch-stone", a dark-coloured stone on which gold, when rubbed, leaves a particular mark. As a metaphor it means a trial or test of the genuineness of something. It was also used for trial by means of torture, from which it came to signify the torture itself. In Matt. 8. 6 the palsied man was grievously tormented, (*basanizo*) with his disease. We have an additional point to examine, namely, does the parable intend to convey the idea that the torture in the next life is physical? It says in verse 24 that the rich man wanted a slight amount of water to cool his TONGUE; for he was tormented in the flame. Now it is most evident that the reference to the tongue here must be not real but symbolic, because in verse 22 it says the rich man was buried, and if the tongue was not a material substance, neither was the flame of fire the same as we see in this world. Some have said it is a spiritual anguish only, but we cannot say that, without admitting this story to be a parable. We must also remember that whatever it means, it is not eternal.

Let us now examine a few further details of the account in Luke. In verse 19, the Revised Version footnote says "fared sumptuously". This could alternatively be rendered, "living in mirth and splendour". The word "laid" in verse 20 should be "cast or thrown down". "Desiring" in verse 21 signifies additionally, "without satisfaction". These two verses are interpreted thus by Edersheim. "Gate" in verse 20 is not "*pule*" but "*pulon*", says Farrar, and means a stately portal. These renderings make the picture more vivid. Note verses 24 and 25, the relationship of father and son or child continues. This is somewhat different to what one is taught in the doctrine of eternal condemnation in hell fire. Again in verse 27, a person in hell prays for his brethren on earth!

Who the five brethren of verse 28 are has been variously interpreted as the ten tribes of Israel, or the five sons of Annas the High Priest, all of whom succeeded him in the priesthood. Others think the rich man resembles more a king (Antipas) than a priest, and some say the meaning, if any, is lost or unknown. Farrar, dealing with verses 30 and 31 shows that the clause "from the dead" means something different in each case according to the Greek. In this he has the powerful support of Bengel and French. Briefly the point is this, the rich man

requested that Lazarus should be sent "from" (*apa*) the place where he was, as an angel might be sent from his station, and the five brethren would fully repent. Abraham replies that even if a stronger miracle than that were performed and one went "out from" (*ek*) the dead ones, that is by a resurrection, they not only would not repent, but would not even be persuaded. And was not that true when another Lazarus was raised from the dead? Also did they not continue unpersuaded when God raised Jesus from the dead?

And now having dealt so minutely with the text, what have we found? That our Lord had taught the covetous Pharisees a severe moral lesson by reversing their parabolic arrangement of the respective relationships of themselves and their so-called inferiors in the other world; and did so by means of an infinitely more vivid and clever parable than those which they had produced.

With these findings a good many would conclude the matter, but we feel there is more than this to be understood. The ethical findings are both good and true, but the nature of the story seems to require some historical interpretation too. We are not alone in this view, although quite a few good scholars disagree with it. To us it seems to be a prophecy of the change in the religious privileges of the Jew and the Gentile; the rich man representing the Jew, and Lazarus the Gentile. There is a slight difference of interpretation between expositors, but in the main there is general agreement. And here may we suggest that no parable is intended to be symbolic in every particular but only in the main outline. This rule will save a lot of confusion. The Jew was rich in having committed to his stewardship the oracles of God, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, the promises, the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came. The Gentiles were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God in the world. (Rom. 3. 1, 2; 9. 3-5; Eph. 2. 11-12.) The Jew did not pass on the blessings to the Gentiles, indeed they refused to hear Moses and the prophets, and therefore did not receive Jesus as the Christ. For these reasons they lost their privileges and metaphorically were cast down to Hades as Jesus had told Capernaum (Matt. 11. 23). The Gentiles inherited the benefit of these privileges (Rom. 9. 30-32), and are now permitted to become the children of Abraham (Gal. 3. 7, 8, 14. Compare also Matt. 8. 11, 12). The Jew continued to call Abraham his father and to appeal to him rather than to Jesus, in spite of warnings both from John the Baptist and Jesus. (Matt. 3. 9 and Luke 13. 28, 29.) Note too their attitude to

Jesus on this matter (John 8. 53). A great gulf is fixed between the Gentiles and the Jew as a nation on the question of the Messiah, although individuals among them come to the Saviour, when they regard Moses and the prophets and see that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day and was glad. In the meantime the Jew is indeed in great torment in this Hadean condition of his nation, and the parable does not seem to hold much hope for their future, unless it be in the fact that Hades is not a permanent condition. If *gehenna* had been used instead of *hades* it would have indeed been a different prospect. They were in danger of that (Matt. 23. 33 and context). Thank God there is an absolute assurance of the return to Abrahamic blessing for the Jew, in the holy Word of Truth.

David Baron presents a version of the legend of the wandering Jew. Joseph Cartophilus, a Jew, was door-keeper for Pontius Pilate when Jesus passed by to his death. When he rested, the Jew smote him, saying, "Move faster. Why do you stop here?" Jesus replied, "I go, but you will wait for my return". The Jew was thirty years old, and whenever he reached the age of one hundred, he returned to the age of thirty, and in spite of his misery and longing for death, he must remain till Jesus comes. Nineteen hundred years have gone and the persecuted Jew has not died out, and he will not; but soon the Redeemer shall return and turn away ungodliness from Jacob and all Israel shall be saved. God will graft them in again into the olive tree, and the receiving of them will be life from the dead. How could we believe otherwise in view of Ezekiel 37 and Rom. 11? The rich man refused crumbs to Lazarus, and the converted Gentile should think kindly of Jacob and pray the prayer of Jeremiah 31. 7 "O Jehovah, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel".

The Christian is a traveller, his life is a journey, Heaven is his end, his road lies through a wilderness. How earnestly and devoutly ought he then to pray "O send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling!" For surely "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the ways of life." The Word of God discovers to us our errors; it shows us where we lost our way, and how we may find and recover it again. If we take this "lamp" in our hand, it will not only enable us to perceive the right course, but it will also direct us in every step, and guide our feet aright in the path of holiness and peace. Only let us apply our heart to the word of life and walk with God, then we may sing His praises as we pass through every trouble, and we shall sing them for ever.



## PROGRESS IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

A commentary on recent events affecting Palestine

The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry on Palestine issued its report a little over two months ago. We should be intensely interested in this, for there is no doubt that momentous changes in the affairs of the Holy Land are imminent, and the events of the next twelve months may throw a flood of light upon certain hitherto obscure features of the "Time of the End". It will not do to draw detailed conclusions as yet; we are too near to these movements to assess their significance accurately, but we can take note of the facts and include them in our thoughts and discussions.

The principal recommendations of the Report have been noted in the daily Press, and are, in brief, that one hundred thousand Jews be admitted as soon as possible and further immigration be arranged as soon as seems desirable; that the Land Laws of 1940, which hindered Jewish purchase of land, be repealed; that the present British Mandate be continued until it can be superseded by a Trusteeship under the control of the United Nations; and that Palestine should be neither a Jewish nor an Arab State. The Report is based upon the assumption that America will participate with Great Britain in the future administration of the country.

Here are a few significant phrases from the Report:—

*"We know of no country to which the great majority can go in the immediate future other than Palestine. Furthermore that is where almost all of them want to go. They are sure that they will receive a welcome denied them elsewhere."*

*"We are sure that the Government of the United States, which has shown such keen interest in the matter, will participate vigorously and generously with the Government of Great Britain in fulfilment."*

*"We, therefore, emphatically declare that Palestine is a Holy Land, sacred to Christian, to Jew and to Moslem alike . . . we further, in the same emphatic way, affirm that the fact that it is the Holy Land, sets Palestine completely apart from other lands, and dedicates it to the precepts and practices of the Brotherhood of Man, not those of narrow nationalism."*

*"Palestine is a country unlike any other. It is not merely a place in which Arabs and Jews live. Millions of people throughout the world take a fervent interest in Palestine and its Holy Places and*

*are deeply grieved by the thought that it has been the seat of trouble for so long. . . . It is sacred land to the Arab but it is also sacred to the Jew and the Christian; and the future of Palestine cannot possibly be left to be determined by the temporary impressions and feelings of the Arab majority in the country of the present day."*

It remains to be seen whether the Government will accept the Report, and if so, to what extent America will co-operate. As might be expected, neither Arabs nor Jews are satisfied with its terms. There is no doubt, however, that the execution of its provisions would make possible a big forward step in the Jewish development of Palestine and since this is the great end for which we as students of the prophecies are looking, a brief survey of world reaction to the proposals will be of interest. Here are some comments from the British Press:—

*"If indeed the Report is adopted by Britain and by the United States, and finds broad acceptance, as it deserves to do, elsewhere, its translation into action cannot be successfully challenged."* (The Times.)

*"The recommendations of the Committee are more a hope than a convincing policy. It may be a duty which we cannot escape. If we assume it, we must be certain that we have the full backing of America."* (News Chronicle.)

*"The Report . . . will not satisfy the Jews because, although it recommends the repeal of the White Paper of 1939 and the immediate immigration of 100,000 Jews from Europe, it would dispose 'once and for all' of their claim to a Jewish State in Palestine and would therefore, if accepted, put an end to Zionism."* (Manchester Guardian.)

Responsible Jewish quarters are chiefly concerned with this latter point in the Report, the negative reply to their demand for a Jewish State. The Jewish Agency for Palestine says "It is the firm conviction of the Jewish Agency, and of the overwhelming mass of Jews throughout the world, that the National Home cannot be really secured save within the framework of the Jewish State. As has been made clear from the beginning, the Jewish State is to be based on democratic principles and full equity of rights for all citizens, without distinction of race or religion. . . . Any Jew in need of a home would be able to settle in Palestine as

of right. In establishing an Arab State in one section of the Mandated territory of Palestine (Transjordan) the Mandatory Government precluded itself from denying to the other section the right to become a Jewish State." The Zionist organisation said "We had hoped that the rulers of the world would not fail to take due cognizance of our immense sufferings and our contribution toward the common war effort . . . The Jewish people will proceed on its way with a stubborn determination. . . . From all corners of the dispersion rises a desperate cry for the opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration. . . . The Zionist Movement has been forced into fateful struggle for the fulfilment of its age-old hope, the establishment of the Jewish Commonwealth". Other Jewish organisations' comments are "The whole public, economic and social life of Jewish Palestine will have to be switched over to the task of absorbing these one hundred thousand. The people of Israel are called upon to bring their children home. The remnant shall return!" "The Jews will come to Palestine whatever happens. History cannot be stopped."

It might be noted by way of commentary upon these remarks that some interesting statements were made by Jewish witnesses before the Committee when it was conducting its investigations in Jerusalem. Dr. Herzog, Joint Chief Rabbi of Palestine, invited the Committee to consider the Jewish case "from the sublime heights of the prophetic interpretation of history", thus reminding the members that the problem before them was one in which the promises of God are involved. Mr. Kaplan, Treasurer to the Jewish Agency, gave facts and figures to show that the agricultural population of the land could be doubled or trebled, even when ignoring the large areas of land at present desert or uncultivable, and which could be made productive by large scale irrigation. Mr. Moshe Shertok told the Committee "We have come here to stay. Jewish Palestine will forever remain part of the Middle East". He also spoke at length on an aspect that is not generally stressed in the British Press, viz., the progress that is being made toward Arab-Jewish agreement. We who recognise that the sons of Ishmael have their place in the Divine purpose as well as the sons of Isaac are especially interested in this. He said in part "Beneath the political surface there is a broad under-current of economic and political give-and-take. Professors of the Hebrew University have been repeatedly invited by the (Arab) Governments of neighbouring countries to undertake research and formulate schemes of improvement. Officials and students from neighbouring (Arab) capitals have been

sent to work and study in Jewish research institutions and laboratories . . ." On the question of uncultivable land he said "The Jewish people claim access to all derelict and under-developed areas throughout Palestine, to develop and fructify it for its own benefit and for the benefit of the whole country". In this latter connection it is interesting to note that attention is being paid to the Negeb, the desert land in the south of Palestine on the way to Egypt. The Israelites at the time of the Exodus had good reason to know this district, although it was more fertile then than it is now. Asluj, the first Jewish settlement to be established in this desolate spot, is beginning to show how it can be made fertile again. Fourteen hundred years ago the area was the home of a clever and industrious Arab people, who built large cities and by means of ingenious irrigation schemes brought the land to a high state of productiveness. These Arabs were mostly Christians, and the rise of Mohammedanism and the incursion of fierce nomad Arabs from the south swept away this civilisation and reduced the country to its present desert state. This "Negeb" includes nearly half of political Palestine and has a population of less than 50,000 compared with the 1,500,000 of the other half. There is great scope here for further development of the Divine promises and these pioneers are now showing what can be done. "In the wilderness shall waters break forth, and streams in the desert."

Summing up, then, from the point of view of prophecy, it would seem that these proposals, if accepted, will do nothing more than make it a little easier for Jews to settle in Palestine. It is clear that the kingdoms of this world are opposed to the creation of a Jewish self-governing State; it is also clear that the Jews themselves are becoming increasingly determined to set up that State by force of arms. Their threats to this effect are becoming less veiled and more definite. With this is coupled the fact that there is little or no religious basis in their desire to inherit the land. Jacob is for the moment abiding still in unbelief. And all of this is a most serious barrier to the re-gathering for which we look, when the children of Israel shall come with weeping and repentance, exhorting each other to come and join themselves to the Lord in a covenant which shall not be forgotten. It can only be in that frame of mind that they will be able to build up and dwell in a "land of unwallled villages" secure in their confidence that God will defend them from their enemies. The present events therefore must be taken as preliminary to these greater and more significant happenings. Present experiences are perhaps designed to demonstrate to thoughtful Jews that the power of man

will by no means attain them the land ; it will have to be given them by God Himself, even as He has said in *times gone past*. But that change of heart may come about very suddenly and we may be much nearer that longed-for consummation than would appear on the surface. The Jewish people have suffered greatly in recent years ; who knows what "mass effect" it may not be having upon them leading to a great national awakening and repentance even as it did in the days of King Josiah? There are isolated indications that such a spirit is not so remote as some might think. Two shiploads of illegal immigrants to Palestine, survivors from Buchenwald and Belsen concentration camps, were recently temporarily interned at Atlit by the British authorities and have now been permitted to enter Palestine. Each immigrant carried with him a "permit", printed in Hebrew and English, claiming as his or her authority to enter the land, the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate, *Ezekiel 37* (the "valley of dry bones" chapter) and *Isaiah 54* ("for a small moment I have forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee"). When this people really do say "*Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a covenant that shall not be forgotten*" the flood tide of immigrants will be irresistible ; but the fact that, even now, "in unbelief", they claim the Old Testament prophecies as their authority to enter the land is full of significance for the future.

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A treaty recognising Trans-Jordan, a land that forms part of the country promised to Abraham, as an independent state was signed between that country and Great Britain on 22nd March, 1946. It is not generally recalled that under the Mandate Trans-Jordan is part of political Palestine, which Great Britain held in trust for the League of Nations. In recent years there have been increasing Jewish demands for its inclusion in the proposed Jewish state. Trans-Jordan occupies the lands which in Biblical times were known as Moab, Ammon and Edom, and at the entry to the land by Israel were occupied in part by the tribes of Manasseh and Reuben. As a modern state it was virtually created by Great Britain in 1921, and Abdullah, son of Sheik Hussein of Arabia, was offered the kingship. Its population is one-fifth that of Palestine although it is twice the size. Abdullah, an enlightened and level-headed monarch, has for many years been concerned over the poverty and lack of enterprise of his subjects, and is known to be desirous of attracting Jews into Trans-Jordan for the sake of the commercial prosperity they would foster, but in this he is resisted by his people.

Article I of the Treaty reads in part:—"His

Majesty the King may station armed forces in Trans-Jordan in places where they are stationed at the date of signature of the present Treaty and such other places as may be agreed upon and His Highness the Emir will provide all the facilities necessary for their accommodation and maintenance and the storage of their ammunition and supplies, including the lease of any land required." The Treaty further provides for British assistance in the training and equipment of the Emir's military forces. It would seem that Palestine and Trans-Jordan together are intended to constitute a great British military bastion in front of Egypt and the Suez Canal, a strong Empire defence against potential enemies, and a "safe" territory through which the oil of Iraq may be brought to the Mediterranean seaboard.

Concurrently with this, the coming withdrawal of British troops from Egypt is coinciding with active preparation to make Haifa the main British naval base in the Mediterranean, Gaza the site of extensive military encampments, and Mount Gerizim, from which the Law was proclaimed in the days of Joshua (*Deut. 27. 12 ; Josh. 8. 33*) the location of a Radar station which is now nearly complete. These defences will not be necessary when the people dwell "in the land of unwallled villages". What purpose they may be called upon to serve in the meantime we do not know, but every right-thinking Christian will fervently hope that they will never be used. May God speed the day when the people of the land will fulfil *Ezek. 39. 9*, even although we know they must pass through a crucial test first.

In the meantime there can be no doubt that these developments will increase the material prosperity of Palestine. True to prophecy, the wealth of the nations is being poured into the land. This in itself betokens an advance in the development of the Plan. The ultimate outcome is bound up with our own expectations respecting these lands. When Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and John the Baptist take up the reins of government there will be no need of Treaty or of military equipment. "*The governors of Judah shall say in their heart 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God'*". (*Zech. 12. 5.*) The present state of strife and terrorism, of militarism and commercialism, and of divided political sovereignties, will give place to the wise and just rule of the Ancient Worthies, and that nation, "dwelling without bars or gates", will await, in full confidence of faith, the advance of the forces of "Gog and Magog", knowing that God Himself is to be the Deliverer and Defender of His people, even as in the days of Jehoshaphat and Sennacherib (*2. Chron. 20*).

There is one Messianic prophecy which is directly connected with these things. Psalm 108 contains God's answer to the appeal of His people that He rise up to establish His glory in the earth. "*Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine . . . Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe.*" All these territories are now represented by Trans-Jordan. In the Psalm the people cry "*Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?*" That will very shortly be their cry; indeed is already beginning to become their cry. The reply shows that this people will have renounced the use of armed force and will have placed their trust in God. "*Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts? Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.*"

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Russia's diplomatic success over the question of Persian oil has focussed the attention of evangelical Christians upon the probable intentions of that great Power. It is being predicted by some periodicals that Ezekiel 38 is about to be fulfilled, that the great onslaught of "Gog and Magog" is imminent. Such forecasts should be taken with reserve, for there is another development that must come first, the regathering of Israel into the Holy Land from their twenty-five centuries of Gentile domination and their achievement of national status and prosperity. It is important to remember that God destines the nation that sprang from Jacob's twelve sons to play a vital part in the evangelising of the world during the Millennial Age; that their long period of persecution and oppression and suffering, enduring from the time of Egyptian slavery to the present day, has been permitted for the purpose of fitting them for that destiny, and that, notwithstanding their national shortcomings, they are to be restored, no more "two nations", but one, to be "priests of the Lord" and "ministers of our God". The descent of "Gog and Magog" will be *after* that regathering has been measurably completed, and the sequel to that invasion will establish in the minds of all men the realisation that Divine power has taken sovereignty over the earth.

What do we see at present? The Holy Land is passing through a difficult period consequent upon the vacillating policies of the Western Powers. That period will pass and progress be resumed, when those Powers have made their decision. The temper of the Jews now in Palestine, and of those who wish to enter, is such that if the decision is unsatisfactory to them they will probably attempt to decide the issue by force of arms. They did that at the

Exodus, and they failed (Num. 14. 44). They will as certainly fail again. It is unthinkable that the land and nation which is to become the nucleus and first outpost, so to speak, of the Kingdom of God on earth shall be established by means so directly antagonistic to Divine principles. Perhaps after the failure of that attempt, after it is made, the way into the land will open in a more peaceable and totally unexpected manner. After that must be allowed a period for the people's attainment of temporal prosperity; "gotten cattle and goods, and that dwell in the midst of the land". Then, and only then, can we expect "Gog and Magog" to move up to the assault.

Turning now to view the Gentile powers, it is clear that both the "king of the north" and the "king of the south" are jockeying for position. Russia now controls, by treaty or conquest, over half of Europe, including the Balkans and the major portion of Germany. Her influence is strong, and will inevitably become stronger, in Turkey and Persia. It is apparent to the most casual observer that she will very soon encompass the Holy Land on its northern and eastern sides.

The policy of the "Allied Powers" appears to be taking a different course. The Arab states, nominally in association with the west, are either independent or in process of becoming so. All the lands at present bordering on Palestine are sovereign independent states. It would seem as if "Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" (Ezek. 23. 13), will prove to be an association of more or less free peoples rather than a homogeneous striking force such as is evidently to be the constitution of the northern Power. And it is noteworthy that in the 11th chapter of Daniel, although the "king of the south" certainly is said to "push at" the "king of the north", it is the latter who seems to be the great aggressor and comes to his end, after initial successes, with no one to help him, at the standing up of Michael.

In reading the signs of the times we must stand by this principle. The key to the events which mark the end of this present Age is the restoration of God's ancient people to the Holy Land in peace and prosperity, and around that understanding we must frame our expectations.

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The friends at Leigh (Lancs.) announce a two-day Convention for Saturday and Sunday, August 3rd and 4th. A warm welcome will be extended to all who can attend. Programmes and information can be obtained from Sister (Mrs.) Lloyd, 213, Maple Crescent, Leigh, Lancs. Bros. Hardwick, Jennings, Linter, Lodge and Wright will (D.V.) address the friends.

# The Promise to Abraham

THE DIVINE PURPOSE THROUGH THE AGES

The story of this, the greatest of all Bible promises, begins about two thousand years after the expulsion from Eden in that part of the world where the garden had probably been situated. The God of glory appeared to one of whom no previous mention had been made in Scripture and required him completely to change his home, his prospects, leave his kindred and remove to some unmentioned destination where God would bless him, make his name a blessing, give him a seed and a vast tract of country for an everlasting possession. When, in early Christian times, Stephen made his defence before the council in Jerusalem, he spoke as though that event was almost the dawn of history. At least it was a turning point in the affairs of man, the previous centuries having given little hope of betterment to mankind; and here, at last, was proof that God had not forgotten the bare promise to Adam, but was initiating a plan of action for the benefit of the whole world. And although the provisions of the promise have not yet been fully met sufficient has been fulfilled to guarantee the realisation of all its pledges. And so, the development of the promise and the great events of the Bible arising from it are enough sanction for regarding the promise as the beginning of world history.

The word promise does not in modern use imply so binding an agreement as does the alternative word covenant. The Bible uses the word interchangeably, and we must not in our study of the Word think that a covenant by God is superior to a promise from him, though we may properly regard an oath-bound covenant or promise as the highest form of pledge that could possibly be given. And in this connection we remember that this original promise was forty years later bound by the oath of God Himself. During those forty years the promise was at intervals repeated to Abraham and he gave ample proof of his great faith in the One Who had promised. Who can read the narrative without discerning that Abraham fully earned the title of the "Friend of God"?

The first mention of the promise is in Gen. 12. 1-6 where it will be seen that the first requirement of Abram is that he leave his old associations and go to an unknown land. He believed and obeyed, some of the family trekking with him. One may doubt whether they should have accompanied him, for though he is not chided for taking them with

him he does not seem to progress until they are removed from the caravan either by death or dispute. On arriving in Canaan the Lord appeared, telling him that this was the land He had promised; and Abram in acknowledgment and worship built an altar unto the Lord, but soon, because of famine, went to Egypt. Did he make a mistake in leaving the land of promise? In Egypt domestic deception brought him into trouble with Pharaoh, who expelled him from his land, and so he returned to where he had built the altar and there he called on the Lord. But the land was not fruitful enough for them all to dwell together, and the shortage caused the quarrel between Abram's and Lot's herdmen. Abram gave Lot the choice of the land in which to dwell and he selfishly chose him all the plain of Jordan, and he journeyed east to the rich land—and trouble. Ensuing on the separation the Lord repeated the promise more explicitly, particularly mentioning the seed (yet to be born) and the land (in which he was only a tenant) which was to be his for an everlasting possession (see Gen. 13. 4, 7, 14-17). In the next chapter he hastened to rescue Lot from the hands of the kings who had taken him captive, and on the return journey meets Melchisedek. The casual reader might think it unnecessary to mention this incident as it seems to have no bearing on the fulfilment of the promise. But if such read the details and the shrewd reasoning of the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews he will learn how closely the story is connected with the promise. He will see that Melchisedek is as needful to the distant fulfilment of the promise as was the intervention of God necessary to its early fulfilment.

But the years are passing, Abram and Sarai are ageing and the promise of the seed seems less likely humanly of fulfilment as time progresses. And Abram knows that in law his steward Eliezer is his heir, and so he asks the Lord about the matter (Gen. 15. 1-6). Again he is assured that he will have a son and that his seed will yet be as the stars for number; and because he believed this he was counted as though he was righteous. One might not expect the principle of faith-justification to be so clearly stated in the Old Testament, thinking it to be Pauline, but it is there nevertheless. Abram then asks for guidance about the land inheritance and in reply is commanded to sacrifice certain animals. Upon complying the Lord acknowledges

the sacrifices and details the area of the land to be inherited in due course; but also intimates that Abram's seed (even though at that time he had none) would be afflicted in a strange land for many years and would then come to their land with great substance—a prophecy exactly fulfilled when Israel left Egypt. Ten years after the original promise during which they had dwelt in their land (Abram is 85 and Sarai is 75) Sarai, desirous of the promise being realised, suggests that a son may be born to them through Hagar. "And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai" and Sarai soon regretted it, for Ishmael was born of Hagar. The Lord God was not angry with them for thinking to fulfil His promise—in fact He blesses Ishmael. (But his birth meant many trials to the descendants of Abraham for many years. We could wonder how the course of Israel's history would have turned had he not been born; but why ruminate on questions that cannot be answered? Born of the bondwoman, born without the intervention of God, he serves the apostle with an illustration of Israel bound under the law they said they would keep, and by comparison of birth and life he makes the true seed stand out as the child of promise.)

But thirteen more years pass by, and the promise seems less likely humanly of fulfilment on account of their advanced years; and there is no record of God speaking to them during that time. No doubt this period was a great trial of faith to Abram, but he does not appear to swerve. This trial is suddenly ended by the appearance of the Lord God and the repetition of the promise with additional proofs. He changes his name from Abram to Abraham (its meaning is in Gen. 17. 5) thus he will always carry this support to his faith. Year in and year out he is thus reminded that he is to be the father of a multitude. God also changes Sarai's name to Sarah and says for the first time that Sarah his wife will be the mother of his son—so that the child of promise will surely be their son, not merely Abraham's son. Thus Ishmael was shown to be not the child of promise. It is twenty-four years since the original promise, and Abram on account of his great age and that of Sarai laughs within himself. It is not the laugh of the unbeliever, though there is still a question in his mind, and his love for Ishmael causes him to wish that he could be the honoured seed. The Lord's reply is speedy, for He names the coming seed (thus forever reminding Abraham that he laughed) and says that He will establish His covenant with him in turn, and tells him that Ishmael, though to be blessed, will not be reckoned as the child of promise. In the next chapter of Genesis he welcomes the three men who stood near him while he sheltered in the

tent door and in the ensuing repetition of the promise we note that Sarah also laughed. Again, not the laugh of scorn or unbelief, for we know from other words that she judged Him faithful Who had promised. But now their long test of faith is over, for the Lord God promises when the child Isaac will be born (Gen. 17. 21; 18. 4; 21. 2). ((In passing, the twentieth chapter of Genesis seems to be out of place as regards time.) And now Sarah's laugh is the laughter of full joy—joy which shall yet be to all people. This recounting of family history proves that God intervened in His own time and made possible the fulfilment of His own promise. Isaac was in every respect a child of promise, for he could not have been born without Divine intervention. A few years later Abraham is commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac (the very one in whom the promise inheres) and unquestioning he is about to do this great requirement when his hand is stayed. We may well be amazed that such a great trial of faith was put to him and that he survived it with such honours. Had such a faith been given to any other descendant of Adam he may have fallen, but here was a man who had endured great trial for forty years during which he had to believe something that seemed unbelievable. In fact, his faith was so mature that he was able to reason that even if he should sacrifice his own son the One in whom he believed was able to raise him from the dead. In acknowledgment of this act of faith, God not only repeats the promise, but binds Himself by oath to fulfil the Covenant, thus making it a binding agreement, the onus of which rests upon Him who made the oath. It must be noted that in this covenant the Lord God refers to Isaac as being the only son, thus passing by the son of Hagar who was not born by promise. One more noticeable sign of the faith of Abraham was shown in his life, and that was his sending his servant back to his own people to find a wife for his son Isaac who would be worthy of the covenant and his own faith.

And so, reviewing the promise, what part of it had by then been fulfilled? The family of Abraham were merely tenants in part of the land destined to be theirs forever; the promise that the nations of the earth would be blessed is yet to be realised; the promise of the seed had begun in the birth of Isaac; the promise that the seed would be as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the seashore was not then fulfilled, but was, according to the Word, fulfilled numerically when they came out of Egypt with great substance at the end of their prophesied sojourning.

When, at last, after their wanderings the nation arrived in Canaan it was soon seen that they were not inheritors of the land any more than had been

father Abraham, and as the centuries passed their tenure became more precarious. At last such as survived were taken away captive for several years near where Abram had started his journey of faith, and when they arrived back after seventy years of desolation they were no more secure. When we remember their history, their hopes, their depressions, their joys and how at times they signally fail we begin to wonder what is lacking. God had as he had promised, blessed them, but had they become a blessing to other nations? If any attempt had been made to bless other nations it was by proselytising and in that the traditions of the elders and meticulous observance of items of the Mosaic law and the omission of the weightier matters, judgment, mercy and faithfulness, gave it little success. And they did not realise that before they could bless the nations they themselves needed further blessing. They certainly had those blessings from God detailed in Rom. 10. 4, 5 and these they properly claimed as proof of their standing before God as the descendants of Abraham. It was to these legal descendants of Abraham that John the Baptist came with his call to repentance and preparation to receive Messiah—a call which was repeated in different words following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 3. 25, 26). The call to repentance met with prompt but not lasting response, for of the many who responded few followed on to know the Lord. There would have been hope of them had their attitude of heart been "what lack I yet". The truth is, the people were, unknown to themselves, in bondage—in bondage to that very law of Moses which they thought proved them to be the seed of Abraham and which made them superior to the Gentile nations. Their seeming inability to comprehend their true position before God is clearly shown in John 8. 32-40. Our Lord's offer of the truth that would make them free is rejected, they answering that because they were Abraham's descendants they were never in bondage to any man. This assertion was glaringly untrue, for several times in their long history they had been in captivity and even while they spoke they were dominated by the Romans. And they were under an even more dominating bondage (the more deceiving because they thought it marked them out as God's people, the seed of Abraham), the bondage of the Law. And that they like all the nations were under the bondage of sin and death was not deeply realised. For the sake of proving to them their true standing, our Lord concedes that they are Abraham's seed, but adds that because they seek to kill him they are not in fact the children of Abraham. They then shift their ground of argument and claim to be the children of God but that is

proved equally untrue. Descendants of Abraham they may be, but in disposition and opposition to Christ, the true seed, they are like to Ishmael, the son of Abram not by promise. How could a people so bound, so blind, so unlike their father Abraham be regarded as the seed of Abraham in the covenant sense? How could such people see the truth of Rom. 4. 13 that the true seed are children of faith and children of Abraham the father of faith? How could they know for themselves the principle of faith-justification which had long ago been credited to Abram? How true is Rom. 9. 7, 8 "*Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*". Thus, Paul has introduced a new thought, that the true seed of Abraham are also the children of God, for we notice in reading verse 8 that when we expect him to say "the children of Abraham" he says "the children of God". That the children of God are the church of God is explained in the previous chapter. That the children of God are the children of Abraham is repeated in Gal. 3. 26, 29. So much is said on this matter in both these epistles that we know not where to begin and end. But from their consideration will emerge that in the story we shall see that Abraham pictures God himself, Who will bless all the families of the earth through His gospel and through His Son and His sons, and that the Jewish nation under the bondage of sin and the law are pictured in Ishmael the son of Hagar.

It may well be asked as to how those who are not descended from Abraham become his seed. A hint of the procedure to be followed was given long ago in the words to Abraham "*In Isaac shall thy seed be called*". Not that his seed would be called Isaac, but that the seed would be called IN Isaac. Yes, it is a matter of calling rather than descent. But it will follow that on the coming of Jesus Christ (Who is the seed by descent and by calling) that the calling to be the seed of Abraham should first be made to those who were children by descent. All know that they responded poorly to this great invitation. Their repeated claims that they were children by descent and were never in bondage blinded them so that they stumbled at the stumbling stones. They certainly had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; and Paul speaks of them as "going about to establish their own righteousness" a self-imposed, but hopeless task! A simple but sublime means of attaining to righteousness is provided by God Himself, but the simplicity of it may be a cause of stumbling to those who think

they can prove who they are by their own effort. The principle of faith-justification was applied to father Abraham and was not written for his sake alone but is applicable to all his children (see Gen. 15. 6 ; Rom. 4. 20-25 ; Gal. 3. 6, 7). Paul clearly says "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" and from it we may be sure that all who respond in faith to the calling are therefore the seed of Abraham. It is true both of Jews and Gentiles, for the scripture which hath concluded all under sin is equally munificent to both, so that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ is given to all them that believe (Gal. 3. 22). The whole truth is summarised in the words of Gal. 3. 26 "*For ye are all the children of God (and therefore of Abraham) by faith in Christ Jesus*". The closing verses of this chapter speak of Baptism in Christ, whether Jew or Greek, and of the confident knowledge that if we be Christ's then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Hence "*We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*" (Gal. 4. 28). That they have become sons only by the grace of God must always be remembered, for as He promised that only by His own intervention would the child

of promise be born, so do we know that only by the work of God are the church created in Christ. Even the faith which, like their father Abraham, they have in God, cannot be a ground of claim upon God to justify them, and their placing in the body of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit which marks them out as the sons of God can likewise never be claimed by them as a right or as a reward for services rendered.

The seed having been created by God, the fulfilment of blessing of all the families of the earth can be effected by the establishment of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the dead—and also the resurrection of Abraham to receive the land which is due to him under the promise. But before this momentous work can be done, the church must needs themselves be blessed and this must be in the first resurrection. And in this, we think again of Melchisedek, who in Hebrews is shown as superior to Aaron because, among other things, he is endowed with the power of an endless life. Following their resurrection and glorification, nothing need stay the remainder of the Abrahamic promise from being accomplished in the heavenly kingdom upon earth.

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## THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

### 2. Prophetic Foresight

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A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

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The class of prophecy to which we apply the description "prophetic foresight" is that which foretells events yet to happen in the affairs of men, and which is described in word or writing by the prophet but is not the result of visions or dreams. It has to do chiefly with the affairs of this world, and generally has some direct relation with the condition of the world in the prophet's own day. Although the influence of the Holy Spirit is behind the giving of such prophecy, its utterance is also dependent upon the prophet's own foresight into the affairs of men and nations, and his observation of world or national events. It follows therefore that such a man is not a recluse or a mystic, retiring from contact with the world and its affairs into a secret retreat of his own, confining his thoughts and his utterances to the unseen things of God's spiritual world, but one who takes a lively and intelligent interest in the events of his day and the concern of his fellow-men. It is for this reason that we find prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel closely connected with the political affairs of their day and often holding high office in the State. This

does not mean that Christians to-day are necessarily called to follow their example in this respect ; it does mean that such a station in life was God's will for them and had its place in the orderly development of His Plan.

This class of prophecy, then, is mainly concerned with predictions of the course of world history during the progress of this "present evil world" up to its close and the establishment of the Kingdom. Prophecies concerning the "Kingdom Age", the Millennial Age, are usually of a different nature, based upon visions. The scenes of the coming Age rise before the prophet's eyes so that he can describe what he actually sees. The type of prophecy now being considered does not come by means of such visions, but from the illumination of an already instructed mind by the power of the Holy Spirit. The prophet lays himself out to be the recipient of Divine instruction concerning the future by studiously observing current events and diligently learning the lessons of past history, the knowledge of human action and reaction thus obtained enabling him intelligently to receive the information regard-

ing the future that the Holy Spirit is waiting to impart.

Such a man must therefore, and first of all, acquire a knowledge of those Divine principles which ought to govern the conduct of earthly affairs. He must become a student of Divine Law, and this involves diligent study of the Scriptures. He must also be an observer of the habits and lives of his fellow-men, and of world conditions and events, and, applying the Divine principles to them, perceive how every infraction of those principles is reflected in the further degeneration of the human race. From this he learns how to deduce the probable outcome of the state of affairs in the world as it exists in his own time, and to warn his fellows of the dangers of the course of conduct they are following. This is so often the burden of those Hebrew prophets who lived in the days of the monarchy, from David to Zedekiah, and then onward to the end of Old Testament history, that nearly all the books from Isaiah to Malachi have predominantly the same note. "*Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*" (Isa. 59. 2). "*And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear . . . I will even send a curse upon you . . . saith the Lord of Hosts*" (Mal. 2. 1-4). Therefore "*woe to them that go down to Egypt for help*" cries Isaiah (31. 2) referring to Judah's leaning toward political alliance with Egypt at that time "*but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel*" He goes on to predict that the power of Egypt shall fail, and with that failure Judah will fall also. "*When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.*" The rulers and the people of Israel took no notice of his words then, but they must have remembered them a few years later when Sennacherib's general stood with his army outside the walls of Jerusalem and declaimed in tones of the bitterest sarcasm "*Lo, thou trustest in the staff of that broken reed, on Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him*" (Isa. 36. 6). And it was then that Isaiah's prophetic foresight was doubly vindicated, for in the same breath that he had declared woe to Judah for going to Egypt for help he also predicted a great Divine deliverance. "*As birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem . . . passing over he will preserve it . . . then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword*" (31. 5 and 8). That prediction was fulfilled in the celebrated destruction of Sennacherib's host in one night outside the walls, and his own violent death at the hands of an assassin

(37. 36-38). The entire section, chapters 20 to 37 of Isaiah, covering a period of some thirty years from Sargon's campaign against Ashdod (20. 1) to Sennacherib's death, is a splendid example of this particular type of prophecy. Isaiah's shrewd summing up of the situation, added to the influence of the Holy Spirit working on his mind, enabled him correctly to estimate the immediate political consequences of his countrymen's attitude and also to foresee ultimate Divine intervention.

In a very real sense, therefore, these prophets were *in* the world, mixing freely with their own fellows, maintaining a lively interest in events and trends of the day, whilst most definitely not being *of* the world. In this their lives are an example to us, for we too, if we would be "as men that wait for their lord" must needs have that same lively interest in the changing panorama of world events, and the same attitude for correctly interpreting that panorama in the light of Divine prophecy, as did they. We therefore cannot assent to the principle of the monastic life, one that demands withdrawal into a pious seclusion, seeing and hearing nothing of what goes on in the world outside. Our Christianity must be vigorous and practical, based upon a recognition that we are God's warriors in this world and His witnesses testifying to the utter inadequacy of any system other than His coming Kingdom for the bringing of life and happiness to men.

Nevertheless we must realise that not all believers are called to observe the changing of prophecy into history with that clear-sightedness which is so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets. All do not possess the powers of intellect so to understand world events. It must always be true that the many will obtain their understanding of these things from those whose natural talents, consecrated to God and so amenable to the power of the Holy Spirit, can be so used for the assistance of their fellows. So it must have been in the days of natural Israel. There were many pious, God-fearing Israelites, students of the Scriptures, waiting and looking for the coming Kingdom, but they were not by any means all Isaiahs or Jeremiahs. One or two prophets in a generation were all that God needed then; and so now, "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased him" and all members have not the same office.

There are many striking examples of this kind of prophecy in the Scriptures. The story of Jeremiah and Hananiah is one such (see Jer. 28). Hananiah had promised that within two full years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would be broken and Judah would be free.

Jeremiah replied that the prediction was false, that the yoke would not be broken; moreover, since Hananiah had prophesied falsely, he would die within the same year. Two months later Hananiah did die—and the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar did remain on Judah for seventy years. Jeremiah gauged the power of Babylon more correctly than did Hananiah; and he knew that in consequence of Judah's transgression the "seventy years" of captivity was to come upon them. So far his prophetic foresight aided him in coming to a true conclusion. But his knowledge that Hananiah was to die within a few months reveals the illumination of the Holy Spirit, guiding his mind so that the prediction he uttered was not entirely of himself, but was inspired and directed of God.

Now because it is true that history repeats itself, that the sequel to a set of conditions existing in the world at one time is so often matched by the sequel to the same set of conditions existing at another time, it is oft-times the case that the prophecy of an Old Testament seer intended to refer to his own people and generation becomes equally applicable to another people and generation where the same conditions obtain. It would seem that God has caused to be recorded such prophecies to the deliberate end that they be so used for the instruction of later generations of God's people. Thus when Jesus gave his famous prophecy of the End Time on the Mount of Olives He cast His words in a mould which also fitted the events about to befall the people of Judah in His own day. The ending of the Jewish Age was an anticipation in miniature of the ending of the Gospel Age. Hence much of the prophecy in Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 has a double application, one in miniature to the events of A.D. 70, and another, on a greater scale, to the events of the present time. Another case that comes readily to mind is the promise of Malachi that God would send Elijah before the coming of the day of the Lord. Jesus said that this prophecy was fulfilled in His own day (Matt. 11. 19) and yet it is clear that a further fulfilment must be expected at the end of this Age.

It does not follow that every prophecy must of necessity be applied in this fashion. The Book of Nahum is a case in point. Nahum, who lived with his brethren of the Captivity in the mountainous country north-east of Nineveh, a generation or so after they had been transported from their own land, broke into a passionate denunciation of Nineveh and foretold its coming destruction. From his own observation he knew that its iniquity had come to the full. The great repentance of the time of Jonah was at least a hundred and fifty years in the past and the city had long since gone back to its bad

ways. Nahum sensed that the time of judgment had come, and in three short chapters he foretold, in superb language, the coming destruction. The whole of his predictions were fulfilled within the next half century, and with that fulfilment the prophecy served its purpose. There is nothing in it to justify its application to events at this end of the Age, and nothing in later Scriptures to authorise its use as such a prophecy.

Isaiah's and Jeremiah's prophecies of the fall of Babylon constitute an instance of the opposite principle. Their vivid descriptions of Divine judgment upon that city are used in the Book of Revelation in a setting which points unmistakably to the end of the Age. We can therefore, if we wish, take these prophecies to have a double application, in the first place to the literal overthrow of the literal city—and although Jeremiah spoke more than fifty years before the event his words were wonderfully and accurately fulfilled—and in the second place to the downfall of the great world system of evil which Babylon so fitly pictured.

We need therefore to view these "political" prophecies against the background of the times in which, and the circumstances under which, they were written, to note what use is made of them by later Biblical writers, and particularly by the writers of the New Testament, and then decide whether or no any particular prophecy is intended to convey a meaning beyond its purely local one. We may have to give up some cherished interpretations in the process, but the prophecies that we do accept as having definite bearing upon our own day and time will become fraught with deeper meaning and rest upon a more secure because more logical basis than before. Some knowledge of the history of the prophet's own period is therefore essential when it comes to interpreting such prophecies, and because the knowledge of such history is constantly being amplified by research and discovery it follows that our understanding of the subject will be subject to clarification as time goes on; the interpretations of the nineteenth century commentators are often quite out of date in the twentieth.

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*The next article in this series is entitled "Visions and Dreams" and will examine the difference between "prophets" and "seers" and the conditions under which holy men of old have received revelations regarding things to come.*

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All we know about waterpots is that they were empty. Those at Cana were empty—but the Lord filled them. Rebecca came with an empty waterpot—she became Isaac's bride. The woman at the well—but she brought a whole city to the Master's feet.



# Nebuchadnezzar's Madness



A STORY FROM THE BOOK OF DANIEL

King Nebuchadnezzar was at the zenith of his glory. The "head of gold" had become the conqueror of the nations. He had seen three successive Pharaohs of Egypt, the rival nation, pass into death—two of them struck down by his own hand. Pharaoh-Necho died at the time of Jerusalem's downfall in Zedekiah's day. His successor, Psamatik II (not mentioned by name in the Bible), was slain when the Babylonians invaded Egypt in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year (Jer. 52. 30 and 43. 1-13). Pharaoh-Hophra had just perished, also at the hands of the victorious king, and his successor, Amasis, held the throne of the Pharaohs only as a tributary to Babylon. Egypt had become, as Ezekiel said it would become (Ezek. 29. 14) a "base kingdom"—and in actual fact it never regained its former greatness. The proud city of Tyre, after a siege of thirteen years, had been forced to capitulate. The Assyrians were no more, and their mighty city of Nineveh was a mass of broken down ruins. The Ten Tribes were scattered in the wilds of Armenia, spreading slowly outwards, and the remnants of Judah dwelt to the south of Babylon. The Holy Land lay a desolate waste.

For seven or eight years now the great king, having measurably pacified his widely spread empire, had been devoting himself to the erection and adornment of the wonderful buildings for which both he and the city became famous. Temples and palaces, roads and canals, parks and gardens, all grew quickly under the inspiration of his fiery enthusiasm. It is to be feared the cost in terms of human suffering was great, for all these huge works were executed by hordes of labourers little better than slaves. Every street corner and public square boasted statues and sculptures executed in stone or bronze; the temples and public buildings were adorned with richly painted representations of historic events in Babylonian history and mythology; the libraries were replete with books dealing with every conceivable subject—inscribed clay tablets which have proved to be the most imperishable of all written records. The king's own passion for recording all his actions and his feelings toward his gods, taken together with the vivid intimate pictures given us by Daniel, make Nebuchadnezzar better known to us than any other king of antiquity.

Picture him now, a little above fifty years of age, in his own domestic circle, with the Median wife

whom the historian says he dearly loved, and their children, Avil-Marduk (who succeeded him as king—the Evil-Merodach of Jer. 52. 31), Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar (Dan. 5. 10) and another daughter whose name is not recorded. Daniel, on his frequent visits to the great palace beside the river must often have talked with the queen and her children, and as he talked he would notice with growing apprehension the changing disposition of the king—his feverish exultation and pride in his achievements, his forgetfulness of the great miracles wrought by the God of Heaven Whom he had once been so ready to acknowledge, his increasing devotion to the service of Bel, the great false deity of Babylon. The incident of the fiery furnace was five or ten years in the past; the dream of the great image nearly thirty years; and the visible evidence of his work, crowned by the mighty temple which his own enthusiasm had done so much to complete, was steadily driving the nobler impulses from his mind. Daniel knew what the inevitable end must be, and without doubt he talked to his sovereign on many occasions with warnings of the inevitable fall that follows great pride.

Megalomania, they call it nowadays. In Nebuchadnezzar's case the disordered condition of his mind brought on a fearful malady of the brain in which he imagined himself to be a wild beast. Yet the blow did not fall until in the providence of God a marked opportunity for repentance was given.

It must have been in the very year that his last enemy, Pharaoh-Hophra of Egypt, had been overthrown and slain, that the strange and terrible dream came to the king. The account is to be found in Dan. 4. It is related by the king himself, and bears every mark of having been written under the king's direction in recognition of the lesson he had been taught. He was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace—fitting description of his cessation from active warfare and his devotion to the adornment of his city. He saw in his dream a great tree, the greatest that the earth had ever seen, and it gave shelter to all the birds and beasts of the earth. There came a "watcher" down from heaven. In Babylonian mythology there were seven "watchers" who were the messengers of the gods, corresponding somewhat to the seven archangels of Jewish traditionary thought. The watcher decreed the cutting down of the tree and the scattering of

its fruit, and the binding of the forlorn stump with a covering of bronze, fixed with iron clamping rings, to protect it from further damage, until seven times should pass over it, and the living should know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

In the days of Babylon dreams were considered to have great significance, and it would be a comparatively frequent occurrence for the interpreters to be called before the king to explain the visions he had seen during the previous night. Once the dream was related, an explanation could easily be given in such words that, whatever the outcome, the interpreters would be tolerably sure to preserve their reputation. It is therefore a little surprising to find that in this instance the wise men declined to interpret the dream. A possible reason for this refusal is hinted at in verse 7 of chapter 4, which contains a significant statement by the king. He says, not that they *could* not, but that they *did* not, make known to him the interpretation. It is true that in verse 18, when repeating the matter to Daniel, he says that they were not *able* to make it known, but the impression one has is that this very shrewd judge of men had formed the opinion that the interpreters could have hazarded an interpretation if they wanted to but abstained from doing so for reasons of their own and pleaded ignorance as *excuse*.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably right in his surmise. The change in his disposition was becoming manifest, and others beside Daniel would be perceiving the impending disaster. Daniel was still chief of the wise men; it might well be that these officials, shirking the duty themselves, left it to their chief to tell the king the truth.

So, in the ordinary way, his subordinates having retired, Daniel came in before the king to hear the dream. One can sense the king's relief of mind, in verses 8 and 9, confident that Daniel can and will give him the truth of the matter. The king's own religious views were still warm towards the gods of Babylon and he still credited Daniel with possessing the "spirit of the holy gods". Daniel, when he heard the details of the dream, was silent and dejected for a long time. It could not have been that he had not foreseen this; he must have known the meaning of the dream as soon as it was related; what oppressed Daniel was his realisation that the blow had fallen. The decree had gone forth, and all the glory of a man whom he respected and admired was to be humbled to the dust.

It is in the 19th verse that we have evidence of something almost approaching affection in Nebuchadnezzar's feeling for Daniel. Observing his

faithful Minister's distress, he exclaimed "*Belte-shazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee*". He was prepared to forego the explanation in order to save his friend distress of mind. This is a very different aspect of the man from that displayed when as a ruthless autocrat he ordered three men to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, and signed an order for the execution of all the wise men of Babylon on a momentary impulse. Even in the midst of that haughtiness and pride which was rapidly driving him to madness, this proud monarch cherished feelings of respect and concern for Daniel. How profound must the influence have been which the latter's integrity and loyalty had exerted upon the heart of this pagan king through the years!

The words gave Daniel his opening. Gently, but firmly, he told the king the import of the dream, and added his own earnest counsel, "*Wherefore, O king, let my reason be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*". Perhaps he had in mind the story of Nineveh of nearly three centuries before, how that they repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonah, and how God repented of the evil which He thought to do, and did it not. Long and earnestly must Daniel have pleaded with the great man, recalling those days in his early life when he had acknowledged the power of the God of heaven, and seen His hand outstretched to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego from the fiery furnace. Daniel would have recalled the king's dream of the great image, and reminded him how that dream had been fulfilled in his rapid conquest of the then known world. But it was all quite evidently of no avail; the sequel shows us that the king remained unrepentant. And so the blow fell.

"*All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking upon (see margin) the great palace.*" It would seem from the use of that word "upon" that this scene took place in the park which has become known as the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon", one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Because Nebuchadnezzar's queen missed the forests and mountains of her native Media, the king had caused to be built within the palace precincts a miniature stretch of wooded hills. Three successive tiers of brick arches, built like three great viaducts piled one on top of another, were erected and covered with earth, so disposed as to make hills and valleys. Upon this foundation the park was laid out, with grass, shrubs and trees, pathways and terraces, and artificial streams which were supplied from the River

Euphrates far below by means of some kind of water-raising device. Reared up high above the roof of the palace, commanding a magnificent view of the city, this park with its tree-clad hills appeared from a distance to be suspended between heaven and earth, from which fact it has become known as the "Hanging Gardens". There was no more likely place than this in which the king might be walking when the dread calamity came upon him.

"And as he walked, he spake, saying 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?'" (Vs. 30.)

The words were spoken, and they could not be recalled. Retribution, swift and sure, came out from the outraged holiness of God. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee . . . the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws."

Vivid, life-like words—the testimony of an eye-witness! Who wrote them? Who walked with that magnificent man in those beautiful gardens, looked down with him upon the glorious buildings stretching far below for miles towards the horizon, followed with the eye the silver ribbon of the river as it entered the city precincts, skirted the palace, passed through the dock basin with its ships from Arabia and India, and beyond the massive ramparts to lose itself in the distant fields? Who gazed with him upon the scintillating golden sanctuary at the summit of the great Tower, set like another sun against the blue heavens, six hundred feet above the city; and then, horror-stricken, saw the light go suddenly out of those piercing eyes, the fine intelligent face reshape its lineaments to the form of an imbecile, the upstanding figure drop down upon hands and knees, the commanding voice at which kings and warriors had trembled begin to utter strange sounds, grotesquely imitating the beasts of the forest? Who was it that sought in vain to restrain those strong hands as they tore the princely raiment to shreds and began grubbing at the roots and herbs of the soil; and then, failing, ran in frantic haste to summon assistance?

It might have been Daniel. It might have been Queen Amytis. There is a familiarity about the usage of the king's name in verse 33 which seems more fitting coming from the queen than from Daniel. It might well be that this most interesting

document enshrines the testimony of three people, and that verses 28 to 33 are from the hand of the Babylonian queen.

In any case Daniel would be very quickly on the spot. There was very little that could be done. The physicians would doubtless be trying their cures and the magicians busy attempting to exorcise the demon that had taken possession of the king's person. The sorcerers would be feverishly uttering and muttering their incantations to the same end. Daniel would not interfere. The king's family and his ministers would expect the customary treatment to be given. All was of no avail. Finally the soothsayers would come forward and pronounce the verdict of the omens they had examined; and probably, being wise after the event, would hazard the opinion that the gods had afflicted the king in consequence of some great offence, perhaps insufficient attention to the service of the gods, or even—if Daniel happened to be out of earshot—in displeasure at the king's interest in a foreign god and a foreign Chief Minister. It is hardly likely that the native priesthood would let slip such a golden opportunity of impressing upon the king's family the significance of this act of the great god Bel!

Nebuchadnezzar continued in this state for seven years. It is true that secular historians do not make any reference to this happening. Berosus, the Babylonian historian who was a priest in the Temple of Bel at Babylon some two and a half centuries later, and who had access to all the records when writing his history, does refer vaguely to some strange mystery connected with the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. One or two other cryptic allusions are met with in the works of other writers, but nothing that can reasonably be said to confirm the Bible account. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a member of the secret caste, the Chaldeans. The whole episode, if generally known, was likely to bring the fraternity into disrepute. Even although the priests may have exploited it within the king's family circle to warn the youthful Avil-Marduk against his father's predilection for the Hebrew's God, they would be anxious to suppress the general circulation of the story, and since the historical records of the nation were in the charge of the priests, it is tolerably certain that they took good care to keep private anything of a derogatory nature.

The story as we have it in Daniel 4 bears all the evidences of truth. There is the king's own account of the dream which predicted the disaster, vs. 1-18, to which is added the testimony of his Minister as to their subsequent conversation. Next to this comes the account of the actual happening, by an eye-witness (28-33) probably Queen Amytis,

## What doth the Lord require of thee?

*"What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."* (Mic. 6. 8.)

And is this all that the Lord really asks; to manifest these three virtues and to live a life in which they are exemplified and practised? When the final reckoning comes to be made, and it is said of a man that he was just, and good, and humble, will God be satisfied? Do the high standards and self-denying demands of the High Calling of this Gospel Age come down at last to no more than this?

It is even so—but it is that the standards and conditions of our calling reach *up* to these three demands, and until we have learned, and well learned, all that is involved in Balaam's exhortation, we shall not have measured up to the likeness our God has set before us.

We know nothing of the circumstances under which these words were originally uttered. How they came to be preserved for nearly a thousand years, then to be quoted by the prophet Micah, we do not know either. Micah accredits them to Balaam, and all that we know of Balaam is that he was a prophet of God although a Gentile, that being hired by the king of Moab to curse Israel he blessed them instead, and that having fallen into the hands of the Israelites he was put to death by them. This wonderful utterance shows a side to his character which otherwise would be quite unsuspected. *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* he says, as if he but reminds us of what we already know perfectly well, something that God has manifestly and admittedly shown us already. And that is the first keen truth that comes home to us. *We do know these things.* We have enough of the original law written in man's heart to realise that justice, goodness and unselfishness are fundamental in human relations and that without them we cannot make progress toward the Heavenly city. God has shown us that and inwardly we know it. We might do very well by writing in our hearts the one line *"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good"* for in calm, quiet reflection upon those nine words there *is* a wealth of spiritual instruction. The Israelites of old were treated as servants and given a code of laws in which every crime and penalty was clearly defined, and, as the writer to

the Hebrews says of that law "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward"; we who are of the New Creation are treated as sons, as men and women whom the Father trusts to work out the Divine law for themselves on the basis of certain cardinal principles which He has laid down, and hence we do need calmly and quietly to think out the implications of those principles.

Justice has become a harsh, unyielding word to us in the English language, calling up visions of transgressors having meted out to them the due of their deeds. Of course the true idea behind the word is that of rightness, or righteousness. The man who takes into account all that is due to his God, his fellow-man, and to his own self, and renders to all the due that is theirs, is a righteous and a just man. This involves a sober recognition of the purpose of God in creating man and placing him upon the earth, and a willing taking up of the duties and responsibilities of a citizen of earth. Those who have consecrated their lives to God and become footstep followers of Jesus Christ, have the added duties and responsibilities of that calling to consider. These have entered into a family, the brethren of Christ, and there are family obligations to be honoured. How many there are who look upon the fellowship solely from the doctrinal angle and fail to realise that it is a brotherhood which has its basis upon things far deeper and more potent for good than mere intellectual understanding of God's Plan? There are many who are very correct in doctrine but have utterly failed to appreciate and honour the family relationship which must exist between those who hope ultimately to "reign with him".

This first principle, then, must be understood along the lines of righteousness; not a cold, austere, "holier-than-thou" righteousness the possessor of which thanks God that he is not as other men; not a bigoted, rigid cast of mind which sees nothing save its own narrow conception of the Divine dealings; but a warm, generous, zealous attitude of heart which manifests itself in a constant endeavour to maintain the highest ideals of faith and conduct before men, a refusal to compromise those standards under any circumstances, and a firm conviction of the rightness of God's ways and the certainty of their eventual triumph that nothing can shake.

Our consecration to Divine service does not absolve us from our Christian duty to our fellowmen. Rather it intensifies that duty. We are not of the world, but we are in the world, and whilst so we cannot escape the obligations which properly devolve upon us as God's representatives in the world. The monastic form of life which involved a complete separation from ordinary affairs and ordinary people was a retreat and an escape from the principle that all created things were inherently sinful and corrupt and that withdrawal from them, and a physical mortification of the flesh, was pleasing to God. All this is wrong, for God Himself is the Author of creation and what He made, He made very good. Paul's words regarding the mortifying of the flesh were intended to teach and inculcate quite another truth, one that was perhaps best enshrined in the words "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John. 12. 24.) The Church of this Age is called to suffer and die in Christ that, like Him, they may be sown for the bringing forth of fruit, new life, in the coming Age amongst mankind. Lights in the world, bread of life, salt of the earth, every Scriptural illustration we have shows the intimate contact of the Christian with the world in which he lives, and yet his essential separateness from it.

It is thus that he learns to love mercy. Goodness, benevolence, kindness, cannot be attained by reading about them in a book—even though that book be the Bible. They are essentially practical virtues, and a man becomes a good man, a kind man, a benevolent man, only by means of his dealings with his fellows. To love mercy therefore implies a desire to practise mercy and this in turn leads to a way of life which finds scope for the practice of the desire. There is so much opportunity for the exercise of goodness to-day and it is not limited to those possessing money or outstanding talents. The Christian commission to "bind up the broken-hearted" is one aspect of "loving mercy". One may very conceivably do more good to a sad soul by giving assurance of the coming Kingdom than by a present of money. Sympathy and friendly compassion may upon occasion be more sorely needed than food or clothing. The word in season, the helping hand, the friendly endeavour to lighten a burden whether in a spiritual or a material connection are evidences of the attitude that God requires of us, that we "love mercy".

"Pure religion and undefiled before God" says James "is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Once again there is that intimate

association with practical Christian endeavour toward the distressed of this world and separateness from the world that is the hall-mark of the instructed Christian. Moving among these people, ministering to their distresses, but not of them, professing and manifesting a citizenship which is not of this earth, this is experience that will stand us in good stead when the time comes to turn the "pure language" to all people and teach them to call upon the name of the Lord with one consent.

These things are duties toward man. We have also, and of supreme importance, our duty toward God. "Walk humbly with thy God" said Balaam. Can we amplify his words to include that life of reverence and worship which must be ours if we would eventually see His face? "He that abideth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty" said the Psalmist. All our right doing and goodness will avail us nothing if it is not lived in "reverence and godly fear". Above all our outward activities we must place the importance of the inner life, that life which finds its all in complete consecration and submission to God. Our behaviour towards our fellows will bring us rich lessons of experience that are necessary to our future work, but our dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will show us the Divine character and transform our minds and hearts into a copy likeness of His Son. Unless we have attained that likeness all the benefit of life's experiences will have been lost so far as our High Calling is concerned. Many there are, claiming with justice to have performed many wonderful works in His name, who will nevertheless be rejected from among the number of the triumphant Church. We must diligently follow after those things which will increase our perception of the inward life of the Spirit if we would truly come to know as well as worship God in spirit and in truth.

The active, businesslike, "practical" Christian often finds this a hard thing. There is so much to be done in active service, so many opportunities of preaching the message, so much of distress and suffering to be relieved, and he, by nature and temperament well fitted to undertake such labours, is very apt to give insufficient time and thought to that calm, quiet, leisurely communion with God in the things of the spirit that comes so much more easily to less active souls. He does not realise his loss, until, it may be, the failure of his activities, or disappointment at their outcome, awakens him to realisation of the things he is missing. In all our activities let us always leave room for walking "humbly with God".

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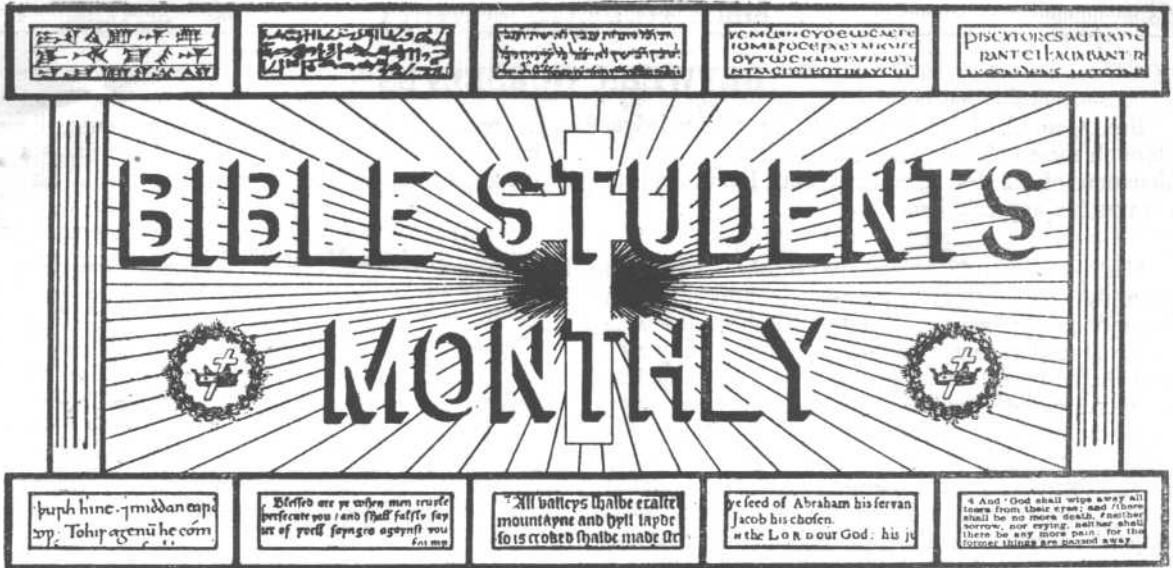
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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

Bro. Geo. A. Ford would like to acknowledge, through these columns, the receipt of an anonymous donation of £2 for the Benevolent Fund, and to express his appreciation.

\* \* \* \*

With this month's issue the B.S.M. reverts to monthly publication. It would appear from correspondence received that this has been the wish of many readers, but it will entail additional expense, and the co-operation of all our friends is invited so to increase the circulation that the magazine may meet the cost of its production. In this connection quite a number of friends write to explain that they do not themselves subscribe to the Monthly but read a copy passed on by a brother or sister of their acquaintance, often with the thought that by so doing they will save us the work entailed in sending them a separate copy. Now, whilst this consideration for the "despatching" department is very sincerely appreciated, it really does not help the cause of the B.S.M. at all, but rather hinders. The cost of printing for a small circulation is much higher, proportionately, than that of printing a greater number, and if all those friends who at present read someone else's copy were themselves to subscribe, the magazine would go much more nearly to paying its way. Perhaps the brethren who are able to co-operate along this line will think the matter over and decide to take out a personal subscription. The despatch department will be right glad of the additional service involved!

Another very real service which friends of the B.S.M. can render is to introduce it to others who are likely to be interested. It will be a pleasure to send a packet of recent back numbers to any who would like to do this, upon receipt of enclosed form stating how many copies could be profitably used. If unable to distribute copies in this way yourself, write on the back of the form the names and

addresses of friends to whom you would like an introductory copy sent, and if such are not already readers copies will be forwarded to them.

\* \* \* \*

The necessity for a tune book to accompany the "Bible Students Hymnal" has long been felt. A number of brethren actively interested in this have made it possible for such a book to be produced should there be sufficient demand to make it worth while. The book as planned will contain suitable tunes for all the hymns in our Hymnal, and will represent a very choice selection indeed of some 350 hymn tunes. It will be cloth bound gold stamped. Will the friends please indicate on the same form used for above purpose how many copies they would take at either of the maximum prices shown? This information will enable a decision as to its preparation to be taken.

\* \* \* \*

A sample of the new "two-minute" tracts has been enclosed with this issue. They are available in packets of 100 assorted tracts, of 16 different titles, at 1/6 post free, or 1,000 assorted as desired at 10/6 post free. With one such packet you will have literature on sixteen different subjects ready to your hand to meet almost any occasion that may arise. If the friends like these little leaflets and make use of them it will be counted a privilege to keep them always in stock and to extend the range of subjects. Suggestions for further titles will be very welcome.

\* \* \* \*

It is rather late to comment upon the Easter Convention held at Warrington, but a report to hand from the friends there tells of the unusually happy and profitable time spent by those that were present. There was a record attendance and the addresses were timely and instructive. The friends parted at the end feeling how good it had been to be there.

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# Gods of Egypt

## AN EXHORTATION

*"Make us gods to go before us, for as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him."*  
(Exod. 32. 1.)

Man has ever been prone to make God in his own image and likeness. There are few who realise with Solomon that heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain God; and much less any house that man can build. The average Israelite of Moses' day believed that God dwelt literally inside the innermost sanctuary of the Tabernacle, and that Aaron went in to speak with Him face to face. Moses and the leaders of the nation knew better, but they could not impart that knowledge to the people, for the people would have none of it. A visible leader, a mighty man of valour to go before them and smite their enemies, they could follow; a popular preacher, arousing their feelings and enthusiasm for a new crusade and a great awakening to this opportunity of attaining a land flowing with milk and honey they could heed; but this mystic who remained alone on the mountain to no apparent purpose for days on end, coming down only to define and order their communal life together for a purpose still imperfectly comprehended, had ceased to fire their imagination. They did not understand what he was doing and they looked about for more tangible things upon which to fix their interest. So it was that they tired of the high mission to which they had been called; shrank from the hardships of the journey that lay before them, and magnified the obstacles which lay in the way. The fair vision of a land in which their children could grow up and the family of Israel live as a free people paled away and in their hearts the vivid colours of Egypt, its gaudy temples, its green fields and its blue river, exercised an appeal the more potent because in spirit they had never really left Egypt. The cruel slavery was forgotten, the distress and sore labour faded from their minds, and they said one to another "Go to, let us return into Egypt, for the former days were better than these". Whilst Moses wrestled with God on the mountain, the people in the plain sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play. The tremendous significance of their deliverance from Egypt no longer meant anything to them, and the enthusiasm which had led them to shout exultantly "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient" had spent itself and they were left with nothing but an awareness of those things that appealed only to the gross materialism of their

natures. That expression "to play" indicates a free indulgence in unholy rites and practices which were expressly condemned in the law Moses had so recently given them. For a short time they had caught a vision of heaven, and in the wonder of that vision had given themselves wholeheartedly to God for His service—but the vision had faded and they had turned once again to the more tangible if less exalted things of this world.

We must, nevertheless, impute to these unfortunate Israelites a certain measure of sincerity. They did not turn back to the gods of Egypt solely because the worship of those gods pandered to depraved desires which could not be satisfied in the purer worship of the Most High. Their reversion to the religion of Egypt was largely because that religion was expressed in terms they could understand; they had been brought up in its atmosphere, under the shadow of its temples, indoctrinated in all its lore and traditions. Those marvellous manifestations of Divine power, the ten plagues, the Red Sea crossing, and the waters of Marah, had for a time turned their thoughts and devotions to the hitherto unknown God Whom Moses preached, and the rosy promises of a land in which they might live free from Egyptian bondage spurred them on to a new zeal and service fired by that expectation; but with the magnetism of Moses' personal presence withdrawn and his own prolonged absence on the mountain top the old arguments and ideas began to re-assert themselves. Feeling themselves to be in need of leadership and guidance, and fearing that both Moses and the God Whom he represented had forgotten and deserted them, the people stretched out longing hands to the gods which they had previously served. Dreading to be left without a shepherd, they were willing to accept as shepherds even those that would lead them back into the intolerable bondage from which they had so recently escaped.

This is the test that comes upon each one that hears and accepts the Divine call to complete dedication of life. Sometimes it comes to communities of believers, sometimes to the individual, but to each and all, at some time in life, comes the insistent question "Lovest thou Me more than these?". Are you prepared to maintain your high ideals, your continual seeking the things of the Spirit, the things which are above, even although Moses has disappeared into the mists of the mountain top and

the magic of his voice, the thrill of his presence, is yours no more? Can you finish your journey to the Kingdom under the guidance and in the strength of an invisible leader now that the visible one who led you in the early days has passed out of your ken, or must you set up for yourself things of earth to which you will give your allegiance? True, these gods of Egypt will appeal more readily to the senses and give you a feeling of earthly satisfaction. There is music, and dancing, and rich viands, and exhilarating drink, and good company, for those who espouse the gods of Egypt, and for a while these things will seem to be more worth while than that stern, selfless devotion to a cause which seems on the surface to be a lost cause. But you are not really in tune with these things, and in your heart of hearts you know it. The turning away from the high spiritual standards of your calling may give temporary relief to eyes tired with "straining . . . for the tarrying day" and cause them to rest more easily upon the pleasant things of this world, but it will bring leanness into your soul, and your heart will become sick for the days when "we walked to the house of God in company". No one, having once sincerely and intelligently appreciated the conditions of our calling and caught a glimpse of the creation that shall be can ever be really satisfied with earthly arrangements, institutions and interests again. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; all things have become new." And "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour".

We do not necessarily formally reject the faith that is in us when we turn to follow gods of Egypt. We can set them up in our own midst and worship them thinking that we are worshipping the Most High more acceptably. We, no less than others, can make God after our own image and likeness. And it is so fatally easy because, like Israel of old, we want to see results. This waiting period is a time of severe strain. There is so much to be done in the execution of the Divine Plan, and we want to play our part in it. Israel was anxious to inherit and build the Promised Land and could not understand the wilderness experiences which had to come first. We are like that. We want to see our Father's Name vindicated and His praise and worship established throughout the earth. We know that we are called to witness to His truth and His Plan through all our days on earth, to be witnesses unto Jesus in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. We know also that this witness is a necessary part of our spiritual development and training for the future work, but because it can be made to produce results of a more visible and tangible nature than the fruits of the Holy

Spirit's work in our own hearts and lives we tend —so akin are we to those Israelites in the wilderness —to give the greater attention to that which is the means to the end, and to forget the end itself. The world will not be converted through our preaching now; we hold that as a basic principle of the Truth. We are called and commissioned nevertheless to preach the Gospel at all times, in all places, in every manner that we can, as a witness to all nations, right up to the end of the Age, until the end come. That is a basic principle of the Truth also. But unless we are so guided in all our ways and activities by the power of the Holy Spirit, and transformed measurably into the likeness of our Lord, then we shall not be counted worthy of inclusion in the company that is to be entrusted with the task of reconciling men to God in the next Age. That is so fundamental an article of our faith that all else must centre on that. "Give diligence, brethren, to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do *these things* ye shall never fail, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"; there follows an enumeration of the graces of the Christian character, fruits of the Spirit which we must acquire in their fulness if we are to be wellpleasing to our God.

We must learn to look, then, not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen, and in the power of *that* vision lay our hands to the opportunities of outward service that come our way. Our witness must be as a people, a compact body of believers, a family in Christ, witnessing not only by word of mouth, not only from the public platform, but also by demonstration of the manner in which our faith works out in our own fellowship and reveals itself in our own meetings. The one that hears our message must be able to look at us in our assemblies and see what this faith has done for us, and seeing, "fall down on his face and worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14. 25). No witness is really effective unless it eventually leads to this.

We go forward, then, not behind the panoply of the gods of Egypt, borne each upon their bearers' shoulders, as Isaiah so caustically remarked "because they cannot go", but behind the guiding cloud which rises aloft and goes always in front of the host, leading onward and upward, away from Egypt and all its materialism, away from the standards and methods of this earth, away from the mechanistic organisations of men, on, ever on, towards the Promised Land and the realisation of all the golden promises made to our fathers and inherited by us. If we can only transform our fellowship into a

compact family, held together, not by creeds and regulations, rules of faith, synods and presbyteries, but by the vital power of the Holy Spirit, operating in each heart and mind, leading to a spontaneous co-operation together in every good work, then, and

only then, will our witness go forth so effectively that men, even in this day of intellectualism and science, will stop, and take heed, and say one to another "They are ignorant, and unlearned, men, but—whence have they *this* knowledge?"

## The Millennium in the Teachings of Jesus

Both Jesus and His forerunner, John the Baptist, were born and brought up in a domestic atmosphere of what to-day would be called intense Millennial expectation. This is clear from the opening chapters of the four gospels. Zacharias gave expression to such hopes at the birth of his son, proclaiming him the herald of the Messiah: "*And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways . . . and give knowledge of salvation unto His people . . .*" (Luke 1. 68-79). He thus connected the mission of John with the prophecy of Isaiah, given seven centuries before. It is not surprising therefore that when, grown to manhood's estate and embarking upon his life's work, John was asked "Who art thou?" he replied in Isaiah's own words "The voice of one crying in the wilderness 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight . . . and all flesh shall see the salvation of God'" (Luke 3. 4-6; Isa. 40. 3-5). This is the first hint of Millennial teaching to be met with in the Gospels.

The words of the angel Gabriel to Mary confirmed this expectation. They were in the truest sense a crystallisation of all that every orthodox child of Israel believed concerning the coming earthly Kingdom of God: "*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke 1. 32-33). The aged Simeon, taking the child Jesus in his arms, thanked God that he had been permitted to see with his own eyes the Lord's Messiah "*a light to lighten the nations, and the glory of thy people Israel*" (Luke 2. 29-32). Likewise Anna, "coming in at that moment", spake of him to "all them that looked for deliverance in Jerusalem", an expression indicating not only belief in the promise of the Kingdom, but an expectation that it would come in their own lifetime.

It was in this environment that the boy Jesus grew up. His later utterances reveal His thorough familiarity with the "Kingdom" prophecies of the

Old Testament, and also His knowledge of the apocalyptic (uninspired) literature of his own day, literature which depicted in glowing terms the glories of the Messianic Age. It is probable that Jesus could read and speak three languages, Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew, and there was available to Him in these tongues a wealth of literature with which He must have been well acquainted.

The climax to this early training came upon the occasion of His first public discourse, in the synagogue at Nazareth, where He definitely identified Himself with the Messianic position by reading the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah and declaring that He Himself was the One to Whom the prophet referred. "*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*" (Luke 4. 16-27). That chapter is the charter of Israel, the commission and authority defining the place of Israel in the Millennial Age, and in that memorable discourse Jesus gave the seal of His own authority to the prophecy. Although in His subsequent teaching He did not refer a great deal to the Millennial Age, His mission being rather, as He said, to call men to repentance and discipleship, and to lay the foundations of the Christian work of this Gospel Age, yet what He did say reveals His own sure knowledge that the fruition of His earthly life and death could only be borne when that Age should come.

This fact is nowhere so strikingly shown as in His reference to "the regeneration". Asked upon one occasion by His disciples as to the outcome of their following Him and faithfulness to death, He replied, ". . . *ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Matt. 19. 28). Our Lord's use of this word is very significant. *Palingenesia* primarily means to be born or created anew, and was commonly used of the restoration of a thing to its pristine state, or as we would say, renovation. The Jewish theologian Philo of Alexandria, contemporary with Jesus, uses the word of the renovation of the earth after the Deluge, and Josephus, of the renovation of Judea at the

return from Babylon. Thayer defines its meaning as "that signal and glorious change of all things (in heaven and earth) for the better, that restoration of the primal and perfect condition of things which existed before the fall of our first parents, which the Jews looked for in connection with the advent of the Messiah, and which the primitive Christians expected in connection with the visible return of Jesus from heaven". Jesus Himself used the term dispensationally, applying it to a time future when He would be seated on the throne of His glory, reigning over the earth. Jesus probably talked with His disciples in Aramaic, and the Aramaic equivalent of the expression is "in the new age". His declaration therefore implied His own belief in the future Messianic Age on earth, and that His disciples were to occupy administrative positions superior even to that to be occupied by Israel at that time. Upon a later occasion He confirmed His words by telling them "I appoint unto you a kingdom . . . that ye may . . . sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22. 29-30). That this Age of universal conversion could not come prior to His own Second Coming is clear from a comparison of His own prayer "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth . . ." (Matt. 6. 10) with His prophetic utterance "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 8). The context of the latter text shows very clearly that He knew quite well He would not so find faith. It is plain that Jesus realised that despite all the Christian evangelism that coming centuries were to witness, the world would be largely unconverted at His return, the nations would still be controlled by other than Christian principles, the "heathen" would still be numbered by millions, and the Millennial Age would be the only hope of world evangelisation and general acceptance of Christianity.

It was inevitable that the word "judgment" should appear in Jesus' discourses concerning that Age. The Millennium is the great Day of Judgment, during the course of which all outstanding questions of man's relationship to God are brought into review and settled. Remembering that this judgment (*krisis*) includes much more than the mere passing of sentence—it includes a trial, a consideration of all relevant circumstances, the testing as to each one's fitness or otherwise for God's plans, the separation between righteous and wicked—it is evident that many aspects of that Age can be set against the background of "judgment". Particularly is this true in respect to the opportunity for repentance and reform which that Age affords, for Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19. 10); God "sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world

through Him might be saved" (John 3. 17). It is to be expected therefore that Jesus would stress this aspect of His Millennial work, and in fact He does so by using as illustrations just those peoples whom the self-righteous would condemn as unworthy of Divine favour.

"The men of Nineveh" He said "shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it . . . The queen of the South (the Arabian queen who visited Solomon) shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it" (Luke 11. 31-32). This is a definite avowal that one feature of the Messianic Age is to be the resurrection—re-creation—of the dead, to a state in which generations that had lived at widely different times in earth's history are brought face to face. The nature of that judgment is shown more definitely in the Lord's denunciation of the unbelieving cities of His own day. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin and Bethsaida" He said "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11. 22). "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Mark 6. 11; Matt. 10. 15). "Woe unto thee, Capernaum. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee" (Matt. 11. 24). In view of the apparent fact that with all their shortcomings it would seem that the cities of Galilee were hardly so depraved as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah it is pertinent to inquire what our Lord meant by the expression "more tolerable".

The Greek word really means that the lot or portion of those named will be more endurable. It is derived from *anechomai*, to bear or to endure, and to illustrate its use several instances of *anechomai* are given.

"I suffer fools gladly." 2 Cor. 9. 19.

"Being persecuted, we suffer it." I Cor. 4. 12.

"Suffer the word of exhortation." Heb. 13. 22.

"Bear with me in my folly." 2 Cor. 11. 1.

"Reason would that I should bear with you." Acts 18. 14.

"They will not endure sound doctrine." 2 Tim. 4. 3.

"Forbearing one another in love." Eph. 4. 2.

"Forbearing one another." Col. 3. 13.

The meaning of Jesus' words seems to be that those of Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, whose sins were largely those of ignorance, will find the stern repression of evil which is characteristic of the Millennial Age easier to bear or endure than will those of our Lord's own day who had the advantage of fifteen centuries of God's laws and at the end the presence and preaching of Christ

Himself, and yet had rejected Him. This is in keeping with the Jewish belief, carried over from Old Testament times, that in the resurrection there is to be a distinction made between the "just" and the "unjust" and that the latter must at least undergo penitentiary "stripes" to effect their cleansing before they can be admitted to the full privileges of that day. This is the meaning of the allusion in Daniel 12. 2 to the effect that some will rise to everlasting (Heb. *olam*, enduring) life and some to shame and "enduring" contempt, this expression being paralleled by our Lord's own declaration "*The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation*" (*anastasis eis krisin*—resurrection into judgment—the present English usage of "damnation" does not correctly represent the meaning of "*krisis*"; John 5. 28-29). This expression "resurrection into judgment" describes the condition into which the evildoers will enter when they awake and find themselves called upon to "answer for the deeds done in the body". Those that have "done good" in their former lives will emerge from the grave already measurably free from the necessity of undergoing this "resurrection into judgment" and these were referred to by Jesus when he spoke of the "resurrection of the just" (Luke 14. 4).

The most vivid picture of Millennial conditions that ever came from the lips of Jesus is the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25. 31-45). In that parable Jesus spoke of the gathering of all nations before Him when He has come in His glory and a great dividing, as a shepherd separating his sheep from his goats. That judgment fixes the eternal destiny or fate of every man, and the parable closes with the gracious welcome to those that have been found worthy, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". Other casual allusions of Jesus to conditions in the Millennial Age include His words to the dying thief "Thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23. 39-43), that strange answer to the Sadducees' question regarding the marriage state in that day "In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matt. 22. 30), and His declaration to the Pharisees "Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, sit down in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13. 28-29). There is ground, here, for the view that the earthly leaders of mankind in that day will be the old patriarchs and prophets of Israel, raised from the dead to administer the affairs of the new world in righteousness. The sterling

character of these "Ancient Worthies" is sufficient guarantee that their rule will bring peace and happiness to mankind.

As to the time when this Kingdom will be set up, Jesus was silent, even when pressed by His disciples. "*It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.*" "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only*" (Acts 1. 7; Matt. 24. 36). He did indicate that the time would be long, and He gave certain signs by means of which those living when the time had come would recognise the imminence of the Kingdom. For the meantime, He counselled watchfulness and expectancy. "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

It is true therefore to say that a very considerable part of the edifice of Millennial belief is built upon the words of Jesus Himself. It would be surprising were it not so, for the burden of His message was the fact that God is actively moving to fulfil all the promises made to the fathers, and that fulfilment involves the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth.

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*An Item of Interest.*

### Young Bible Students' Circle

A number of young brethren, recognising the need for encouragement of young people in the most important thing in life, have grouped together to provide fellowship among young Bible students in Great Britain. As they are well scattered over the country and meeting all together is practically impossible at the present, they have arranged to publish a small periodical to be circulated among any interested. In order to get it going, a small panel of responsible ones, with the guidance of an experienced older brother, has been formed, and at a democratic meeting, has made the necessary decisions which will enable the first one or two editions to be produced. It is to be entitled "The Young Bible Students' Messenger", and an Editor has been elected.

We want this magazine to be the organ of fellowship among young truth-seekers, all over the country. In order that young brethren may know about it, we would like all readers to draw their attention to this notice. Those who would like to receive copies of the YOUNG BIBLE STUDENTS' MESSENGER, please write to the Secretary:—

Bro. D. Nadal,

35, Palace Gardens,  
Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

An upper limit of thirty years of age for membership of the Circle has been adopted.

# THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

## 3. Visions and Dreams

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

The greatest prophecies have been given through visions and dreams. We do not know how many of the Millennial descriptions of Isaiah and others owe their vividness of detail to this fact, but we do know that such prophecies stand out the more clearly, and linger longest in the memory. It may be that God chose the sense of sight rather than that of sound as His first medium of communication with man, and spoke to "holy men of old" in vision rather than by sound. The oldest words for "prophet", *roeh* and *chozeh*, seem to indicate this, for they both mean *one who sees*, and are often translated *seer*. After about 1000 B.C., however, the word *nabi*, meaning one who speaks ecstatically and fervently, began to supplant the older words, and it may well be that this change of word indicates a development in the status of the prophets, that whereas at the first they could do no more than relate the visions that they had seen, the later prophets could, and did, *explain* their visions in part to the people and perhaps tell them in glowing terms of those glories of the Divine Plan which they had been permitted to see. Such a conclusion is in harmony with the view that Divine Truth progressively unfolds as century succeeds century. An interesting note in this connection is found in 1 Sam. 9. 9, where the narrator, explaining Saul's servant's reference to the "man of God", says, "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet (*nabi*) was beforetime called a Seer" (*Roeh*). This verse is evidently an editorial note added to the account at some later date to explain the change of term to a generation that was not familiar with the more primitive meaning.

It is noteworthy that visions and dreams were not used to convey knowledge of God's future plans to men until the time of Isaiah. From then to that of John the Revelator, a period of eight hundred years, they formed the principal means of prophetic revelation. It is probable that visions as such go right back to the time of Eden; the sight of the Cherubim with the flaming sword, stationed at the entrance to Eden to keep the way of the Tree of Life (Gen. 3. 24) must have been a vision, for the cherubim, symbolic four-headed and six-winged creatures, have no existence in reality. Then Moses saw the vision of God on the Mount, and talked with Him, at the time when the Law was written there by the finger of God (Exod. 31. 18). Moses, of course, was that finger, for the Law proved to be well and solidly engraven on stone slabs, and

human instrumentality of some kind manifestly was employed.

Apart from the problematical case of Balaam (Num. 24. 16) there is no instance of "Kingdom prophecy" by vision or dream prior to the time of Isaiah. This is in keeping with the fact that Israel's own understanding of the Messianic Kingdom began to assume definite shape in Isaiah's day; even although David sang about it in his Psalms the idea was not clearly formulated in Israel at that time. It required the revelations of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel positively to define the nature of that Kingdom, and appropriately enough these four, together with Zechariah, who lived last of the five, were those to whom the greatest and most detailed of the Messianic visions were granted.

Isaiah's first vision was that of the Lord in His Temple (Isa. 6. 1). Although he does not explicitly state which of his further revelations were given by vision the nature of some of them, particularly chaps. 13, 21, 35 and 63, is such as to leave little room for doubt that they are descriptions of scenes that he did actually see. In some cases the visual impression was merely a symbolic picture, symbolising to his mind the reality that was intended. For example, in chap. 21 he perceived the dreaded *simoom*, a cyclonic wind, sweeping up from the Persian Gulf, to destroy the land, followed by a motley procession of chariots drawn by ill-assorted beasts of burden making all haste to get away, and he knew this to be symbolic of the fall of Babylon and the overrunning of the country by Cyrus of Persia; in chaps. 44 and 45 he associates this victory of Cyrus with the assuming of regal power by the destined "Servant of Jehovah", the Lord Jesus Christ in His Millennial Kingdom, and so makes chap. 21 a prophecy of that also. In chap. 35, however, he describes a scene that will certainly be literally fulfilled in the Millennial Age, and like Paul in *after days* (2 Cor. 12. 2) he might well have viewed in vision an actual scene of earth, three millenniums before that scene can be enacted in reality.

Jeremiah saw an almond twig suddenly and miraculously burst into blossom, and then a boiling caldron overturned so that its seething contents were precipitated all over the ground (Jer. 1. 11-14). Those symbols told him of the coming fulfilment of Divine promise but that there must first be a visitation in judgment at the hand of the Chaldeans, spreading death and destruction over the land. A later vision showed him two baskets of figs, symbolic of his own nation, one basket containing good figs

and the other, bad ones, telling him of the two sections into which that nation had divided itself, the one part heeding the Divine word and resting quietly in Babylon, the other, chafing under God's judgment and looking still to Egypt for salvation (Jer. 24. 1-10). The prophecy represented by this vision was fulfilled to the letter eighteen years later, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and brought the national existence of Judea to an end.

Twelve years after Jeremiah had seen his blossoming almond rod, Ezekiel, far away in Babylonia, beheld a series of visions which for sheer grandeur have no equal in the Old Testament. Like his predecessor Isaiah, he saw first of all a vision of the majesty of God, riding on the heavens, His throne supported by the cherubim (Ezek. 1). Later on he received visions relating to events imminent in his own time, a roll of a book containing an intimation of the coming downfall of Jerusalem (chaps. 2-7), a vision of the Temple with its idolatrous worship and the destruction of both city and Temple at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers (chaps. 8-11); all this some twelve years before the events took place. Later in his ministry he saw the final re-gathering of Israel (the valley of dry bones), their last trial of faith (the onslaught of Gog), and the Millennial reign, under symbol of a new Temple and city, chapters 37-48 of his prophecy comprising a detailed symbolic account of history from the Jewish viewpoint extending from their national awakening at the end of the Gospel Age to the final establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth, a series of events that in Ezekiel's day was still something like twenty-five centuries future.

The visions and dreams of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar belong to this same period, but whereas Ezekiel viewed the Divine Plan from heaven's standpoint, Daniel saw these things from the standpoint of an observer upon earth. Ezekiel was a priest, Daniel a statesman. Ezekiel saw his visions on the plains of Tel-Abib, the Jewish colony in southern Babylonia; Daniel saw his in the main at Babylon, the centre of Gentile power. The symbols in which the visions of the Book of Daniel were expressed were in keeping with this environment, expressive of the might of material things; a great image, a great tree, powerful wild beasts, and a heavenly Judge come down to make an end to them all. And here is a case where a completely unregenerate man is used as the vehicle of Divine revelation. Nebuchadnezzar was not a worshipper of God, yet his two dreams were as strictly and accurately prophetic as were Daniel's, although it was necessary for Daniel, the God-directed man, to explain them. At the same time it must be remembered that Nebuchadnezzar was a deeply religious

man and served his gods with an ardour worthy of a better cause. Like Saul of Tarsus, he verily thought he did God service. Is it possible that this piety of his, even although applied to unworthy objects, did make it possible for the prophetic vision to come to him where it could not come to less worthy men?

The Book of Daniel has often been called the "Revelation" of the Old Testament, but the description is probably more true of the Book of Zechariah. The visions of this, the Restoration prophet, embrace a greater span of time and a wider range of symbols than any other of the Old Testament prophecies, commencing with the Captivities of Israel and the Restoration, going on to the history of the Church, merging into the coming to power of the Ancient Worthies and concluding with the establishment of the Kingdom. The imagery of Zechariah is more like that of John the Revelator than is that of any other prophet.

Now the significant thing about all these prophetic visions and dreams is that the later prophets saw more deeply, farther into the future, and clothed their prophecies in more grandly symbolic language than did the earlier ones. There seems to be a kind of progressive revelation at work which enabled the later prophets to see more clearly into the mysteries of the spiritual world. Amos and Nahum, and to some extent Isaiah and Jeremiah, spoke only of things that were fulfilled within a century or so of their own time; and the visions were largely of mundane things, the city of Nineveh, the everyday implements of husbandry, the armies of Babylon, and so on. The later visions of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and all those of Daniel, reach farther forward, to the threshold of the Millennial Kingdom, and employ symbols in which the powers of heaven begin to be introduced—the stone cut out without hands, the Ancient of Days come down to judgment, the new covenant written in men's hearts, and the new heavens and new earth. Ezekiel and Zechariah, and John the Revelator, the last of the "vision" prophets, take their predictions into or to the end of the Millennial Age and use symbols which only the spiritually minded can hope to understand; the Temple and the River of Life, the High Priest raised to royal power, the olive trees and golden candlesticks, the Lamb on Mount Zion and the marriage of the Lamb. In all of this there seems to be a gradual but a definite leading away from the plain unvarnished literal acceptance of what is seen in the vision to its spiritual interpretation along lines of accepted symbolism. And this in its turn is but another aspect of our turning away from that which the natural eye perceives to that which is discerned spiritually, by the mental sight, that we might thus be instructed in the things of God.

To us, then, the visions and dreams of the prophets should be looked at in their structure as akin to our own dreams, strange composite pictures, flickering across the consciousness, not necessarily to be taken as literal images of the things with which they deal, but as representations in which every symbol has a meaning alluding back to some event or thing in the Old Testament or in the world of the Old Testament. Thus it is that only those who are thoroughly conversant with that rich storehouse which is God's word can hope to understand and interpret prophecy.

How do the visions come? By what power are these symbolic foreviews of events that have not yet

happened produced upon the screen of the human mind? And, once produced, is there no power that can divert the current of events so that the predicted happening never materialises in fact? And if there is no such power, and the event must follow the prophecy as surely as night follows day, and if the lives and destinies of men are bound up in such prophecies—as indeed they are—and there is no escape from the fulfilment predicted, it may be, long ages before those men were born, what becomes of the boasted freewill of the individual? The answers to such questions, insofar as there can be answers in the present limited state of our knowledge, must form the subject of a separate article.

*To be continued.*

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## THE BIBLE - THE BOOK FOR TO-DAY A familiar theme re-written and brought up-to-date in points of detail

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The Bible is the most interesting and instructive collection of writings in existence. Its sixty-six books comprise the handiwork of at least sixty authors, the latest of whom lived only nineteen hundred years ago and the earliest nearly five thousand years ago. Of all the books that are now before the reading public, this one is the most up-to-date. It presents a full and adequate explanation of life, of life's problems and perplexities, and of life's possibilities and opportunities. Above all, it points unhesitatingly to the One Who is the source of contentment, happiness and peace.

The Bible is the oldest book in existence. It has outlived the storms of forty-five centuries. Men have endeavoured by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth; they have hidden it, burned it, made the possession of it a crime punishable with death, and the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives. To-day, while many of its foes slumber in death, and hundreds of volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence are long since forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every nation and people of earth. It has been published in more than one thousand different dialects and languages. In the last one hundred and fifty years alone, four hundred and fifty million copies have been printed and circulated.

Between its covers is found law, ethics, poetry, drama, history, travel, prophecy, romance, philosophy, political and social instruction; in short, everything that has to do with the life of man. Its authors were as varied in character as are its contents. Kings, emperors and princes; poets, sages and philosophers; fishermen, statesmen and priests; poor men, rich men, preachers, exiles, captains,

legislators, judges, men of every grade and class, have contributed to the writing of this book.

General Smuts once said:—

*"Whenever I see anything great or anything really moving, my mind always passes into the language of the Old Testament. It is the language of the human heart, the language of the human mind and soul expressing pure human feelings and human emotions, with a universality which appeals to all races and all ages."*

No other sacred writing possesses this appeal. The sacred books of Islam and Buddhism, the two great non-Biblical religious faiths are less than two thousand years old and cannot be compared with the Bible. They give no detailed history of nations as does the Bible, neither do they pronounce with such authority and reason on the burning questions of man: his origin and destiny; and of evil: its origin, the reason for its permission, and its end.

The Bible therefore merits the thoughtful consideration of every reflective person. Upon the earth there is distress of nations with perplexity; a voice that speaks with authority is sorely needed. The Bible is that voice. *The Bible is the book for to-day.*

\* \* \* \*

As a record of history the Bible is unsurpassed. Over two-thirds of its contents are historical narratives. These narratives are authentic and reliable. Prof. Sayce, one of the greatest of archaeologists, has said: "*I do not for a moment hesitate to assert that the investigations in Assyria and Egypt thoroughly corroborate the statements of the Old Testament*", and Prof. Yahuda, another authority, declares "*Every archaeological discovery in Palestine and Mesopotamia contemporary with the Bible period bears out unflinchingly its historical accuracy.*"

There is evidence in the opening chapters of the Bible that they were written in Mesopotamia not later than twenty-five centuries before Christ. The history thus commenced was continued by successive writers for some two thousand years and was completed only four centuries before Jesus Christ came to earth. In the later decades of the nineteenth century the historical accuracy of these writings began to be questioned by critics, but to-day that scepticism has been proved unjustified, largely in consequence of the decipherment of Egyptian and Asiatic written records and the further discoveries of archaeologists. A tremendous amount of excavation has been undertaken in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt since the war of 1914, and practically every part of Bible history has now been confirmed or illuminated by the results of this work. Numerous books have been published setting forth these facts. *The verdict of twentieth century research is that Bible history is true!*

\* \* \* \*

There is poetry, drama and philosophy of a high order in the Bible. The Book of Ruth is an idyllic romance of three thousand years ago; the Book of Esther a rare study in human character. The passionate drama of the Book of Job stands in strong contrast to the measured soliloquys of Ecclesiastes, and the staccato epigrams of the Book of Proverbs to the delicate loveliness of the Song of Solomon. The crisp sunlight and shadows of the Book of Acts make it one of the most vividly interesting books of travel ever written, and the Book of Psalms is full of the most inspiring poetry. Each of these books is one to be read slowly and sympathetically as a work of art having its own characteristics and its own peculiar appeal.

The English language has been built up largely around the Authorised Version of 1611; the English love of liberty and justice is due in no small measure to general appreciation of its teachings; the finest of British characteristics must be attributed in considerable degree to three hundred years of consistent reading and preaching of the Book. Very truly, then, was it said by the famous biologist, Prof. T. H. Huxley, some seventy years ago, "*Consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this Book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of a merely literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilisations, and of a great past, stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations of the world.*"

In the practical things as well as in the cultured tastes of daily life, therefore, the Bible is a sure guide. For good health of body and of mind the Bible contains ample instruction. For guidance in affairs of nations as well as in relations between individuals, the Bible is the best authority. This Book, which has inspired the creative genius of writers, poets and painters through the centuries, is no less effective in the lives of ordinary men and women who read and ponder over its pages. *The Bible is the book of daily life.*

\* \* \* \*

Finally, and first in importance, the Bible is the Divine Revelation.

Man does not live by bread alone. A full and rich life is the portion of those who consciously seek to fulfil the Divine will. For all such the Bible is the teacher.

The Bible message is that sin and death are intrusions among men and will one day be removed. The first human beings were created sinless, undying, with ability to use the earth's resources for good. Tragically, they forsook the laws of righteousness and allowed selfishness, malice, injustice, to influence their course of life. Inevitably, pain, disease and death followed and has continued until now. Bible history follows the course of that sad progress, and then tells of the coming to earth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to redeem the world from its sin and the consequences of that sin. The immediate fruitage of His life and death on earth has been the development of the Church—a world-wide assembly of Christians completely devoted to His service. A further fruitage will become evident when His Kingdom on earth has been established, and under His beneficent control, and the administration of His Church, all humanity will be instructed and guided in that better way which will "make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth", abolish disease, poverty, and all the ills from which mankind now suffers, and bring to an end sin and death. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" for "there shall be no more death".

The Bible, then, is the book of the future. The time spent in reading, studying and discussing this, the greatest of all books, will not be time wasted. It cannot fail to broaden the mind and ennoble the character. It cannot fail to make the reader more thoughtful for others, more desirous of serving his fellow-men, more confident of the future. It cannot fail to establish intelligent faith in God, and a conviction that men have a mighty destiny before them, reaching far beyond the limits of things that are now seen and known, and extending into eternity.

*This article will shortly be available in leaflet form. Watch for notice in the "Monthly".*

# The Parable of the Sheep and Goats

AN EXPOSITION

The opening verse of this parable indicates the time of its application. It refers to the period of Christ's reign over the earth, from His assumption of power at the commencement of the Millennium to the cleansing of the world from the last trace of evil. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25. 31-32). Jesus cast this parable against the background of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7. 9-10) in which that prophet saw the "Ancient of Days" seated upon a throne of splendour with myriads assembled before Him for judgment, one "like the Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven to be brought before Him, and the kingship of earth being formally committed to that Son of Man and His companions, the "people of the saints of the Most High" that they might possess the kingdom for ever. Meanwhile the evil powers and institutions of the old world were being destroyed in a great holocaust of fire. Jesus knew Himself to be that "Son of Man" and His disciples and those that should afterwards believe on His Name to be the "people of the saints of the Most High" that were to be joined with Him in that Kingdom, and in this parable He set down the purpose and the character of His kingship over the nations during the Age of His glory.

The disciples must have understood this parable more clearly than any other parable. They were so accustomed to this view of the Messianic reign. How often in the Temple services would they join with intense feeling in the inspiring strains of the twenty-fourth Psalm "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty . . ." and so on. How they must have conned over the mystic vision of Zechariah "Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH . . . he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6. 12-13). Jewish literature of the date of the First Advent is full of such references, and Jesus Himself must have been thoroughly familiar with them. It is thought that the very phraseology of this parable was suggested to His mind by passages in the Book of Enoch, a book with which He would certainly be well

acquainted: "On that day mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory and shall try their works . . . and I will transform the earth and make it a blessing . . . for I have provided and satisfied with peace my righteous ones, and have caused them to dwell before me: but for the sinners there is judgment impending with me, so that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth". "And the Lord of Spirits seated him upon the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness was poured out upon him, and the word of his mouth slays all the sinners . . . and they shall be downcast of countenance, and pain shall seize them, when they see the Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory" (I Enoch 45. 3-6 and 62. 2-5). Another passage in the same work, quoted by Jude, runs "And behold! he cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly; and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (I Enoch 1.9: compare Jude 14-15). Here is a reference that parallels the various sayings of Jesus regarding the "angels" or messengers that will be with Him at His coming, the members of His Church, raised from the sleep of death, or changed "in the twinkling of an eye" as the case may be, united with Him and revealed with Him to the world in glory.

The vision of the Great White Throne of Revelation 20. 11 is parallel to that of Daniel 7 and to this parable. In Revelation there is the same standing of the nations, the "dead, small and great", before the Throne, the same judgment and separation between good and evil, and the same condemnation of sin and sinners. These three passages between them afford a wonderfully vivid picture of the work of judgment that is carried on throughout the Millennial Age, a work that divides and separates men into two classes, those who choose righteousness and life, and those who choose unrighteousness and death.

The basis of the selection, feeding or not feeding the hungry, clothing or failing to clothe the naked, and so on, is an allusion to the very practical ideas held by thinking men in Jesus' day as to what constituted fitness or unfitness for eternal life. Such "good works" have always been features of the religious life of true Jews. There is a parallel to the Lord's words in the "Secrets of Enoch" (not

to be confused with the Book of Enoch just now mentioned, and usually known as 2 Enoch to distinguish it from that book), a work which was known to pious Jews during His lifetime, or at any rate shortly thereafter. The book itself is of no particular value to Christians; it presents the truths of religion as they appeared to orthodox Jews of the First Century and was to them what many theological works are to us to-day; and was strongly coloured with Greek and Oriental philosophies. But the passage in question is interesting: it describes Enoch's visit to Paradise, in the third heaven (compare Paul's use of this term when writing to the Corinthians) and his guides say to him "This place, O Enoch, is prepared for the righteous who endure every kind of attack in their lives from those who afflict their souls: who turn away their eyes from unrighteousness, and accomplish a righteous judgment, *and also give bread to the hungry, and clothe the naked, and raise the fallen, and assist the orphans who are oppressed*, and who walk without blame before the face of the Lord, and serve him only. *For them this place is prepared as an eternal inheritance*". The likeness of these words to the parable is obvious. The following reference to the sinners is also highly significant. They are said to be *cast into hell in the third heaven*. That is a fitting description of that death which comes to sinners in or at the end of the Millennial Age, the third heaven of which Paul spoke. "And I (Enoch) said, Woe, woe, how terrible is this place! And the men said to me: This place, Enoch, is prepared for those who do not honour God: who commit evil deeds on earth . . . *oppressing the poor and spoiling them of their possessions . . . who when they might feed the hungry, allow them to die of famine: who when they might clothe them, strip them naked . . .* (2 Enoch 9 and 10). If in fact Jesus was familiar with the book and did take these passages as the basis of His parable it is easy to see how readily His hearers would grasp His meaning, and connect the "sheep" and "goats" who "did" or "did it not" with the final judgment upon righteous and evil men. At any rate the similarity of thought shows that the sentiment portrayed was one that was quite familiar to Jewish ears.

In the parable the "sheep" are those that manifest the practical Christian virtues toward their fellows—feeding the hungry and thirsty, sheltering the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and delivering those in bondage. It has been pointed out that of the seven obligations laid upon the Christian in the New Testament only one—visiting the fatherless—is omitted in this parable. The reason is not hard to discern—there will be no

fatherless in the Millennium! All will have been restored to conscious life by the Redeemer, Jesus, and all may thenceforth become sons of God by reconciliation with Him. But there will be many hungry, naked and in prison, at first. Men, returning from the grave, will have the same characters and dispositions that were theirs at death, and the result will be that, although physically whole, many will still be mentally and morally sick, in prison by reason of bondage to their past vices and depravity, naked as respects fitness for the new world into which they have come, and whether they realise the fact or not, hungry and thirsty for the blessings of life and knowledge that the Kingdom is designed to give them. There is a link here with the Parable of the Good Samaritan; it will be remembered that Jesus gave that parable in answer to a question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and the Samaritan who undertook the care and healing of the distressed wayfarer was the one shown to be worthy of such. So it will be in the Millennial Age; the man who is making progress toward perfection and harmony with God will be actively employed in helping and assisting his fellows in every conceivable way; the selfish and the sinner will be indifferent to such service and Jesus in the parable points to this as a touchstone by which the true state of the heart can be indicated.

The question put both by sheep and goats "When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst . . ." and so on, is a rhetorical one, put into the mouths of the characters in order to throw into prominence the essential principle of these "good works"; inasmuch as ye did it—or did it not—unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it—or did it not—unto me. Our Lord's concern for those He came to seek and to save is such that every service or disservice rendered to them He feels as if rendered to Him. More; since He gave His own life, at the cost of great suffering, for the salvation of men, and is to establish His thousand year reign on earth for the purpose of persuading as many as can possibly be persuaded to "turn from sin to serve the living God", it follows that every service or disservice rendered to men in that day is either a help or a hindrance to the execution of the King's plans, and therefore can be aptly said to be done, or not done, unto Him. No one in that Age can escape working, either for or against the purposes of God—and all will be judged accordingly.

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (vs. 34). This "kingdom" is not the same as the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. That is a kingdom in which all men are under discipline,

and all, good and bad alike, are present in that kingdom and must perforce remain so until they have come to a full knowledge of the truth and made their choice between "life and death, good and evil". This is a kingdom entrance into which is granted only to the proved righteous, to those that have passed the test and are in no sense unclean. It thus corresponds to the Holy City of Rev. 21 and 22, into which nothing unclean or that defileth will ever enter. It is the kingdom of the earth after the Millennial Age, which men inherit as kings in their own right, living, moving and having their being in God the Father and conducting their own affairs on a basis of equality with each other in harmony with the laws of righteousness.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (vs. 41). Here we have the antithesis to the Holy City, the lake of fire of Revelation 19 and 20, symbolic of utter destruction. The allusion is, of course, to

the valley of Gehenna outside Jerusalem, where perpetual fires destroyed the refuse of the city. Jesus took the illustration from the apocalyptic literature of His day, and His hearers would realise quite naturally what He meant. The final verse of the parable perhaps makes this more clear "*These shall go away into everlasting punishment*", where "punishment" is *kolasin*, disciplinary restraint, and not *timora*, which is the word that indicates penal infliction in the sense of the English word punishment. *Kolasin*, derived from the verb *kolazo*, which means to lop or prune trees, hence to check, curb or restrain, is very descriptive of the purpose of God with irrecoverable sinners. "They shall be as though they had not been"; they will be "cut off from among the people" and so the expression "everlasting" (or enduring) punishment can be accurately rendered "final cutting-off". That cutting-off is as permanent and everlasting as is the eternal life of the righteous mentioned in the same verse.



## PROGRESS IN THE LAND OF PROMISE

A commentary on recent events affecting Palestine

The recent acts of violence in Palestine are deplored by all right-thinking people. Any nation trusting in such methods for its establishment cannot expect to become the instrument of Divine reconciliation with the world. It is for this reason that no existing nation—not even Great Britain—can be that instrument, for all depend upon force to maintain their rule, as Britain has shown in connection with these same events in Palestine. The people of this country are liable to condemn all Palestinian Jews for these acts, not realising that this policy of terrorism is that only of a small proportion, not more than five thousand out of six hundred thousand Palestinian Jews. The apparent failure of the remainder to co-operate with the British authorities in dealing with the situation is understandable in the light of British failure to implement the policy of the Mandate and the pledges given by the present Government prior to the last election. Our own understanding of the Divine Word is that not until Israel abandons all resource to force and violence, and in implicit faith trusts entirely in God for the fulfilment of His promises, will they become masters in their own land. We cannot expect them in their present frame of mind to accede to that principle, and it seems clear that there will be a period of strife the outcome of which cannot at the moment be foreseen; but the ultimate outcome is sure. As

Dr. Weizman said the other day: "*During the last thirty years we set ourselves to the implementation of this promise. It cannot now be stopped. It will go on. It must go on. It is our destiny, of which we cannot free ourselves if we would.*" Although, it may be, the Zionist leader bases his assurance upon political developments rather than the Divine promise, he might well, like Isaiah of old, be uttering truths the significance of which he himself only partially grasps.

The dignified statement issued by Dr. Herzog, Chief Rabbi of Palestine, shows that some voices at least are being raised even now calling attention to that power which will eventually be acknowledged by all Israel, and so make Jerusalem "the city of the great King, the joy of the whole earth". His statement runs in part:

"Just over a quarter of a century ago Great Britain solemnly pledged herself before God and the nations to facilitate the return of Israel to Zion. The late King George V on one occasion made public mention of his gratification at being enabled by Providence to be the instrument of fulfilling the Biblical prophecies concerning Zion's restoration. By virtue of her solemn undertaking—and by that alone—Britain was entrusted with the Mandate over the Holy Land. Has the conscience of Britain grown mute? Have those vast streams of the spirit, which

have always watered the soul of a great nation, dried up? Will the people hold their silence while their national honour and morality are cast to the winds and bleeding Israel is flung to the abyss of uttermost despair?

And unto my people I call, fear not, and be not dismayed. Our Father in Heaven hath many a time heretofore led us forth from the valley of darkness. Our endeavour draws its strength and inspiration from sources which lie beyond the reach of the tempting hands of mortals. In this hour of greatest distress stand Homeland and Dispersion, knit together by our undying faith.

'The Covenant which I made with you on your going forth from Egypt and My spirit live in thee' —Fear not!"

\* \* \* \*

An interesting incident occurred at the opening, in the middle of July, of a new settlement near Mount Tabor, the generally reputed scene of the Transfiguration, where Jewish ex-service men have set up a colony of 1,700 acres. At the inaugural ceremony a delegation of Arab elders from the neighbouring village attended to welcome the Jewish settlers, and their chief, Ibrahim Altayh, said this:

"I have searched our history and have failed to find any cause for enmity between the sons of Ishmael and Isaac, both of whom were sons of Abraham." He went on to say that it was only intriguers who sought to sow discord between the two peoples and expressed the hope that the present

clouds would disperse and that a peaceful time for all would soon begin.

\* \* \* \*

A new training farm for young Jews intending eventually to settle in Palestine was opened in Sussex during July. There are now several such establishments in England, devoted to the preliminary training of young people who, whether they know it or not, are destined to play their part in building up the "land of unwallled villages".

\* \* \* \*

Here is a picture of immigrants arriving at Haifa, ready and eager to take up their share in the task of building up their homeland. One is reminded of Isa. 66. 20, where the expression "swift beasts" is probably more correctly translated "swift ships". The Hebrew word is thought to be equivalent to the Greek *cercurii*, a particular type of fast merchant vessel in use in the Eastern Mediterranean in Isaiah's day and for several centuries thereafter. If so, this picture is an example of prophecy in course of fulfilment! For the sake of Israel's speedy peace and prosperity we may hope that some at least of this cheering party standing on the deck of that ship viewing the land that henceforth was to be their home heard within their souls words ringing down the centuries "Arise, shine, for thy light is come . . . surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far . . . to the Holy One of Israel". (Isa. 60.)

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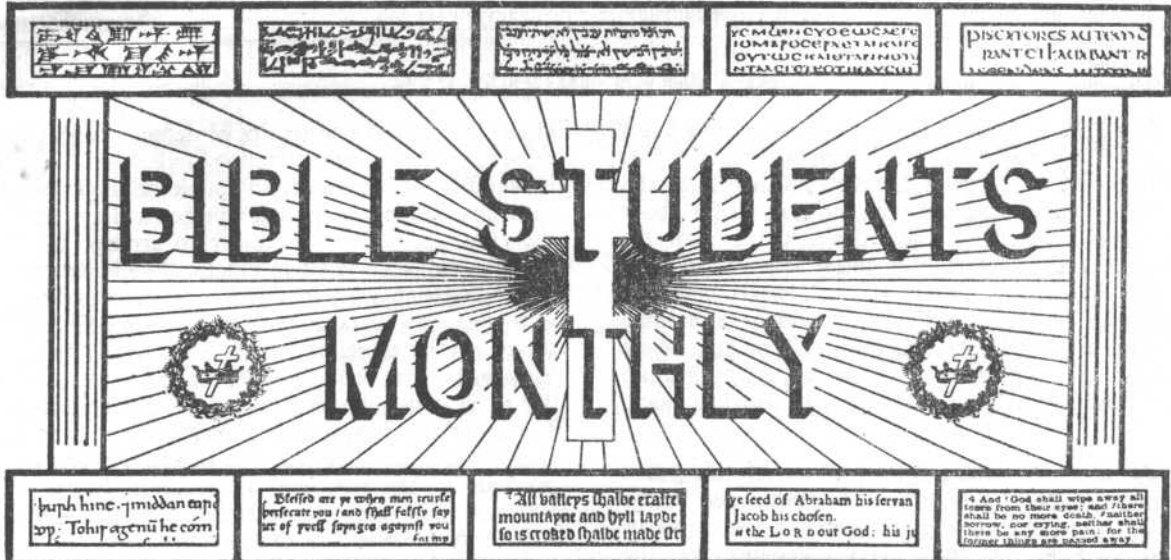
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OCTOBER, 1946

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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

A widely loved and faithful servant of the Lord passed to her reward on 5th March last in the person of Sister M. E. Seal, of London. Sister Seal, who was 76 years of age, had been seriously ill for about two years, and her earnest desire to be with the Lord became increasingly manifest as she neared the end of her earthly course. For 25 years until her retirement in 1935, Sister Seal held a responsible position in St. Thomas's Hospital, London, where she lost no opportunity of giving witness by her life and testimony to the Truth which she loved so much.

\* \* \* \*

Our last issue made brief mention of this year's Convention at Warrington. The enthusiasm shown at that gathering justifies the recording of a rather more complete account. The attendance was the largest so far attained, and a notable feature was the presence of a goodly number of young people among whom a suggestion was mooted for an organised means of exchange of news and views upon matters of interest to young folk. (*This has since materialised along the lines of the notice in this connection which appeared in last month's B.S.M.*) Messages of greetings and good wishes were received from absent friends, including some from the Continent. A baptismal service was held at Hill Cliffe Baptist Church, where a number of brethren gave outward witness to their consecration to God. It seemed that every phase of the Christian life was dealt with by the various speakers, and so the proceedings concluded, with praise and thanks to our Heavenly Father and His Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

\* \* \* \*

The "Bible Students Council" in Manchester has arranged a public meeting in Levenshulme Town Hall for Sunday, October 13th, at which Bro. H. C. Thackway, of London, will speak on "The Coming Universal Empire." In connection with this meeting special week-end arrangements have been instituted, commencing with the distribution of literature on Saturday, October 12th, and a meeting at 7.0 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Houldsworth Hall, Manchester, to be followed by further literature distribution on Sunday morning and then meetings at Levenshulme Town Hall during the afternoon. Full details of the arrangements can be obtained from Bro. L. Shephard, 48, Demesne Road, Whalley Range, Manchester 16.

Without doubt brethren from other districts will desire to visit Manchester for the week-end to participate in this effort. Accommodation is of course difficult, but the friends at Manchester will make

all arrangements upon receipt of definite information regarding requirements, stating nights for which it is required, whether married couple or single, single or double bedded room, and whether willing to meet the cost. It will be necessary to arrange for the friends to stay in hotels in practically all cases since accommodation with brethren is very limited; and it is necessary to book early. Will those intending to go please therefore write AT ONCE to Bro. Shephard. The booking will then be confirmed with details of cost. Please also state if staying to lunch and tea on the Sunday—these meals will be provided free of charge. Brethren able to spend a few days previous to the week-end to assist in leaflet distribution will also be warmly welcomed—please write Bro. Shephard in this case also.

\* \* \* \*

We are happy to announce that Bro. J. T. Read, of the Pastoral Bible Institute, is to visit this country early next year at the invitation of British brethren. Many of the friends know and have appreciated the yeoman service rendered by the P.B.I. since its establishment in 1918, and past very acceptable visits of its brethren to our shores. Bro. Read will be able to visit meetings and gatherings of the friends where a desire for such is expressed. The arrangements are in the hands of an informal group of brethren from the Midlands and Southern areas and it will be appreciated if all who desire visits will write to Bro. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry, if they have not already done so, as quickly as possible.

The types and shadows of the Bible are like the outline maps of our schooldays—we have to fill in the details ourselves in order that our memory might be impressed.

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## The Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard

A WORD OF EXHORTATION COMPILED BY A SYMPOSIUM OF BRETHREN

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm in my holy mountain" cried a prophet at a time of great stress "for the day of the Lord cometh—IT IS NIGH AT HAND!" Once more we can well raise that cry with even greater urgency and infuse into it all the compelling fervour of which our natures are capable. The greatest catastrophe of human history is upon us; men know that grave disaster is imminent. World leaders are nonplussed; the hearts of men are failing, failing them for fear of those things which they see coming upon the earth and the course of which they know they have lost the power to divert. The writer of the premier article in the "Sunday Times" of June 30th wrote "Standing on the very threshold of what may be a new era, we seek earnestly for some fingerpost to tell us what lies ahead. With Abraham Lincoln we could better judge what to do and how to do it if we first knew where we were and whither we were tending". Blind leaders of the blind; how crushingly come the biting, searing words of the Man of Nazareth "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15. 14).

But the prophet's call sounds again, not fainter, but louder, piercing into our inmost souls. "Blow ye the trumpet, sound an alarm in my holy mountain". To whom does he cry? Not to those who have already confessed their impotence and their blindness. He calls to us, to us who know the Truth, and the meaning of these things, and the remedy. Only such can comfort those that mourn and help to open the eyes of the blind. What, then, is our duty and privilege in face of this admitted darkness, doubt, and fear? What should we do? What SHALL we do?

Before the Flood, God gave *adequate* warning. That catastrophe foreshadowed the far greater trouble in which "this present evil world" is to be destroyed. Is it not reasonable to expect that, once again, *adequate* warning—proportionate to the calamity—will be given? And by whom will the warning be given? Surely by those whom God has qualified to give it! Never, in all the history of the world, has God left Himself without a witness. Always, in every time of disaster, disaster caused by human selfishness and sin, he has stood at the parting of the ways, entreating, pleading, warning, by the lips of His chosen ministers, whether the people hear or whether they forbear.

But, say some, we told the people of things to come in our earlier days. And our expectations were not, in some important respects, fulfilled. We told them of our hopes for the immediate future, and some of them, and all of us, now know that many of our views for that time were wrong. How can we raise our voices again?

True, many voices that then were raised are now silent. Do we then, in view of the distressing experiences that we know lie ahead, experiences which are inevitable before the Kingdom is established, feel that we have done all that we ought to have done? Are we so soon discouraged? Have we lost confidence in the living message of the Kingdom because of past mistakes—for that is all that they were, just mistakes, and "a just man falleth seven times, and riseth again"? Should we not, rather, first discover where and why we were wrong and then give a clear, vigorous and strong witness concerning the trouble ahead and the long-promised Kingdom that is to follow?

It is almost a platitude to say that evil is rampant now—but it is no matter of words; it is a dread reality. Our conflict is not with flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Knowing this, should we not expect, once more, a fulfilment, greater by far than the past has ever known, of the prophet's words "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59. 19)?

"Blow ye the trumpet; sound an alarm in my holy mountain . . ." Brother, sister, do you hear the call? Who will join together in this proclamation? Who will grasp the privilege of rallying to that standard by using every means and opportunity to proclaim "the acceptable day of the Lord; the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn" (Isa. 61. 2)? Noah preached, and continued to preach, until the Flood came, although the people did not heed but scoffed at him. Should not we also endure?

So we who have these things laid on our hearts urge all our brethren, all that love the Lord and His Truth and desire to enlighten men concerning His Plan, to hold this matter diligently before the Lord in prayer and earnest watchfulness, that we might discern His Will for us.

From whence shall we derive our driving force? From the power of the Holy Spirit, ours through the medium of prayer and faith! We may use every means of assistance that lies to our hand. The little journal in which this exhortation appears can help, for it seeks to strengthen, to inspire, to instruct, and yet not to control the faith of anyone nor to build a house which is not the Lord's building (Psa. 127. 1). Mayhap it will become a more efficient instrument in the hands of the brethren, and assist them to give an effective witness. There are brethren who would serve the Lord by helping in the supply of literature and other aids to our witness,

and other brethren who would gladly take advantage of such assistance in order to translate their own zeal into action. The B.S.M. could be used to bring such brethren in contact with one another (*It would do so gladly: Ed.*) and so the unity of our fellowship be manifest in yet another of its phases, the joyful co-operating together in the mission that stirs our souls "*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth*". Tell us, brethren, what do you think?

---

## THE TESTIMONY OF TWO APOSTLES

### to the truth concerning the Kingdom

---

The teachings of Christ were quickly made known to the Roman world by the men whose lives' works are recorded in the Book of Acts. Appropriately enough, the predominant thought in their minds during those stirring times was the coming of the Kingdom. "*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" they asked Jesus hesitantly at the moment of His final ascension (Acts 1. 6-8). They received no direct answer to their question; they were given instead a commission to be His witnesses and to preach the Kingdom to all nations; but in that commission the promise of His return to earth was reiterated and that to them was the equivalent of the kingdom.

Peter's first sermon, given on the day of Pentecost and recorded in Acts 2. 14-17, affords an insight into the workings of their minds, guided as they were by the Holy Spirit. "*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*" he said ". . . in the last days . . . I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Reference back to the prophecy quoted (Joel 2. 28) shows that this great outpouring of the Divine Spirit upon mankind is to come *after* the restoration and conversion of Israel. "It shall come to pass afterward" says Joel (*kai estai meta tauta*—"and it shall be after the same things"—i.e., the things just referred to). Peter evidently expected to convert Israel to Christ there and then, and knowing that the next step was to be the great Millennial outpouring was able to announce the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy as commencing at once. Hence the enthusiasm of the early Christians. They expected to convert the world very quickly and then the Lord

would return and establish His Kingdom on earth in their own lifetime, sitting upon the throne of David even as Peter declares in verse 30.

Peter's second sermon, delivered a few days later in the Temple of Jerusalem and recorded in the third chapter of Acts, shows how clearly he had grasped the fundamental principles of the coming Age. "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted*" he cried, "*that your sins may be blotted out, in order that times of refreshing shall come from the presence (face) of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began*" (Acts 3. 19-23). The A.V. renders "*when times of refreshing*" but the Greek text has the meaning of "so that" or "in order that". These "Times of refreshing" refer to the relief from present evils and disabilities which are contingent on the blotting out of sin, and Peter's exhortation to his generation was that by repentance and conversion on a national scale, the times of Millennial refreshing, of relief from pain, disease and death, could at once come to them. Israel did not so repent, and their times of refreshing have been delayed in consequence. The expression "restitution of all things" refers to the restoration of primitive Edenic conditions on the earth, and of the original human purity, which Israel associated with the Kingdom, and is synonymous with our Lord's expression in Matt. 19. 28, the "regeneration". It is quite true that this coming "Golden Age" was referred to by the prophets from earliest times.

The clearest expression of this Apostolic expectation concerning the Kingdom on earth and the

conversion of the nations is found in the proceedings of the Council at Jerusalem. The story is told in Acts 15. 13-21. There had been differences of opinion in the infant Church as to the acceptability of Gentiles into their number. The Council represented the last struggle of the old conservative position, that the invitation to rulership in the Kingdom, to be of the promised "Seed of Abraham" which was to bless all the families of the earth, was confined absolutely to the Jewish people, against the newer and broader understanding that God intended to select the "Seed" from among any and every nation upon earth. The new view prevailed, and the Church formally accepted the principle that Jew and Gentile stand equally before God in this matter of the "Call of the Church". James, the half-brother of Jesus, and already the leader of the Church at Jerusalem, in his capacity as President of the conference, voiced what was evidently the general feeling of the assembly when he said "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name; and to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written 'After this I will return, saith the Lord, and will build again the tabernacle of Jacob which is fallen down, and I will raise the ruins thereof and I will set it up, that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord'" (Acts 15. 13-21). The implication of these words is that after God has taken out of the Gentiles (the nations), a "people for His name", the Church, the promised Seed, He will restore the tabernacle (dwelling place) of Jacob (Israel), the re-establishment of Israel in their own land and their preparation for their future work; and then, all preparations being complete, the remainder of mankind will be invited to "seek after the Lord"; the time of world conversion, the Kingdom on earth, will begin.

The A.V. rendering of Amos 9. 11-12, the prophecy which James quoted, differs considerably from James' words in Acts 15. This is because James quoted from the Septuagint, the version in general use in his day, and the A.V. is based mainly on the Massoretic text of the 9th century A.D. The Septuagint reads "that the remnant of men, and all the Gentiles (*ethnos*—peoples) upon whom my name is called, may earnestly seek me", and this is probably the more correct version of Amos' original words. Thus the purpose of God in restoring and rebuilding the people of Israel in their land is that all men might through them be led to seek after God.

A study of the public utterances of the Apostle Paul confirms these conclusions. Paul gives ample

evidence that he based his whole hope for man's future upon the resurrection of the dead and the coming Day in which God will afford all men, dead and living, an opportunity for conversion. So he says to Timothy (1. Tim. 2. 4) that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth". When addressing the Athenians from the Court of the Areopagites (Acts 17) he preached *Jesus and the resurrection*, at which some mocked; and he also declared that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained". That day is the Millennial Day, and Jesus will rule, teach and ultimately decide the destiny of men, in righteousness, even as was predicted of Him in Isa. 11, a Scripture that Paul must have had in mind when he spoke the words. Later in his life, upon the occasion of the riot in Jerusalem which culminated in his being brought before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23. 6) he declared "Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am this day called in question". After his final arrest and arraignment before Felix, the Roman "procurator" or governor of Judea, he re-affirmed his belief in the teachings of the law and the prophets to the effect that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24. 25) and went on to reason of "justice, righteousness, and judgment to come" at which latter expression, we read "Felix trembled" and terminated the interview. The "judgment to come" of which Paul spoke was the disciplinary and remedial judgment of the Millennial Age, and Felix, who is known to have been an unscrupulous and base man, might well have trembled to be told that all his deeds would come up for inspection and judgment "in that day".

Two years later Paul was brought before Porcius Festus, the successor of Felix, and a man of very different stamp. The new procurator gave Paul a careful hearing and then invited Herod Agrippa II, the nominal "king" of territories to the north-east of Judea, to give him the benefit of his own knowledge of Jewish religion and customs. Accordingly Paul had the opportunity of stating his case to one well qualified to understand its relation to traditional Jewish hopes. Paul again stressed the resurrection to a day of judgment as the great foundation of Divine purpose. "*I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers . . . unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. . . . Why should it be thought it a thing incredible unto you, that God should raise the dead?*" and then, having presented his case with all the force of which he was capable, he threw out that tremendous challenge "*King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?*"

*I know that thou believest!*" The impression Paul must have made upon Agrippa is evidenced by his historic reply "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian". Although modern commentators have tried to gloss this as "Would'st thou so easily make me a Christian?" the Greek text does justify the A.V. rendering. There is little doubt that on that fateful day, King Agrippa, like the lawyer who "answered" Jesus "discreetly" was not far from the Kingdom of God. And it is evident that his knowledge of the Old Testament prophecies persuaded him that Paul's application of them was correct.

It is when Paul writes to the Corinthians that he reaches the highest point in his exposition of the Kingdom. He still stresses the necessity for a resurrection from the dead as the means of entrance thereto. In 1. Cor. 15 he insists that the resurrection of Christ Himself is the basis of hope for the Kingdom and the world. Then "As in Adam all die" he says "even so in Christ shall all be *restored to life*" ("made alive" does not correctly convey the meaning of the Greek word used). It is a self-evident fact that all men do die, without exception, and Paul's insistence is that this is due to Adamic condemnation. Just so certainly will all men, again without exception, be restored to life, a restoration which is due to the work of Jesus Christ. What use they may make of that restoration to conscious existence upon earth is a different matter; some may prove quite unamenable to the missionary endeavour of that day and will eventually go into death again; but that there is to be, first of all, a resurrection both of the just and unjust is very plainly taught in this passage as well as in the Book of Acts. It is significant that Paul sees a definite succession of events in this connection. "Every man in his own order" he says (vs. 23) where "order" is *tagmati*, a military order or class of men. Paul sees in his mind's eye a procession returning from the grave as though in military formation "Christ the first fruits"—the word here is in the singular and refers to the first loaf to be made from the gathered wheat "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming". The resurrection of the Church takes place first, and afterward that of the world of men. "Then cometh the end" he concludes "when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power, for it is written 'Thou hast made all things subject unto him'". This is the end of the Millennial Age, and the time when resurrection work—not only the actual restoration from death but the raising up to human perfection and into the Divine likeness—has been completed. It is then that the last rebels against God's righteousness will lose life finally and irrevocably, and with

that final operation of death amongst mankind it becomes true, as the next verse declares "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death". So Paul concludes his masterly exposition of the subject by declaring this triumphant conclusion to God's Plan in the words "Death is swallowed up in victory".

It is with this in mind that he wrote to the Romans "the earnest expectation of the creation (*ktisis*—a created thing or creation) *waiteth* for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 19-22). The world is waiting in suspense, unknowingly, for the time when Christ and His Church will be manifested in glory for the work of the Millennial Age. Isaiah said "It shall be said in that day 'Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us'" (Isa. 9. 25) and both prophet and apostle pointed to the same event, the commencement of the Kingdom on earth, the "desire of all nations" (Hag. 2. 7).

Peter and Paul both placed this "gospel of the Kingdom" in the forefront of their teachings, Peter stressing the kingship of Christ and the necessity of repentance and conversion on the part of those who would benefit from that kingship, and Paul dwelling upon the fact that the restoration of all men to the opportunities of the Kingdom will be afforded them by means of a resurrection from the *dead*.

---

There is now in stock a good supply of Scriptural message cards, bearing favourite inspiring texts with suitable verses, printed in Old English letters in green and gold, and blue and gold. There are 12 different cards in the set, and they are available post free at 1/3 per packet of 12, or 3/6 for three packets. Please ask for "T" cards. A typical example of these words appears here:

THE LORD BLESS THEE, AND KEEP THEE: THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE UPON THEE, AND BE GRACIOUS UNTO THEE: THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE, AND GIVE THEE PEACE.

*"Lo, see, the curtains part, and from the Holy Place,*

*Comes Aaron, Priest of Israel, to bless.*

*All sacrifice is past, and in his radiant face,*

*Men see a glimpse of Jesus' loveliness;*

*The One Who came to die, and living, comes again*

*A Priest upon His throne, o'er all the earth to reign."*

---

By the cross of Christ the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. Two corpses. No danger of their getting interested in each other.

J. H. Murray

**BE YE TRANSFORMED**

Be ye transformed by the renewing  
of your minds that ye may prove  
the will of God.

3 ~~This is an important process for the Lord's people to undergo.~~

The Greek word here translated "transformed" is *metamorphoo*. In the English dictionary there is a very similar word, "*metamorphosis*," and the following definition is given in Nuttall's edition: "Transformation, as the chrysalis into a winged insect." A very familiar winged insect to us is the butterfly, and from entomology, which is the science of insects, it is learned that the process of metamorphosis or transformation actually extends from the egg to the butterfly, and that the changes during metamorphosis—egg, caterpillar, chrysalis to butterfly, are very wonderful. The caterpillar is well known to us all with its body, long and cylindrical, consisting of thirteen segments, and its head armed with strong jaws. The caterpillar ravenously eats leaves, and its digestive organs are adapted for this kind of food, whereas the mouth of the butterfly is suctorial; it has a kind of trunk, beautifully suited to suck the nectar from flowers, and the digestive organs of the butterfly are suitable for the assimilation, not of leaves, but of the honey of plants. In the caterpillar there are some hundreds of muscles, which in the butterfly are replaced by others of a form and structure, entirely different.

There is a surprising transformation, the caterpillar—earthbound; the butterfly—an entirely different creature. The change from one form to the other, from caterpillar to butterfly, is, as already noted, not direct. There is that intermediate state, the chrysalis, and the seeming death-like condition of the chrysalis is one of the most remarkable phenomena of insect metamorphosis, wherein the caterpillar existence is put to death. The process is remarkable, and this is an important feature to note, incapacitating the creature for a continuance of its previous existence, while at the same time preparing for a future life.

4 In Romans 12:1 there is the exhortation to us, to full consecration, and in the second verse, "be ye transformed". Each consecrated child of God has been selected from a fallen sinful race, but the "old creature", is being put to death, and a new nature—begotten by the Holy Spirit—is being developed. As stated in the case of the chrysalis, this is a remarkable process, incapacitating us for a continuance of our previous way of living, while at the same time, preparing for a future life. And we are to be transformed, day by day; rising up

and up until—our resurrection completed, the work of transformation fully accomplished—we are exalted in the First Resurrection to heights unimaginable, even to the Divine nature, privileged then to reign with our Lord Jesus, during the complete establishment of God's glorious kingdom in the earth.

5 Our present privileged position is being "in Christ", and if any man be in Christ, he is—not the same old creature, but, "a new creature". We are being transformed, by the renewing of our mind. A new mind is being formed, a new mind, begotten not of the will of man, but of God. "*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth*" (Jas. 1:18). There is a special spiritual treasure being developed, in an earthen vessel; and the earthbound, grub-like tendencies are to be put to death. "*Put off, according to the former course of life, that old man, corrupted by deceitful desires . . . be you clothed with that new man, who, according to God, has been formed in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*" (Eph. 4:22, 24 Diaglott.)

During the chrysalis metamorphosis state, the caterpillar existence is put to death, and at the same time there is a preparation for a new, and quite different future existence. How forceful are the words, "*If ye through the Holy Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*" (Rom. 8:13). Repression, mortification, death, must be going on all the time respecting the fleshly mind, the human will, the earthbound tendencies, so that the spiritual life, the new nature, the new creature, may be made manifest. "*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*" (Col. 3:1-3.) Our Father in heaven asks of us a full surrender; full consecration, non-conformity to this world, and a transforming to the Kingdom requirements; because then, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine in our hearts, to give the light of the *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This knowledge is completely beyond the comprehension of the spirit of man or the spirit of the world. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" (1. Cor. 2:14.) The veil

of human-mindedness in the natural man hangs between him and the most sacred things, and the only way to set it aside is to consecrate and sacrifice wholly, the human will and nature. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. 5. 24.)

In 1 Corinthians 2. 12 the Apostle states, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God". It is in the glorious and privileged condition—typified by the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of old—that the consecrated children of God, although still in the flesh, have their real, inner, life and walk, with God; quite beyond the intellectual sight of the world. And this is where we are taught of God, "not in words taught by human wisdom, but by the teachings of the Spirit; unfolding spiritual things to spiritual persons." (1 Cor. 2. 13 *Diaglott.*) We are experiencing literal metamorphosis, in the "Holy Place", and during this process we are learning the things of God; also proving the Will of God. "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12. 2.) The Greek word here translated "prove" (*dokimazo*) has been much used in olden times in connection with the testing of metals, and means to investigate, discern, ascertain, explore, examine, try, and test. By careful and exacting tests, under close examination and observation the metal is proved. Something is done with the metal; and in our proving the Will of God, we have to do something with the Will of God.

This sounds like a big experience, and it is interesting to note Weymouth's translation of Romans 12. 2: "... be transformed by the entire renewal of your minds, so that you may learn by experience what God's will is..." Jesus learned something by experience; and by experience we learn. By experience, we prove, investigate, discern, ascertain, explore, examine, try, and test the Will of God. Our Father wills to be a God of love, and surely we are daily proving this to be true. "The Father himself loveth you." (John 16. 27.) In our experiences day by day have we not also proved this to be true?—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." (Isa. 26. 3.) And again, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3. 6)—in all thy ways (not merely some of them) acknowledge—discern, consider, know—Him, and He shall direct thy paths. All such Scriptures are very precious, and are proved by the Lord's people. We are to "walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord"

(Eph. 5. 8, 10); Weymouth translates this: "Live and act as sons of light, and learn in your own experiences what is fully pleasing to the Lord."

"... put off the old man with his deeds; ... put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3. 9-10.) Here is the transformation process again. And this metamorphosis must not slacken, it is a wonderful process. Regarding the chrysalis, there is the complete surrender of the caterpillar existence. This is essential, in order that the mysterious transformation may take place. Concerning our complete surrender, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23. 26). The heart, the will, thus given over to God, seeks to know the Divine will, and to obey it in word and deed. Respecting the chrysalis metamorphosis, it is a complete mystery to the world. So is our metamorphosis or transforming process, and the Apostle in Col. 1. 27 speaks of the riches of the glory of this *mystery*... which is "Christ in you the hope of glory". Christ is being formed in us (Gal. 4. 19). We of ourselves are nothing, but Christ is expressing Himself through us. According to Romans 8. 29 we are being conformed to the image of God's Son. We are being "changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3. 18). We cannot effect this change by ourselves, "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2. 13). And if we are "workers together with him" (2 Cor. 6. 1) He will produce in us, "that which is well-pleasing in his sight" (Heb. 13. 21). The writer to the Hebrews further exhorts us to "go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6. 1). The Greek word *teleiotes*, here translated "perfection" actually means completeness, and during this experience we discern what elevates and purifies, what draws us closer and closer to the heart of our Father, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. We also learn what qualities hinder us in our Christian walk. Yes, as children of God, it has been our experience to have failings and shortcomings of our own revealed to us. And so surely as the Lord is making us see our faults and failings, in the light of His glorious countenance, so surely has He gracious purposes of mercy towards us (Psa. 90., 8.) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1. 9). The "transforming" life means this, and the Lord Jesus sits as a refiner, to remove the dross of self-will, until He can see His own glorious image reflected in us. This refining, this cleansing, this transformation must continue. We are to go on unto completeness. "Walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility, and

gentleness; with patience, sustaining each other in love; using diligence to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the uniting bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 1-3, *Diaglott*). What an abundance of simply stated, sublime Scriptures there are describing God's will for us! Easy for us to understand, yet they speak of things difficult for us to do, and to prove.

The true spiritual life, the metamorphosis or transforming process, is one long series of surrenderings to the will of God. During this process of pressing on to completeness, to the finish, to the end, we are having a great and wonderful experience. For not only are we putting into practice during metamorphosis, our Father's will in this respect, but we are also proving, investigating, discerning, ascertaining, exploring, examining, trying and testing, in a more and more intimate sense the progressive, developing revelation of the Divine Will. It is our joy and privilege to personally put what our Father has said, to the test, and He desires us to do this—" . . . prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3. 10.) We are to prove Him and His will, and as a counter

measure the Lord will prove us, "for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 13. 3). For thou, O God, hast proved us; thou hast tried us, as silver is tried." (Psa. 66. 10.) And we prove ourselves ". . . let a man examine (prove) himself . . ." (1 Cor. 11. 28.) What a great experience! God proving us, and we proving ourselves, and Him, also what His will is. In all this, the Holy Spirit guides, directs and instructs, always in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, and never contrary to them. And, as in the volume of the book (the Holy Word), it is written concerning the true Church, what the Church is to do, and what not to do, so we examine, investigate and prove our part in the gracious Divine Purpose, and we act accordingly, exclaiming wholeheartedly "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (Psa. 40. 8).

We therefore let our steps be guided by such truth as we have attained (Phil. 3. 16, *Moffatt*), and we press on, by the Lord's help to completeness, fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, doing the will of God from the heart, in prayer persevering, and seeing to it that the refining and transforming work continues. *Be ye transformed.*

## A Short History of Millennial Doctrine

### Part I—From Isaiah to Paul

A. O. Hudson

Detailed teaching regarding the Millennial Age, its nature, its characteristics, its laws, and the manner in which God will write those laws in men's hearts during its course, was revealed by the Holy Spirit through five prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah. It is true, as Peter said in his second sermon to the people of Jerusalem (Acts 3. 19-21), that God had spoken of these "Times of Restitution" by all His holy prophets since the world began, from the very first prophet, Enoch (Jude 14), and there is no prophet that did not make at least some passing allusion to the Kingdom, but it is to these five prophets, all living between the 8th and 4th centuries B.C., that detailed descriptions of the coming Kingdom, in all its aspects, were granted; and it is upon their prophecies chiefly that subsequent Millennial teaching is founded.

During the four centuries that elapsed between Malachi, the last of the prophets, and the coming of Christ, there was a tremendous amount of study and discussion upon these prophecies and an ex-

tensive literature grew up setting forth men's continually developing understanding of these things. The fact that Truth is progressive is very strikingly shown in general expectations at the date of the First Advent regarding Messiah and His Kingdom compared with the much less clear knowledge of four centuries previously. This literature, which included many of the writings of the Apocrypha, is called "apocalyptic (i.e., hidden or secret things) because it was normally written in the same style of symbolic language as is used in the Old Testament prophecies and could only be understood by the initiated, students of the Scriptures.

It is this apocalyptic literature which bridges the gap between the Old and New Testaments and although we do not regard its preparation as overruled, guided or inspired as were the books of the Bible, we can nevertheless use it with profit to trace that process of reasoning by means of which saintly men of old, studying and pondering over the works of the prophets, came to those conclusions which

led all men, in Jesus' day, to be "in expectation" (Luke 3. 15); and to understand more clearly many of the "Millennial" allusions in the New Testament, which were made with that literature in mind.

Malachi died about 400 B.C. and with his death the direct stream of prophecy ceased. The Old Testament was complete, and now God discontinued the direct revealing of His Plans to men, until the time should come for the great revelation of His Son from heaven. But before that should be He gave Israel several centuries to ponder over and work out the logical implications of the revelations they had already received. The tangible result of that process is the apocalyptic literature, enshrining the state of Millennial belief during those times.

Throughout the hundred years or so following the death of Malachi, the ideas of the Jews were in a state of flux. They enjoyed national existence but were under the rule of the Medo-Persian empire, the "breast of silver" of the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2. 39). There was much divergent thought, for they had brought back many foreign ideas with them from Babylon. The influence of the prophetic writings gradually asserted itself, and Israel began to look forward to the day when God would arise to punish the wicked and exalt the righteous forever. Men realised that sin would have to be eliminated, but not fully appreciating the nature of sin and the necessity for *voluntary* conversion to righteousness, that man might always be a creature of free-will, they interpreted the prophecies to teach that God would eventually intervene in world affairs to destroy all the "sinners" in a great catastrophe, miraculously cleanse the "righteous" from their faults, and change the earth to a condition of perfectness, all in a moment of time, thereafter ruling over His people for ever as did David beforetime. It did not occur to them to think otherwise than that they, the Jews, were the "righteous", and the Gentiles, their oppressors, the "sinners".

In another hundred years the prophecies began to be more clearly understood. Daniel's words regarding the coming of the Son of Man and the resurrection of the dead at His coming were understood in harmony with Isaiah's prophecy of the new heavens and new earth, and men began to think of a Messiah Who would appear to establish a Kingdom, overthrow all earthly powers and reign in their stead, and raise all the righteous dead to reign with Him. The wicked were not to be raised; they would remain eternally deal in *sheol*. The fact that by this time the Jews had passed under the rule of the Greek empire, the "belly and thighs of brass" of the image, and that under this regime they suffered perhaps more acutely than at any previous

time, sharpened their animosity against their rulers and created an increasing tendency to claim life and salvation for themselves and predict eternal perdition for all foreigners. It was during this period that the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes oppressed the Jews and profaned the Temple. But these troubles in turn created a new incentive to search the Scriptures and this in time brought a clearer perception of the Divine Plan.

As to the duration of the Kingdom and what was to come at its end, the Jews of this period were very vague. They had little idea of either a Day or a period of judgment and they did not see that the purpose of this Kingdom is the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to God. What they did perceive was the fact of its being a renovated, perfected earth, beautiful and fertile, where righteousness would flourish and sin be banished. The first intimation as to the duration of this Kingdom, that it would be a thousand years, is found in the *Book of Jubilees*, written about a hundred years or so before Christ, and by then men were making good progress in their understanding of Millennial doctrine.

From then on, general thought was devoted, not so much to the physical earth, the scene of the Kingdom, but to those that should share in its blessings. Belief in two resurrections began to emerge. The "first" resurrection, it was thought, would be of the patriarchs and holy men of olden time—the ones we call the "Ancient Worthies"—and these would arise from the dead at the coming of Messiah. After that there would be a "second" resurrection in which the remaining righteous would rise to eternal life and the wicked rise to be judged and condemned to "second death". The Kingdom itself would last for ever, as said Daniel. In the "*Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*", written about 100 B.C., the second resurrection is described as being of the "righteous to the right hand and the wicked to the left hand", an allusion which appears again in our Lord's parable of the Sheep and Goats. At the end of the thousand years there would be a final judgment in which Satan and all demons were to be destroyed. But there was little idea even yet of world conversion. The Kingdom was for those who had established their righteousness in this life, and the Law was the criterion of that righteousness.

At this point, then, one hundred years before Christ, most of the essential features of our Millennial belief, with the exception of those relating particularly to the Church of this Gospel Age, had become well established. Men were nearly, but not quite, ready for the great revelation that was to come with Christ.

We consider now that last hundred years before His Advent. During this century the influence of Greek philosophy, which had been brought to bear upon Jewish beliefs for half-a-dozen generations in consequence of the close contact between the Greek world and Judea, had resulted in a very general colouring of orthodox Jewish belief with ideas of hell torment and the immortality of the soul, both of which beliefs were not native to Judaism. At the same time this admixture of Greek thought did enable the Jews to appreciate that there could be a spiritual phase of the Kingdom in addition to the earthly phase in which they had always believed, and so during this century, for the first time, belief in a spiritual Jerusalem along the lines of the "New Jerusalem" of the Book of Revelation appeared. Men began to see that there could be a salvation for some in heaven as well as for others upon earth. It was also firmly established during this century that the Messiah must be, not a man of Adam's race, but a Being from above, a Son of God. The titles "Son of Man" and "the Christ" as descriptive of the Messiah came into general use at this time. The *Book of Enoch* uses the expression "Son of Man" frequently, and when, later on, Jesus referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" His hearers knew full well that in using that title He laid claim to being the Messiah.

About two hundred years before Jesus was born at Bethlehem there had arisen a notable reform movement known as the "Zadokites", bearing a remarkable similarity to the Second Advent movement which appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was characterised by a strong reaction against the Greek errors of doctrine that were being introduced into the Jewish faith, a vigorous assertion of belief in the earthly Kingdom, and a proclamation of the imminent coming of Messiah. The sect appears to have almost died out just before the First Advent but it had done its work in creating an expectation and it is probable that Jesus' parents and those who were concerned with His early life, such as Simeon and Anna, were adherents of its beliefs. By the time Jesus appeared the doctrine of a thousand years' reign of righteousness, to commence at the coming of a victorious Messiah, with the destruction of the enemies of righteousness, the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies, continuing to the resurrection of all men and concluding with judgment and death to the wicked of mankind, to Satan and to the fallen angels, was the fixed belief of the ordinary people. The priests and the Pharisees could and did spiritualise much of this expectation in conformity with their belief in the soul's immortality, and claimed that the earthly Millennial Kingdom was to be limited

in duration, and that at the end of the thousand years the earth would perish, the righteous attain spirit nature and be translated to heaven, where they would rejoice over the sufferings of the wicked who had likewise been translated to hell. Whilst Jesus, and later, Paul, taught the Scriptural doctrine of a dual salvation—an eternal earthly one as well as an eternal heavenly one—orthodox Judaism rejected the earthly and distorted the heavenly salvation in a manner that was to be exactly repeated by the Christian Church some five hundred years later.

The teachings of Christ and the writings of the New Testament added two important new features to the doctrine of the Millennium. One revealed that although Israel after the flesh is indeed, as was expected, to occupy an important place, as God's earthly missionary nation, in that day, a still more important position is to be occupied by the Church of this Age, the faithful disciples of Christ, raised to spiritual life and associated with Him in the work of reconciling to God all the willing of mankind. The other made clear at last that God purposes to give all humanity, the restored dead as well as the living, a full opportunity to come into harmony with Him, and so attain eternal life. The Millennium is the day of world evangelisation, and of the issue between eternal life and eternal death. Neither of these truths were understood prior to the First Advent, and with their revelation to men it became the duty and privilege of the Christian Church henceforward to guard and develop the doctrine of the Millennium.

*To be concluded.*

*Down the minster aisles of splendour, from betwixt  
the cherubim ;  
Through the wondering throng, with motion  
strong and fleet ;  
Sounds His victor tread approaching with a music  
far and dim.  
The music of the coming of His feet.*

*Sandalled not with sheen of silver, girded not with  
woven gold ;  
Weighted not with shimmering gems and odours  
sweet ;  
But white-winged and shod with glory in the Tabor  
light of old,  
The glory of the coming of His feet.*

*He is coming, O my spirit, with His everlasting  
peace ;  
With His blessedness immortal and complete.  
He is coming, O my spirit, and His coming brings  
release.  
I listen for the coming of His feet.*

# THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

## 4. Prediction and Revelation

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

A. O. Hudson

"Behold, the days come, that . . ." How many stirring accounts of future happenings in the purposes of God commence with such words as these! We read the passages and sense the certainty of coming fulfilment in the prophet's passionate tones. But how did he come to be so certain himself?

These plain, forthright descriptions of things to come are called predictions. The prophet "predicts" the future. His knowledge is not of himself; it must come from God, for God only knows the end from the beginning. The prophet receives it therefore by revelation; God "reveals" His purpose to the man of His choosing and that man is thereby enabled to impart his knowledge to others by word of mouth, or by the medium of writing, or both. Prediction and Revelation therefore are closely allied in the realm of prophecy.

The gift of prediction stands on a higher spiritual level than does that of prevision, which is prophecy in visions and dreams. It is a "seeing" with the mental sight rather than the physical sight, and therefore calls for a greater degree of spirituality; for the things which are thus discerned make no impression upon the natural senses of sight and hearing. Visions and dreams are, in a sense, "mechanical" revelations, in that the Holy Spirit produces an effect upon the physical visual organs, the eyes, and the mind receives that impression and interprets it along the lines of familiar everyday objects. The prophet to whom is given the power of prediction, by means of a spiritual revelation entering into his mind, receives his consciousness of coming events, not in consequence of an intellectual knowledge of this world's affairs and their evident inevitable outcome, as in the case of "prophetic foreknowledge"; not as a result of visible appearances and dreams which appeal to his sense of sight and are understood by him in harmony with an already accepted symbolism; but because of his being in direct communion with God attuned to the Divine Spirit. This was the highest level of spiritual experience to which any man could attain in Old Testament days, so to walk with God that the human mind, working as it were in parallel with the Divine mind, became able to receive knowledge from that Mind. Since God undeniably does see into the future, the mind thus closely attuned with His is able to share, to some limited degree, in that knowledge.

This thought is borne out by the fact that the majority of such revelations appear to have come to such men at times when they were more than usually in touch with the spiritual world, or by reason of outward circumstances were more than normally susceptible to spiritual influences. This is shown more clearly in the New Testament narratives, which perhaps is to be expected since men of God lived on a higher plane of spiritual experience than than previously. Thus Zacharias, a righteous and godly man (Luke 1. 6) received the great revelation of his life standing in the Holy of the Temple burning incense, and the whole multitude of the people were praying outside—the most solemn moment of the service. With his spirit thus lifted up to God, and being possessed of an intense longing for the coming of Messiah, his senses became receptive to things not normally glimpsed by men and he saw the angel of the Lord at the side of the altar, and heard his voice. It was in the power of that vision that later on, at the birth of his child, his mind came into tune with the mind of God and he uttered the notable prophecy recorded in Luke 1. 68-79. Similarly Simeon, who was evidently already accustomed to the reception of Divine revelations (Luke 2. 26) found himself led as it were by an irresistible spiritual force into the Temple (vs. 27) and then, his eyes falling upon the babe in Mary's arms, his mind in turn ranged itself in line with the Divine mind and he spoke of things yet to come.

The actual words in which such men clothed their predictions can be traced to the influence of their Messianic expectations. There is another class of prediction of which examples are found in the Scriptures where there is no such predisposing influence. An instance of this is the story, in 2 Kings 7, of the Syrian siege of Samaria in the days of Elisha. The prophet had announced to the famine-stricken citizens that upon the morrow food would be abundant. One of the king's lords replied sarcastically and unbelievably, whereupon Elisha told him that he would see the abundance with his own eyes but would never eat thereof. Upon the morrow that lord was appointed to have charge of the city gate, and in the crush of citizens eager to share in the unexpected relief he was trampled to death. There could have been no human circumstance which might have indicated that man's imminent fate to

Elisha; his untimely death a day later was clearly an accident. In a manner to be accounted for only by the laws which govern prophecy, the details of a circumstance still twenty-four hours in the future were impressed upon Elisha's mind and he was able to repeat them. In a similar fashion Agabus, a Christian prophet, foretold the great famine which Josephus confirms as having occurred some ten years later in the reign of Claudius (Acts 11. 28). Agabus also foretold the coming arrest of Paul (Acts 21. 11). Philip's four daughters were prophetesses (Acts 11. 9), and others among the believers shared the same gift, the "gift of prophecy".

It seems though that this great power was not confined to the believers nor even to the early Church. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons in France, at the end of the second century, says that the gift of prophecy was known in his time. There is a record of a prophet Quadratus, and a prophetess Ammia, in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-138). Josephus tells (*Wars* 6. 5, 3) of a man named Jesus Bar-Anan who began to go about the city, four years before the Jewish War, and hence only a few years after Paul's death, prophesying the destruction of the city, the temple and the people, continuing to do so in spite of the punishment meted out to him. For seven years and five months, says Josephus, he continued thus, never varying his cry in the slightest, until one day, during the siege, he mounted the wall, cried "*Woe, woe to the city, and to the people, and to the holy house*" and then, for the first time in seven years, changed the terms of his message, and cried out "*Woe, woe, to myself also*". Almost immediately a stone from one of the Romans' ballistæ (giant catapults used to batter down the walls of besieged cities) struck him and killed him. Who shall say that that man was not possessed, in some degree, of prophetic insight?

That was at the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. One is led to wonder if at such times of national stress there is a sharpening of the prophetic consciousness, a closer approach to union with unseen spiritual influences, leading to such outbursts of prediction. It is noteworthy that in Scripture narratives the prophets are most active and their prophecies most vivid at such times, and this situation appears to be repeated in subsequent history as shown by the narrative of Josephus just quoted. A later instance which reinforces this conclusion can be cited in connection with another time of stress, at an event which affected our own country three centuries ago, to wit, the Great Fire of London in 1666. For a number of years prior to the disaster a widespread conviction existed in certain religious circles that London was shortly to be destroyed on

account of the sinfulness of its people. Walter Costelo, in a treatise printed in 1658, said "*London, go on still in thy presumptuous wickedness. Put the evil day far from thee, and repent not. Do so, London. But if the fire make not ashes of thy city, and thy bones also, conclude me a liar for ever. Oh, London, London, sinful as Sodom and Gomorrah, the decree has gone out, repent, or burn . . .*" Humphrey Smith, a Quaker, in his "*Vision which I saw concerning London*" printed in 1660, six years before the event, described the coming Fire, and runs in part ". . . and as for the city, herself and her suburbs, and all that belonged to her, a fire was kindled therein; but she knew not how, even in all her goodly places, and the kindling of it was in the foundation of all her buildings, and there was none could quench it. And the burning thereof was exceeding great, and it burned inward in a hidden manner which cannot be described. All the tall buildings fell, and it consumed all the lofty things therein, and the fire searched out all the hidden places and burned most of the secret places. And as I passed through her streets I beheld her state to be very miserable. . . . And the fire continued, for, though all the lofty part was brought down, yet there was much old stuff, and parts of broken-down desolate walls, which the fire continued burning against. . . . And the vision thereof remained with me as a thing that was showed me of the Lord." Pepys, the famous diarist, who lived at the time, alludes to this expectation in his entry for October 20th, 1666, after the event had justified the predictions.

In assessing the value of such facts relative to our subject, it may be observed that this period was a time of intense spiritual stress for earnest Christian people, and witnessed the virtual rise of the Non-conformist churches in this country. The Ejection, which deprived two thousand ministers of their positions in consequence of their stand for religious liberty, took place in 1662, four years before the Fire. We have here, therefore, all the necessary conditions for an uprising of the prophetic gift just as on similar occasions recorded in the Bible because occurring in Bible times.

The scope of this treatise does not permit the citing of further similar instances. Perhaps sufficient has been said to show that at times of stress men are found whose minds, closely attuned to spiritual things, are made receptive to the imparting of Divine knowledge regarding "things that must shortly come to pass" and that the foretelling of imminent events is not confined to occasions belonging to Biblical days and to men who are Biblical characters, but has happened and continues to happen from time to time as the history of man unfolds.

All the evidence goes to show that the reality of prophecy is not so fantastic a thing as men think.

There is one peculiarity about the examples which have been cited. They relate to events which were fulfilled within a very short time—only a few years—after the prophecy was given. These men—very ordinary men in the main—did not see ahead into the distant future; their prophetic consciousness was

as it were restricted in its range. In the Bible, and in the Bible alone, we have cases of great men of God, such as Daniel, Zechariah, John, and above all, our Lord Himself, who did see, not a few years only, but thousands of years into the future, and whose prophecies are all the more striking and important on that account. It is to the reasons for this difference that we must next turn our attention.

*To be continued.*

G. H. Taylor

## Suggestions on Israel's Ceremonial Law

**THE PASSOVER.** Israel was typically redeemed by the blood of the Passover Lamb. The family of faith now had its reward—made holy and the blessings they sought brought nearer. It had nothing to do with law, but was God's free gift. Thenceforward they must show their appreciation by loyalty and obedience if their salvation was to be made complete. The Passover was never repeated. Life thus begun rested on this one foundation. Their subsequent instructing and training under the Law was possible owing to its permanent effect. It indicated that righteousness was to be obtained by faith alone.

**THE SABBATH.** After outlining the essence of the Law (Exod. 20. 1-7) God commanded Israel "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy". It was so important they were told to set apart one day in seven to "remember it". It was the background of their law and a condition of faith.

The Sabbath reached back to Eden. God there rested in the satisfaction of completed work and Adam, for a time, enjoyed its blessings. So far as Adam was concerned it was lost; but the Promise implied its restoration. Belief in this Promise constituted the faith that pleased God. The man who first broke the Sabbath failed to "remember" and was "cut off". Lest time had blurred their memory, the Law gradually recalled it by instituting the Sabbath Day, Sabbath Month, Sabbath Year and Jubilee. It took fifty years to explain its full significance. Experience must supplement theory, so that full appreciation was not attained until their "rest" in the promised Kingdom. The command was therefore retrospective and prospective; pointing to the Sabbath lost and to the One to come.

The principle of the Sabbath was commanded to be observed with their chief national ceremonies—an affirmation of faith in the means being taken for its restoration.

**SACRIFICE.** Perfect sacrifice is the submission of a perfect will to that of Jehovah (Heb. 1. 1-10). Those instituted under the Law reminded Israel of

that duty. Like the Sabbath they formed collectively a remembrance of the one Adam should have maintained. They also expressed faith in the promised Seed. Under the Law it was illustrated by a Whole Burnt Offering. Although redeemed, the natural weaknesses of Israel remained. They could not keep the Law. They had no real access to Jehovah. Sin still worked in the body until death resulted. Its removal was necessary to salvation. By sacrifice they acknowledged death as the penalty of sin. The sacrifice, representing themselves, must die. But it also taught that the prescribed substitute could die in their stead and allow them to live. They were accepted because of faith in the substitute.

This principle was observed in their national ceremonies by the order in which sacrifices were made.

1. A Sin Offering.
2. A Whole Burnt Offering.

The latter was possible because of the purifying effect of the former. Being accompanied with a meat and drink offering, it represented the consecration of their perfected selves and all they possessed to the will of God. This was the condition their faith looked to and was reaching after.

**HIGH PRIEST.** The presence of God being inaccessible, Israel could not take their sacrifice or make their offering to Him. Clearly a go-between must be found. Such a provision was made for them in the person of their High Priest. Typically perfect, they could make their offering through him. He acted as a mediator, entered the Presence for them, conveyed their offerings to God, pleaded their cause, and returned with the appropriate blessings to them. By this arrangement complete salvation could be secured.

**THE TABERNACLE.** God's arrangements for the salvation of Israel were condensed in the Tabernacle and its surrounding court. The Divine Presence was concealed in its inmost recess. To return to Him meant submission to all these things. There was only one way—one door. Entering therein they were confronted with an Altar—an unmistakable

sign that sacrifice was necessary. Beyond that was a Laver demanding cleansing. Further on was the Holy Place with its Candlestick, Shewbread and Altar of Incense. Then came the Most Holy Place in which God dwelt, shut off by an impenetrable barrier.

Severance from the world ; submission of the will ; personal purity ; abiding in a state of holiness ; lit by God's light, fed with His food, together with the "sacrifice of praise", was the significance of the Tabernacle. These were the means by which they must "draw near" to Him. Even then they were not permitted to do so personally. A priest went for them accompanied with their offering as a substitute.

These three ideals—Sabbath Rest, Perfect Sacrifice, Access to the Divine Presence—were the elements of righteousness. Salvation—the message of the Law—meant the removal of all that hindered its attainment and the restoration of eternal life.

ATONEMENT DAY. The most important ceremonies of Israel were those performed on the yearly Day of Atonement. They were for the declared purpose of cancelling transgressions (known and unknown) against the Law. Collectively they bore the same relation to the Passover as the sin offering to the Passover Lamb. They formed therefore an annual national Sin Offering. For this reason the sin offering was its most prominent feature. All the essentials of righteousness were laid as the basis of the day's performance. Their work must be wrought in "righteousness". The Sabbath Rest was observed. The Perfect Sacrifice was offered, in the Presence of God. Thus they kept lost perfection in mind and looked onward to its restoration. Hunger for that righteousness inspired them so it was also kept as a fast. But, this important lesson had to be taught, it could not be attained unaided. The offices of their High Priest must be invoked.

The offerings of the day were of a dual nature:

1. For the High Priest—a Bullock as a sin offering and a Ram as a burnt offering. Provided at his cost.
2. For the People—Two Goats as a sin offering and a Ram as a burnt offering. Provided at their cost.

Those for the High Priest were made first in order to perfect him as a mediator for the people. His sin offering was slain, its blood offered to God, and the Holy Place cleansed by the same blood. Then one of the People's sin offerings was treated in the same way, signifying that they and all their contacts were purified. Then followed evidence of the remission of sins. The live goat of the People's

offering was loaded with their sins, taken outside the camp in sight of them all and allowed to escape. No doubt they watched it with joy and relief as the consummation of their faith in the day's ceremonies. They were allowed to live because a satisfactory substitute had been found to suffer death to which they were liable.

Up to this point the work had been done by the High Priest while dressed in white linen robes. The remainder was performed by him in robes of state. The change was prophetic. Human sins and weaknesses having been removed, their salvation was reckoned as complete. God could now accept them as perfect. The High Priest consequently slew the burnt offerings, sprinkled their blood upon the Mercy Seat, and burned their flesh upon the Altar. With them the fat of the slain sin offerings was also burned. The latter qualifies the reality of this perfect sacrifice and marks it as a type. It said "God has accepted the spirit of your offering as a token of what you profess willingness to perform". The last stage of the day's work consisted of burning the flesh of the slain sin offerings. Unlike the fat of these offerings, it was not burned on the Altar. The dead bodies were carried outside the camp and there burned. This suggested to Israel that, although the spirit of their sacrifices had been accepted, the flesh, being imperfect, was not acceptable. Their spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. It must be purged and consumed outside the camp—in the world. They must learn obedience by the things they suffered.

All that Israel saw of the day's ceremonies was the scapegoat removing their sins, the ascending smoke of the sacrifices, and the removal of the dead bodies to be burned. The significance of the day as a national sin offering was thus kept before their minds. Salvation that began with the Passover was, for another year, typically secured. But what they saw depended upon things done secretly by the High Priest within the Tabernacle. Israel was helpless and hopeless without them. He had to present their offerings. He had to reconcile them to God. And it was he through whom the blessings came.

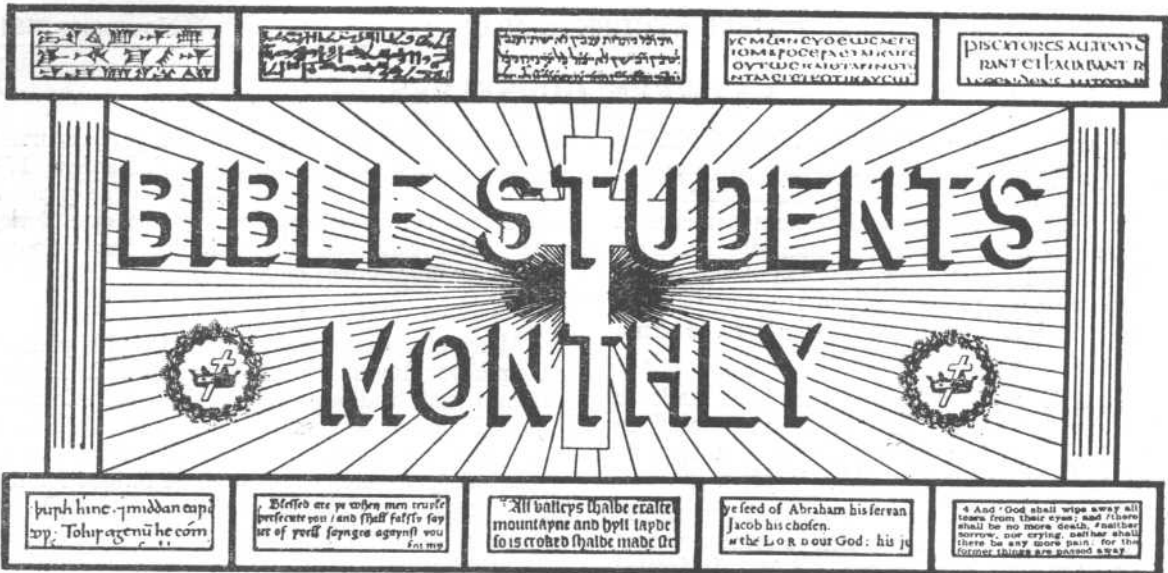
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*We work together, if far apart,  
Hands in unison, heart to heart  
We work as having one common aim ;  
We work as bearing the same good name ;  
We dare not loiter, but still pursue  
The work of the Master, with Him in view.*

\* \* \* \*

The creation of the visible universe is great, but the creation of countless invisible laws is greater still.





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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

“The brethren who attended the Home Gathering held at Leigh, Lancs., on 3rd and 4th August, affirmed a rich time of fellowship and blessing. The speakers gave encouraging addresses to strengthen the faith of the brethren and affirming the Truth we hold on the Plan of salvation. On the Saturday 70 brethren were present and on the Sunday there were 80, and all felt how good it was to be there.

\* \* \* \*

This little word of appreciation is in itself so full of the Christ spirit that we feel sure the brethren everywhere will feel uplifted by its own tone no less than by the subject to which it refers.

“I feel constrained to write you and express my appreciation of the article ‘When ye come together’ in the May-June issue of the B.S.M. It formed the background of our mid-week prayer meeting last night and we had a very blessed season of fellowship with the Lord as we each sought to realise in very truth that the Lord was in our midst. The ideas expressed in the article have been so exactly those that we have sought to impress upon our consciousness as we have met week after week for prayer during the last year or two that it was a real spiritual uplift to have them embodied so beautifully in language so fitting. It was indeed ‘like apples of gold in pictures of silver.’

“If our meetings were all modelled upon the pattern portrayed in the article how much more helpful spiritually they would often be! If we held matters always in true perspective with the Lord as the Truth in the very centre of the picture, a Person ever present with His people, not an abstract set of doctrines, how it would smooth the way with regard to the differences that distress and divide us. A word in season—I don’t think it could be more fitting and I would commend it to the brethren everywhere.”

\* \* \* \*

The friends at Warrington advise us that plans are in hand for the Easter Convention of next year. These gatherings have been held now for the past fourteen years and have become almost traditional amongst us, it being found possible to continue without a break even through the war years. The brethren may begin therefore to look forward to another time of real refreshment. Further information will appear in future issues of the Monthly or may be obtained from Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, Lancs.

\* \* \* \*

Friends who look to obtain the usual Scripture Art Calendar from Bro. Lardent will be glad to

know that they are obtainable this year, as usual, at 2/9 each post free, from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23. The paper is of rather better quality than was the case during the war years and the calendar has coloured Scripture illustrations with daily text.

\* \* \* \*

Many of our brethren will recall with pleasure the pre-war August Conventions arranged by London friends and held at Conway Hall and Memorial Hall, London. The same friends are arranging to resume these conventions as from August of next year, and plans are beginning to be formed for that gathering. The Convention will be held (D.V.) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, already well known to many from the gatherings held there in 1931 and 1934. It is the sincere prayer of the sponsors that this may be in very truth a “holy convocation unto the Lord” and that the influence of the Holy Spirit may preside over all the meetings. The Convention will be financed, as in the past, by the free-will offerings of brethren who feel thus led to help, and we have every confidence that our faith will be honoured. Further information will appear in future issues of the Monthly, or may be obtained from Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

\* \* \* \*

The first number of the “Young Bible Students’ Messenger”—the little periodical published by the Young Bible Students’ Circle—is a most interesting production and reflects credit upon the Editorial panel. It is intended to be a link between young brethren in their ‘teens and twenties and in its general outlook appears to be admirably fitted for this task. Its freshness and enthusiasm, and the keen desire expressed for true Christian unity and fellowship, causes some of us to look back rather sadly upon the history of twenty-one years and reflect how much more we could have achieved had we allowed the Holy Spirit fuller influence in our fellowship. “Let us go forward in the one joyous hope of our calling” says one of the writers “worshipping the one true God, serving the one Head, and having the one common aim and purpose of doing the will of God”. The Secretary of the Circle is Bro. D. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

\* \* \* \*

The concluding article of the series, “The Spirit of Prophecy”, has been omitted from this issue due to lack of space and will appear in the December number.

# ABIDE IN CHRIST

## A Meditation on the Parable of the Vine

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."* (John 15. 4.)

During the life of Jesus on earth, He frequently said to His disciples *"Follow Me"*. It was when about to leave them that He used those words which indicate the more spiritual and intimate union with Himself in glory, *"Abide in Me"*.

There are many earnest followers of Jesus from whom the meaning of these words, with the blessed experience they promise, is somewhat hidden. They seem not to have realised to what closeness of union, to what intimacy of fellowship, to what wondrous oneness of life and interest, He invited them when He said *"Abide in Me"*.

*"I am the Vine, ye are the branches"* (John 15. 5). It was in the Parable of the Vine that our Lord first used the expression *"Abide in Me"*. That parable so simple, yet rich in its teachings, gives us the best and most complete illustrations of the meaning of our Lord's command, and the union to which He invites us. The connection between the vine and the branch is a living one. No external temporary union will suffice; no work of man can effect it. The branch, whether an original or an ingrafted one, is such only by the Creator's own work, in virtue of which the life, the sap, the fatness and the fruitfulness of the Vine communicate themselves to the branch. Just so is it with the believer. His union with his Lord is no work of human wisdom or human will, but an act of God, by which the closest and most complete life union is effected between the Son of God and the redeemed one. God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts. The same spirit which dwelt, and still dwells, in the Son becomes the life of the believer into Him.

So close is the union between the Vine and the branch, that each is nothing without the other. To the Vine the branch owes its place in the vineyard, its life and its fruitfulness, and so the Lord says *"Without Me ye can do nothing"*. The believer can each day be pleasing to God only in that which he does through the power of Christ. Christ dwells in him. The daily inflowing of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit is the only power to bring forth fruit. He lives alone in Him, and is each moment dependent on Him alone.

No less indispensable than the vine to the branches are the branches to the vine. Such is the

wonderful condescension of the grace of Jesus, that just as His people are dependent upon Him, He has made Himself dependent upon them. Without His disciples, His bride, He will not dispense His blessings to the world; He will not offer them the grapes, the fruit. Marvel not! It is His own appointment, and this is the honour to which He has called the redeemed ones, that as indispensable as He is to them, that from Him their fruit may be found, so indispensable are they to Him that through them His fruit may abound. Beloved, let us meditate upon this mystery of the perfect union between Christ and ourselves. All that the vine possesses belongs to the branches. The vine does not gather the soil's fatness and sweetness for itself. All that it gathers is at the disposal of the branches. As it is the parent, so it is the servant of the branches. And Jesus, to whom we owe our life, completely gives Himself for us and to us. *"The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them."* *"He that believeth into Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater shall he do."* All His fulness and all His riches are for the true child of God. O beloved! the vine does not live for itself, keeps nothing for itself, but exists only for the branches. All that Jesus is and has, He is for us. He has no interest separate from ours, and as our representative He stands before the Father.

The branch, likewise, does not exist for itself, but to bear fruit which will proclaim the excellence of the vine. It has no reason for its existence excepting to be of service to the vine. As Jesus has given Himself so wholly over to him, he feels himself urged to be wholly his Lord's. Every power of his being, every moment of his life, every thought and feeling belong to Jesus, that from Him and for Him, he may bring forth fruit. As he realises what the vine is to the branch, and what the branch is intended to be to the vine, he feels that he has but one thing to think of and live for, and that is the will, the glory, the work, and the kingdom of his blessed Lord, the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of His Name.

The branches are for fruit, and for fruit alone. *"Every branch that beareth not fruit, He taketh away."* The branch needs leaves for the maintenance of its own life and the perfection of its fruit. The fruit itself it bears to give away to those around. As the believer enters into his calling as a branch, he perceives that he must forget self, and live entirely for others, love to sacrifice and to do

good unto all men, especially to the household of faith. It is for fruit, "much fruit" that the Father, the husbandman, has made us one with Jesus.

O wondrous parable of the vine, unveiling the mysteries of Divine love, of the heavenly life; how little have we understood thee! Jesus the living vine in heaven, and we, the living branches, on earth. How little have we understood how great our need, and also how perfect our claim to all His fulness! How little understood His perfect claim to all our emptiness. Let us in its beautiful light study the wondrous union between Jesus, until it becomes to us the guide into full communion with our blessed Lord. Let us listen and believe until our whole being cries out "Jesus is indeed to me the true vine, bearing me, nourishing me, supplying me, using me, and filling me to the full, to make me bring forth fruit abundantly" Then shall I not fear to say "I am indeed a branch to Jesus, the true vine, abiding in Him, resting in Him, waiting for Him, serving Him, and living only that through me, too, He may show forth the riches of His grace, and in due time give His fruit to a perishing world".

So, beloved, it is when we try thus to understand the meaning of this parable that the blessed command spoken in connection with it will come home to us in its true power. The thought of what the vine is to the branch, and Jesus to the child of God, will give new force to the words "Abide in Me". It will be as though he says "Think, child, how completely I belong to thee; I have joined myself inseparably to thee; all the fulness and fatness of the vine are thine in very deed. Now thou art one in Me, be assured that all I have is wholly thine. It is my interest and my honour to have thee a fruitful branch. Only abide in me, yield thyself wholly to my teaching and rule, simply trust my love, my grace, my promises. Only believe I am wholly thine. I am the true vine, thou art the branch. Abide in Me." What sayest thou, O child of God? Shall I longer hesitate, or think how hard it is to live like a branch because I thought of it as something I had to accomplish? Shall I not believe that I am in Him, He Himself will keep me, and enable me to abide? Beloved, is not our answer "Yes, I will abide in Thee, blessed Lord Jesus"? O Saviour, how unspeakable is Thy love. We can only yield ourselves to Thy love with the prayer day by day that Thou wouldest unfold somewhat of its precious truth, and so encourage and strengthen Thy loving children to do what our hearts long to do, ever, only, wholly to abide in Thee.

#### THE GREAT HUSBANDMAN

It is God Himself who has united you to Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made into us wisdom from God, both righteousness

and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1. 30). "My Father is the Husbandman" (John 15. 1). The whole Christian life depends upon the clear consciousness of our position in Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus." We must remember our union to Christ, especially that it is not our own doing, but the work of God Himself. As the Holy Spirit teaches us to realise this, we shall see what a source of assurance and strength it must become to us. If it is of God alone that I am in Christ, then God Himself, the Infinite One, becomes my security for all that I can need or wish in seeking to abide in Christ. Let us try and understand what it means, this wonderful "Of God in Christ".

In becoming partakers of this union with Christ, there is a work God does, and also a work we have to do. God does His work by moving us to do our work. The work of God is hidden and silent; what we do is something distinct and tangible. For instance, conversion and faith, prayer and obedience are conscious acts of which we can give a clear account, while the spiritual quickening and strengthening which come from above are secret and beyond the reach of human sight. So it may be that when the believer says "I am in Christ Jesus" he may look more on the work which he did than to that wondrous secret working of God by which he was united to God. It is of great consequence that the mind should be led to see that behind our turning, believing, and accepting of Christ, there was God's Almighty Spirit doing its work, inspiring our will and carrying out His own purpose of love, in planting us in Christ Jesus. So, dear brethren, as we meditate upon this, the Divine side of the work of salvation, we learn to praise and to worship with new exultation and rejoice more than ever in the Divine favour which has made us partakers of Christ. At each step, as we review it, the song will come "Of God are we in Christ Jesus".

O, what hope and strength, what a sure standing ground it gives us as we rest our right to Christ and all His fulness on nothing less than the Father's own purpose and work. We have thought of Christ the vine, and the called one as the branch; let us not forget that other precious work "My Father is the Husbandman". The Saviour said "Every plant which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up", but every branch grafted by Him into the true vine can never be plucked out of His hand. As it was the Father to whom Christ owed His life as the vine, so to the Father the called one owes his place and his security in Christ. The same love and delight with which the Father watched over the beloved Son watches over every member of His Body, all who are in Christ Jesus.

Oh, what confident trust this faith implies, not only as to the being kept in safety to the end, but especially in the being able to fulfil in every point the object for which we have been invited to Christ. The branch is as much in His charge and keeping as the vine; His honour is as concerned in the well-being and growth of the branch as of the vine. God, who chose Christ for the Vine, fitted Him thoroughly for the work He had to perform. God, who has chosen us and planted us in Christ, has thereby engaged to secure, if we will but let Him, by yielding ourselves to Him, that we too shall be to His praise in Christ Jesus. Oh! that we did but fully realise this, what confidence and urgency it would give to our prayer to the God and Father of our dear Saviour! How it would quicken the sense of dependence, and make us see that praying without ceasing is indeed the one need of our lives. An unceasing waiting upon God, who has united us to Christ to perfect His own Divine work! To work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure! What a motive this would be for the highest activity in the maintenance of a fruitful branch life. Beloved, motives are mighty powers; it is of infinite importance to have them high and clear. Here, surely, is the highest we can have. "*You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works*"; grafted by Him into Christ; what for? Unto the bringing forth of much fruit! Whatever God creates is exquisitely suited to its end. He created the sun to give light. How perfectly it does its work! He created the eye to see. How beautifully it fulfils its object! He created the "new man" unto good works. How admirably it is fitted for its purpose!

So then, dear brethren, each branch can say, "Of God I am in Christ, created anew, made a branch of the vine, fitted for fruit bearing". Oh! that believers would cease looking mostly at their old natures, and complaining of their weaknesses, as if God called them to what they were unfitted for; would that they would believingly and joyfully accept the wondrous revelation of how God is uniting them to Christ, has constituted Himself the Husbandman taking charge of their spiritual growth and fruitfulness. How sickly hesitance would disappear, and under the influence of this mighty motive—faith in the faithfulness of Him of Whom they are in Christ—their whole nature would rise to accept and fulfil their glorious destiny. So then, beloved, as we press onwards and upwards to our glorious inheritance, let us yield ourselves to the mighty influence of these words: "*Of God are ye in Christ Jesus*".

Let us take more time to meditate upon this deep truth; our union with Christ is indeed the work of the Heavenly Father. Listen to Jesus as He

speaks to us, "Abide in Me", "My Father is the Husbandman, of Him thou art in Me, and to Him and to His glory shall be the fruit thou bearest".

### THE FRUITAGE

"*He that abideth in Me and I in Him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.*" When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in our life. There are times when the great Husbandman trims and prunes the vine. "*Every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit*"; thus Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the Husbandman. The pruning may cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand, or indifferent heart. Some branches may be found trailing on the ground; these must be cut from earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They must reach heavenward and find their support in God. Excessive foliage which draws life-sap from the fruit must be pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out to give room for the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, so the Husbandman prunes away harmful growth that the fruit may be richer. "*Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.*" The Lord indicated the kind of fruit when He said "This is my commandment that ye love one another, even as I have loved you". The fulfilling of this commandment is to be the convincing and indisputable token of discipleship. Let us try to understand how this is so. We know that God is love, and that Christ came to reveal this, not as a doctrine, but as a life. His life in its wonderful self-abasement, self-sacrifice, was above everything the embodiment of Divine love, the showing forth to men, in such human manifestations as they could understand how God loves.

In Christ's love to the unworthy and ungrateful, in His humbling Himself to death, He simply lived and acted out the life of Divine love. Just as Christ showed forth to the world the love of Christ, they, by living and loving just as He did, are to be perpetual witnesses to the love that gave itself to die. Amidst all the diversity of character, of language, or of station, they are to prove that love has made them members of one body and of each other, and has led them to forget and sacrifice self for the sake of the other. Their life of love is the chief evidence of being children of God. Of all the evidence of a true saint of God, this is the mightiest and most convincing. It is the love to each other as true followers of Christ that is ever put in the foreground as the link between love to God alone and to men in general. In Christ's intercourse with His disciples, this brotherly love finds the law of its conduct. It studies His forgiving

and forbearing spirit, with the seventy times seven as its measure. As it looks to His unwearied patience and humility, His meekness and lowliness and entire devotion to their interests, it accepts the instruction "I have left you an example that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13. 15). Following His example, each will not live for himself, but for others. The law of kindness is on the tongue, for love has vowed that no unkind word shall cross its lips. It refuses even to listen to, or to think, evil of others. In gentleness and loving kindness, in courtesy and generosity, in its life of blessing, the Divine love which has been shed abroad in every heart of the children of God, shines out as it did in the life of Jesus. Beloved, do not our hearts bound at the thought of the unspeakable privilege of thus showing forth the likeness of Him who has loved us? Does it seem too high for us to attain? Let us remember that we have but to "Abide in Him" to be able to love like Him. Let us regard this abiding in Him more than ever as an abiding in His love. Rooted and grounded in a love that passeth knowledge, we receive of its fulness and learn to love. We learn to love the brethren, even those who may be the most trying and unlovable to us. With the love of Christ in our hearts, this

command will cease to be a burden, and become a joy. "This is my command, that ye love one another even as I have loved you." This is surely some of the "much fruit" which the great Husbandman is looking for. Beloved, let us try in all simplicity and honesty to translate this language into the daily doings in our homes and daily conduct that all men may see that we are living with Jesus and learning His ways. Let our tempers be under the rule of Jesus. Let the gentleness that refuses to take offence, that is always ready to excuse, to think and hope the best, mark our intercourse with all. Let the love that seeketh not its own, but is ever ready to wash each other's feet, or even to give its life for them, be our aim. Let our life be one of self-sacrifice, ever seeking the welfare of others be our joy. Let us yield ourselves as obedient learners to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By the grace of God, the most commonplace life can be transfigured with the brightness of heavenly beauty, as the infinite love of the Divine nature shines through our frail humanity. Beloved, let us praise God; we are called to love as Jesus loves, as God loves. Then let us with fresh faith accept the blessed injunction, "Abide in Me, and I in you. . . . Abide in my love."

## OUR FELLOWSHIP

*This little word is slightly adapted from a leaflet once published by some of our brethren in connection with their meetings. Its thoughtful spiritual tone renders it worthy of being called again before our attention.*

\* \* \* \*

A Brotherhood—"all ye are brethren"—is our Lord's conception of His Church, and reminding ourselves of the wonderful privileges and responsibilities which attach to membership will, we trust, lead to a closer fellowship one with the other, and to a deeper unity in worship, study and service.

The seal of membership in the Christian Brotherhood is the Holy Spirit of *Sonship*, which is the evidence of a direct relationship between the individual and God. A son of God, through faith in and humble acceptance of the work of Christ on his behalf, becomes the brother of all of like precious faith.

But sonship seeks and finds its fullest expression in *Fellowship*, and this "dwelling together"—meeting often to worship, to study, to encourage one another, to serve—is the mark of living spirituality.

Fellowship, in turn, can only reach its highest level in the atmosphere of *Unity*—not an artificial uniformity of thought and expression, which is fatal to true spiritual life, but a one-ness of spirit which

springs from our common possessions in God and Christ and the Word, is upheld by the "one hope of our calling", and works toward the culminating Kingdom of God. Such true unity recognises the diversity of the Spirit's working, and rejoices with the truth whenever and wherever found.

Such Brotherhood Love, such Fellowship and such Unity is possible in the meetings, but it depends upon ME as an individual as to what extent the ideal is realised in our midst. MY presence is vitally necessary, not only for others but also for myself, for it is the individual's loss through self-isolation which prompts the Apostolic warning—"Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together!"

The importance of meetings for direct Bible study, then, cannot be over-emphasised. It is our privilege and duty to make first-hand acquaintance with "the holy scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation", and to seek a "thus saith the Lord" for every tenet of our faith. Free expression of thought fosters this spirit of study, and enables all to contribute to the common knowledge.

But there must be also opportunity for exhortations or expositions of the various features of the Divine purposes and at these as at all services the keynote is WORSHIP. The desire to be present at such services should be primarily the urge to worship God in the presence of His people.

## THE CHILD SHALL DIE AN HUNDRED YEARS OLD

An examination of Isa. 65. 20.

*"There shall no more be thence an infant of days,  
Nor an old man that hath not filled his days;  
For the child shall die an hundred years old;  
But the sinner being an hundred years old shall  
be accursed."*

The first two clauses are comparatively easy to understand; there will be no untoward deaths of infants at early ages—the meaning of the expression "an infant of days" being that of one whose life is quickly cut short—neither will there be old men who are, as it were, ready for death but death has not yet claimed them. The present indiscriminate coming of death to all sections of the community will no longer continue; in that day the only cause of death will be wilful and incorrigible sin. The next clause "*for the child shall die an hundred years old*" is more difficult. The word for "child" is *naar*, which indicates a male of any age from infancy to youthful maturity. Thus the child Moses in the water (Exod. 2. 6) is *naar*; so is Absalom in his prime (2 Sam. 18. 29), Joshua when he became Moses' lieutenant at the Exodus (Exod. 33. 11), and the four hundred Amalekite warriors who fled from David on their camels (1 Sam. 30. 17). The same word in its feminine form (*naarah*) is used for "young woman" as for Ruth in Ruth 4. 12. Remembering that Job, speaking of the Millennial Day, said of the wasted and aged man "*His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth*" (Job. 33. 25) we might conclude that this third clause of the verse refers to those who are in the ideal state of human maturity, neither "infant" or "old man", a state which will be the normal physical condition of men in that day. This still does not explain why such should "die an hundred years old", i.e., in the full bloom of maturity, and this leads one to suspect a faulty translation due perhaps to some very early corruption in the Hebrew text. This suspicion is confirmed when one refers to the Septuagint rendering of the verse, which is as follows:

*"Neither shall there be any more a child that dies untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the youth shall be an hundred years old, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years old shall also be accursed."*

This seems to teach more clearly that there will be no untimely deaths in the Millennium, or as we would say, no "natural" deaths, and that an age of a hundred years, which to-day is accounted extreme old age and accompanied as a rule by

infirmity and decrepitude, will then be considered as that of a youth. But there will be death to sinners, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years will be cut off forever.

Further confirmation of this view comes from a book which is thought to have been written about a hundred and twenty years before Christ, the "*Book of Jubilees*". Written by some pious Jew and based upon the Old Testament Scriptures, it contains one passage which is evidently taken from Isa. 65. 20, and since the writer probably had access to a more accurate copy of Isaiah's prophecy than we possess to-day his interpretation is valuable. In describing the Millennial reign, he says:

*"And in those days the children will begin to study the laws, and to seek the commandments, and return to the path of righteousness. And the days will begin to grow many and increase among the children of men, until their days draw near to one thousand years. . . . And there will be no old man, nor one who is not satisfied with his days; for all will be as children and youths. And all their days they will complete and live in peace and joy, and there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for all their days will be days of blessing and healing"* (Jub. 23. 26-29).

Again there is the picture of youthful perfection for all men, and everlasting life for the righteous. Whether the hundred years for the span of the wicked is intended literally or merely as the symbolic measure of a life that is governed by sin in contrast with the "thousand years" of the righteous is perhaps a debatable point. There may be some link with the words of Solomon "Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet know I that it shall be well with them that fear God" (Eccl. 8. 12). It may be that the meaning of this last clause is "the sinner, even though he live a hundred years; even though his life seem to be prolonged beyond the span that to-day is usual with man, yet he will eventually suffer sin's penalty and be accursed (cut off)". God is not mocked: what a man soweth, that shall he reap, and if, under the enlightening influences of that blessed day, a man persists in the way of sin, he will certainly reap sin's penalty—death.

Let no faithless thought, arising,  
Hide His presence from our view,  
He will nevermore forsake us,  
Who has blessed us hitherto.

# The Giving of the Manna

THE STORY OF A VERY WONDERFUL HAPPENING

The giving of manna to serve the children of Israel for food was an outstanding feature of the Exodus. The imagination of generation upon generation, first of Hebrews and then of Christians, has been stirred by this inexplicable provision of food for a multitude in the otherwise barren wilderness. It is true that modern discovery has established that Sinai in the days of the Exodus was by no means so barren and desolate as the popular expositors conceived it, or as it is now; but even so the marvellous story has lost none of its appeal, and the wonder of it has passed into the language of every day so that "manna from heaven" has become an expression denoting any unexpected and beneficent gift. It was no less so in Old Testament days, for the Psalmist (78. 24-25) sings exultantly "He . . . rained down manna for them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food, he sent them meat to the full". The language is poetic; the Psalmist did not mean to convey that this white substance "like hoar frost upon the ground" is literally eaten in heaven by the glorious angels who in their perfection of spiritual life do always behold the face of the Father. Rather does the Psalmist, in a flight of poetic fervour, attribute the provision and the qualities of the manna to the direct intervention of Heaven at a time of sore necessity, and quite naturally speaks of God as sending down food from His own table to meet the need of His people on earth.

Let the narrative be examined in the light of all that the twentieth century can tell us regarding the district in which this thing happened and the circumstances under which it took place. The wonder of the story will be by no means lessened and our reverence for the Divine power which brought this about just at the time when it was needed will be immeasurably increased.

*"And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another 'It is manna' for they wist not what it was. . . . And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. . . . And it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of*

*it was like wafers made with honey."* (Exod. 16. 14-35.)

It was at Elim, just after the passage of the Red Sea, that the manna first appeared (Exod. 16. 1) and at Gilgal, following the crossing of Jordan, forty years later, that it ceased (Josh. 5. 12). During the whole of the intervening period, throughout the length and breadth of Sinai, wherever the people wandered, there was the manna, ready for gathering, fresh every morning, *except on the Sabbath*. When they dwelt in Egypt, manna was unknown; after they settled in Canaan it was seen no more; the phenomenon was confined entirely to the Sinai peninsula and the green hills of Edom and Moab, but so integral a part of the whole account is this story of the manna that unless we accept the fact that this thing really did happen we must reject the historical trustworthiness of the entire Exodus narrative.

The story never died. Long after the strings of the Psalmist's harp were stilled Nehemiah encouraged his brethren by telling them of the "bread from heaven" (Neh. 9. 15). Jesus, in His teaching, reminded His hearers that their fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, "*and are dead*" (John 6. 49). The Psalmist's "angels' food" was not able to arrest the processes of death at work in the bodies of the Israelites, and their daily gathering sufficed only to sustain life for another day. Jesus turned their minds to Himself, "the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6. 51) and talked to them about those things without which no man can enter into life. So, in words intended for His disciples of this Age, the consecrated members of the Church of Christ on earth, the resurrected Lord promises (Rev. 2. 17) to give to "him that overcometh to eat of the hidden manna"—that spiritual quality, immortality, the Divine nature—of which the earthly manna of the Exodus was but a symbol.

The same truth is taught in the fact that a vessel of the literal manna, miraculously preserved, was laid up and preserved in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle throughout Israel's national existence (Exod. 16. 30-34; Heb. 9. 4). There, where the supernatural Shekinah glory blazed out over the mercy-seat, where the presence of God in His Heaven was symbolised, stood the sacred vessel, century after century, its contents the incorruptible

symbol of that "life-in-itself" which is to be the inheritance of those who are "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2. 10).

Now what is there known about this manna? Can it be identified to-day? Did Sinai's hills and valleys no more receive the "bread from heaven" after Israel's hosts had travelled that way and departed? Or was it that God did take hold of something in Nature to meet the needs of the occasion?

Through the centuries it has been commonly reported that the manna of the Exodus was still to be seen in Sinai. The Jewish historian Josephus, writing in the first century, said that it never disappeared but was even then to be found in the places where Israel gathered it. In the fifteenth century, a traveller, Breidenbach, declared that manna was common in the valleys surrounding Mount Sinai, hanging in drops on twigs and grass and stones, sweet as honey, and sticky. Since then various travellers have reported finding this substance and have hazarded various theories as to its origin. It is established that the Sinai Arabs have known and collected it for centuries, and in the sixteenth century it could be found on sale in Cairo. In the eighteenth century it was observed that the substance is connected with, and found upon the tamarisk tree, and Burckhardt, the eighteenth century traveller, describes it thus:—

"In the month of June it drops from the thorns of the tamarisk upon the fallen twigs, leaves and stones which always cover the ground beneath that tree in its natural state. The manna is collected before sunrise, when it is coagulated, but it dissolves as soon as the sun shines upon it. The Arabs clear away the leaves and dirt which adhere to it, boil it, strain it through a coarse piece of cloth, and put it into leathern skins. In this way they preserve it until the following year, and use it as they do honey, to pour over their unleavened bread, or to dip their bread into. I could not learn that they ever make it into cakes and loaves. The manna is found only in years when copious rains have fallen; sometimes it is not produced at all."

The Arabic name for this substance is "*manu*" and this has been its name so far back as it can be traced. The writer of Exodus says that the children of Israel called it "manna" "*for they wist not what it was*". The Hebrew word is *man hu*—"What is this?"

Appropriately enough, however, it is the glory of the Hebrew University at Jerusalem finally to have cleared up the question of manna. Dr. Bodenheimer, of that University, has investigated the problem upon the spot and published a book on the subject, illustrated by photographs. The

manna, it is definitely established, is produced by two insects which feed upon the tamarisk tree. They bear the somewhat terrifying names of *Trabutina mannipara* and *majococcus serpentinus minor*. Just as bees visit flowers to produce honey, so do these insects live on the tree and from its sweet juices manufacture manna. Dr. Bodenheimer has photographed them in the actual process of producing manna in beads varying in size from pinheads to peas ("like coriander seed, white"). At first the beads are transparent as glass and later they crystallise, becoming milk-white to yellow-brown. They are found all over the leaves and twigs on the ground, and are soon carried off by ants. The modern counterpart of Moses' golden vessel of manna is now in the University, where glass vials of the "bread from heaven" are preserved.

But in thus identifying the manna we have not disposed of Divine intervention and reduced this wonderful story to the mere level of a commonplace happening which might be repeated any day. The scanty amount of manna which Sinai produces at the present time would not feed a hundredth part of Israel's multitudes. We need the fruits of research in other directions fully to illuminate this wonderful story.

The first chapter of Numbers gives the number of men of twenty years and upward, able to go to war, as being 603,550. The twenty-sixth chapter gives the number at the entering into the land, forty years later, as 601,730. These figures are confirmed, by the numbers accredited to each tribe and it makes nonsense of the record to assert, as do some modern scholars, that the word translated "thousands" properly means "families" and that actually there were merely six hundred *families* that went out of Egypt. According to a leading present-day economist, Colin Clark, in "*The Economics of 1960*" (1942), the proportion of males between the ages of 20 and 60 to the whole population can be taken as averaging 1 to 4. On this basis, and allowing for the tribe of Levi, there would be about two and a half millions of men, women and children in that long trek through the wilderness. One might say, hastily, that all of Sinai would not produce manna enough for such a multitude.

The Scripture itself gives us the data necessary for a calculation. The ration for each person was to be one omer per day (Exod. 16. 16-18). An omer is roughly equivalent to three pints, as far as Hebrew measures are at present understood. A little less than a million gallons or 150,000 cubic feet of manna, therefore, would be required daily to satisfy the terms of the Bible account. It has been shown that the manna, or rather the insects pro-

ducing it, depend upon rainy years and the presence of the tamarisk tree. It is known that in former times Sinai was thickly forested with tamarisk and acacia (the latter is the "shittim wood" of which the Tabernacle was constructed). Much of this forest lingered until the nineteenth century, but during that century there was a great burning of the trees by the Arabs for the sake of producing charcoal, which was carried into Egypt, a great trade in this being conducted, resulting in Sinai becoming almost completely deforested and transformed into the sterile barren waste that it is now. It was only in 1944 that the Egyptian Government decided to undertake the systematic afforestation of Sinai to restore its ancient productiveness.

It was shown, some years ago, in a paper "Climatic changes since the Ice Age" read before the Victoria Institute, that the world in general experienced a period of intense wet weather round about the time of the Exodus and on to the ninth century B.C. Several features of the ten plagues on the Egyptians confirm the thought that the time of Moses was one of plentiful rainfall. We have evidence therefore that the two factors necessary to the production of manna, viz., trees and rainfall, were present to an unusual degree and with the assurance we have that Divine control over the powers of nature is constantly being exercised in the interests of God's Plan we may be certain that this was of design. Given the climatic conditions indicated above, the quantity of manna just mentioned could be produced, and gathered, over an area of no more than two square miles. The host of Israel, with all the tents and impedimenta required for camping would be spread, at any one

time, over an area of fifteen square miles, the size of a British city such as Coventry. It need not be thought incredible, then, that such a vast host should be able to find a sufficiency of manna for their needs, gathered day by day on either side of the line of march.

But the wonder of the miracle remains. Men of science may reveal to us the nature of this mystic food, showing that God laid hold of that which the wilderness already brought forth. They can bear unwitting witness to the unerring foresight of God for His people's needs and His control of natural forces when they tell us that the climatic conditions at that period were unusually favourable to the satisfaction of those needs. But they cannot explain why it is that for forty long years those myriads of busy insects worked unceasingly for six days in every week—and rested on the remaining day! For when the Israelites looked out of their tents on every Sabbath morning, there was no manna on the ground! They must needs gather on the sixth day enough for two days. That mysterious cessation of the natural course on one day in every week has a regularity which is not of Nature unaided—it is of God. Only the One Who rules the universe from above could so command and restrain the labours of His creatures that they rested every sixth day so that there might be no manna on the seventh. Therein is the hand of God revealed, as it is revealed throughout the whole of this wonderful account, taking up the ordinary, insignificant things of earth, bending them to His purpose, and in that totally inexplicable fashion which men call "miraculous" using them to fulfil a vital need in the execution of His Plans.



## THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

An outline of the Divine Plan

In the beginning God made man; God made him suited to the earth so that he could live everlastingly upon it. God provided for the natural increase of the human race so that the earth could be populated and quite evidently for the cessation of the powers of increase when that object has been attained, so that the earth can continue to all eternity like a well-built house inhabited by a happy and contented family. Physically, mentally and morally perfect, man and woman could look forward to everlasting life under ideal conditions.

We do not understand the nature of life, only that it comes from God and that the life of all

living things is sustained by God. We do not know how the first human beings came into existence, only that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2. 7). What we do know is that they rejected the way of life ordained for them by their Creator, a way of life which would have assured them and their posterity lasting well-being and happiness, and at the instigation of the Devil chose the way of disobedience. So it was that sin entered the world, and with it, selfishness, cruelty, disease and death. Men, drifting farther and farther from

God, degenerated physically, mentally and morally, more and more, until at last . . .

"God looked upon the earth, and behold, every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil, and that continually."

It was in mercy that God took them away, for left to themselves they would have eventually become hopelessly depraved and incapable of reformation. God did not intend that to happen, and so it was that He brought into operation His own plans for persuading fallen men to turn from their evil ways and live. But they were long-term plans. Evil was not yet overthrown.

So that first world came to an end with a great flood which swept away all that civilisation.

"Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." (2 Pet. 3. 6.)

\* \* \* \*

The terrible disaster of the Flood had no lasting effect upon succeeding generations. Human history, which begins at this point, tells of increasing selfishness and sin, violence and misery, disease and pain. Some there were who served God, and strove for better things, but the majority lived without hope and without God. Thus did the years pass, until after many generations, a Light came into the world. . . .

"I am come" said Jesus "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". (John 10. 10.)

The coming of Jesus was an event unique in history. He had been with the Father from before all created things. He laid aside His glory, to be born of a virgin, so becoming man, living among men, sharing their joys and sorrows, teaching them the way of life God wanted them to follow. Because men then in power would not have His teaching, they took Him and put Him to death, little realising that He had thus become the means of their own ransom from the power of death. For three days He lay in the grave, and then God raised Him from the dead.

He was not raised a man, for His humanity had been given a "Ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2. 5-6) when He died upon the cross. He was raised to the heavenly nature which had been His before He came to earth, and exalted to the "right hand of the Majesty on high". And the Divine Plan provides for His return to this earth, in the full glory of His spiritual being, that He might teach men to renounce evil and establish everlasting righteousness.

The period between these two Advents is devoted to the calling and selection of believers who come to Him by the successive steps of repentance, con-

version, justification by faith, and full consecration of life and talents to the service of God. They are brought under the spiritually transforming influence of the Holy Spirit, which is the power, the influence of God working in the world. This calling closes with the end of this present Age or "world", and those who have been faithful throughout life to the conditions of their calling receive a change of nature from earthly to heavenly, and the high honour of association with the Lord Jesus in His future work, commencing with the conversion of mankind, which is the object of the coming Age.

In the meantime the human race continues on its downward course. The majority are heedless—heedless of the Gospel, heedless of their own best interests, heedless of the danger that threatens. Once again does God look down upon the earth and decree a great change. This world—the second world—is to pass away and a third world take its place, and in that third world Christ will rule, justly and wisely. Men are fast destroying this second world now, and the earth with it; but God will not allow them to waste the earth beyond repair. The discovery of atomic energy has introduced a new and terrible menace. No responsible thinkers expect this power to be confined to good and constructive use; for the most part they apprehend havoc and destruction on a gigantic scale, and perhaps the end of civilisation. . . .

"The heavens and the earth which are now . . . are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men . . . wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat . . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3. 7-12).

And at Hiroshima, on August 6th, 1945, the world was shown how terribly prophetic were those words.

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Now these things are signs that the old world has nearly reached its end and that the third world, the Golden Age, is at hand. The warring nations, still striving each after their own selfish interests, holding Peace Conference after Peace Conference and failing every time to secure peace, will presently find that a new and quite unexplainable power has suddenly taken control of world affairs and that all powers, governments and rulers are required to conform their national policies and activities to the standards laid down by the visible representatives of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2. 3). Although the new government will not be backed by armed force resistance to its requirements will be useless, for the same spiritual power that at the outset will have caused

"wars to cease unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. 46. 9) will render it impossible for men to continue in any work of evil which injures a fellow man. During the entire period of the Millennial Age, set aside for mankind's training and instruction in righteousness, the liberty to do evil and inflict evil upon others, at present enjoyed by man, and permitted by God, will be withdrawn, and law-abiding men may go about their business and engage in all the manifold activities of life without any fear of harm or evil befalling them at the hands of malicious persons or interests. "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" (Isa. 11. 9).

There will be no death in that Age, except in the case of those who, after full opportunity and encouragement, refuse to accept Jesus Christ and come into harmony with His ways. As soon as society has been sufficiently re-organised on this new and most desirable basis, and men begin to make the earth productive and fruitful as it has never been in history, the dead will begin to be raised, and eventually all will have returned to earth to share in this universal opportunity for everlasting life. Their education to right-doing will be the mission and work of the Church, who then will be reigning with Christ in the heavens to make all men see what is the true Gospel and to help them back to reconciliation with God. But God will not coerce any man's will, and so the freedom of choosing sin and its consequences remains; but the inevitable consequence of sin is eternal death. That fate must befall any who, after full and fair opportunity refuse to profit by the provisions of the Messianic Kingdom.

This exquisite foreview of this coming Day was written sixty years ago:—

"Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be, and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete."

And this is a more recent description:—

"So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful and mankind attains to a

better and more complete understanding of the message of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background—never forgotten, always remaining an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin but no longer having the power to hurt or destroy. The song of the angels 'Peace on earth—goodwill among men' will have become an accomplished fact at last. Human beings will be fair of form and virile of body, magnificent examples of the creative power of God, and with consciousness of that eternity of supremely happy life which is before them will rise at every dawn to pursue with unflurried minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world's work will go on—men will till the soil and reap the fruits of their labour; they will foregather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal; they will travel and rejoice in the varied glories of nature, and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with each other and with God."

*This article will be available shortly in leaflet form. Watch for notice in the "Monthly."*

A friend of our fellowship who, although not associated with us, esteems very highly the principles for which we stand, had occasion to come into close contact with one of our groups in the performance of some signal service he rendered some of its members. He made this remark to the writer.

"I find that I am deriving considerable spiritual refreshment from my contact with the members of your group. There is an atmosphere of primitive Christianity about them which is altogether unusual. It is not ostentatious and they do not obtrude it a great deal in words, but it is there, and it shows itself in a kindness to others and a spirit of co-operation which is refreshingly spontaneous and natural. They seem to be conscious of a power which is leading them on to do things."

That is a striking testimony! There had been no "preaching"; no attempt to "convert"; just a happy and grateful reception of the service this friend was rendering and the exhibition of a spirit of good fellowship against a background of quiet Christian conviction. This is the ideal; to manifest to those among whom we move an impression of the standards of that Kingdom for which we look. So shall we play a not inconsiderable part in preparing the way of the Lord and making his paths straight. We are not all preachers and speakers, but we can all do something like this.

\* \* \* \*

Do you say "If I serve well, I will be a son," or "If I serve well, I will prove myself a son," or "I know I am a son, therefore I serve"?

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## THE QUESTION BOX

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Q. Please explain 2 Pet. 1. 20 "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation". Does it mean that we should not give any heed to man's interpretation of the Scriptures for our edification?

A. We cannot say so when we remember that the Scriptures also tell us that God has "set" various helpers in the Body—pastors, teachers, elders, and so on—it is only from the Divine Word that such helpers can fulfil their privilege of instructing the "saints". The verse should be read as a whole: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". The word "private" in the Greek means "of one's own self" and "interpretation" is "unloosing"; from this it can be seen what is the thought behind the verse. The prophecies of Scripture were not revealed and interpreted by the prophet's own mental powers; but what they said and explained was by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In exactly the same way it is not possible for us in our day to explain and interpret the prophecies of Scripture by the ordinary processes of natural reasoning; we can understand and interpret them only by the power of the same Spirit by which they were given. We should take for our guides and teachers in these things, therefore, those of our brethren who give evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in their hearts and lives and who can speak to us, not "in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth" (I Cor. 2. 13).

Q. How is it that Heb. 10. 5 misquotes Psa. 40. 6 by saying "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" when the Psalm says "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened"?

A. The writer to the Hebrews quoted from the Greek version in common use in his day, the Septuagint. The translators of the Septuagint, realising that the expression "mine ears hast thou opened" (*karah*, literally "pierced") would be meaningless to Greek readers unfamiliar with the laws of Moses, substituted "a body hast thou prepared me" as conveying the idea of devotion to a master's service equally well. The original allusion is to the Mosaic law of Exod. 21. 2-6 and Deut. 15. 12-17, where it is ordained that a Hebrew servant who had the right to freedom, but because of his love for his master and his master's family refused to depart from his service, should have his

ear pinned to the doorpost with an awl in ceremonial figure that he was forever a member of the household, and would then become a servant of the house for the remainder of his life; his master was in duty bound to retain him, by the servant's own free wish and desire. The Psalm speaks prophetically of our Lord Jesus, who voluntarily and freely "took upon himself the form of a servant" (Phil. 1. 2-7), and submitted Himself entirely to His Father's will for the redemption of the human race. So the writer to the Hebrews makes use of this prophecy and says "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but—a body hast thou prepared me" or in other words, a means has been provided by God whereby His Son can serve Him in the Plan of salvation, and that the Son has willingly accepted that means, saying "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God".

\* \* \* \*

What will happen to the physical bodies of the "wilfully wicked" in the Millennial Age, when their final end has come? Will they remain to be buried in graves as is the usage to-day? This question was raised once at a certain meeting and the suggestion was advanced, based on Acts 3. 23, Rev. 20. 9 and Zech. 14. 12, that Divine power might be so exercised as to disintegrate the bodies of the sinners so that they literally vanished and were annihilated. These friends were the more interested, therefore, at a much later date, to read in the daily Press (of 4th February, 1946) an account of a young American atomic energy research scientist who came under the influence of a previously unknown effect of the force with which he was dealing. His helpless colleagues watched his arm wither away in a few hours, and his body disintegrate, until within two days there was nothing left of him. He had literally vanished into thin air.

It may be in some such way that God will make an utter end of every incorrigibly sinful being when such have deliberately and in the face of full knowledge rejected the Divine way of life. "They shall be as though they had not been." We have full confidence, though, that God will leave no stone unturned to convert the sinner from the error of his way; but when every possible avenue of approach has been tried, and the man shows himself to be proof against every possible Divine leading, then God must turn sorrowfully away—and the end of that man's way is death.

# A Short History of Millennial Doctrine

(Conclusion)

The first few generations of the Christian Church ardently expected the Lord's imminent return to set up His Millennial Kingdom. Persecution by the Roman civil power strengthened the conviction that at His coming the kingdoms of this world would pass away and be no more; there was no hope of reform for this world, said they, it must be completely replaced by the new heavens and new earth, spoken of by the Apostle Peter. Christian literature of the times shows that this belief remained unquestioned for several centuries. It was not until about A.D. 200 in the Eastern Churches (Palestine, Egypt and Greece) and nearly A.D. 400 in Rome and the West, that men began to lose heart at the apparent failure of their expectations and look for some other interpretation of the Messianic prophecies. Those who still held to belief in the coming of the earthly Kingdom were led, on the basis of the Septuagint chronology, to expect it at about A.D. 500. Others devised interpretations of the prophetic Scriptures which would justify the assuming of secular power on the part of the organised Church, and permit some relaxation of the high Christian standards laid down in the New Testament. The Church was becoming "successful"; it was entering more and more into alliance with the State; and in consequence the age-old exhortation to suffer *now*, that they might reign in the future day of Christ's appearing, became less and less attractive. The Church had the opportunity of reigning with the world, and she took it, and fell.

The first serious attack upon Millennial belief was launched in A.D. 247 by Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, a noted theologian of his day. Refusing to accept the Book of Revelation as the work of the Apostle John—a view in which he has been followed by many of later years—he propounded a "spiritual" interpretation of prophecy which left no room for the earthly Kingdom. His opinions were not accepted at once, and a considerable time later, in A.D. 325, the Council of Nicæ re-affirmed belief in the Millennium as orthodox doctrine. But the establishment of Christianity as the State religion under Constantine at this time provided the opportunity some in the Church had been looking for, and it soon began to be suggested that the prophecies of the Millennium were to be fulfilled in the triumph of the Church over Paganism, that this triumph would endure for a thousand years,

and that the Second Advent would occur, not at the beginning, but at the end, of this Millennium. This view paved the way for the companion error that the Church is to convert the world *before* Christ comes, instead of waiting for His coming to set up His own Kingdom for world conversion. In A.D. 373 the Council of Rome formally denounced Millennial belief, and from then on, belief in an earthly kingdom, to be set up at Christ's Second Advent, ceased to be an orthodox doctrine of the Church. A little later the celebrated Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, renouncing his own early belief in the Millennium, lent the weight of his authority to the growing view that the reign of the saints was being fulfilled in the then present temporal power of the Church, and the fruits of that terrible error were very soon manifest in what has been called the "Papal Millennium". For twelve centuries, from Gregory the Great to Napoleon, the Papal system reigned supreme in Europe, wielding absolute power in secular and religious matters, crowning and dethroning kings, persecuting opponents and "heretics", departing completely from the spirit of true Christianity. During all this time knowledge of Scriptural teaching regarding the Second Advent and the earthly Kingdom of Christ was kept alive only by small and persecuted bodies such as the Waldenses, and by notable reformers such as John Wycliffe and John Knox. The seed preserved by these faithful servants of God during the Dark Ages was to take root after the Reformation and bear fruit in that more general acceptance of Millennial belief which is becoming evident to-day.

The fearful results of this Papal supremacy led Protestant theologians after the Reformation to seek some other interpretation of the Scriptures that would retain the dogma of the present reign of the Church before the coming of the Lord, without taking upon itself the claim to rule the nations. The doctrine that was ultimately evolved, and that is still the generally accepted view of the established Churches, was first put forward by a celebrated theologian, Rev. Daniel Whitby, D.D. (born 1638 and died 1726). Whitby taught that the Church is to continue the evangelising of the world until all nations are converted, the time during which this is proceeding being the Millennium of Scripture. At the completion of this admittedly difficult task, the Lord will return and wind up earthly

affairs, apportion rewards and punishments to righteous and wicked, and destroy the earth. His view did not claim jurisdiction of the Church over the secular affairs of the world, as did that of Augustine before him; it dealt solely with things in the religious sphere, and it aimed at the world's conversion to Christ before His return.

But the tide was turning. With the coming of the various reform movements that gave birth to the Non-conformist churches, and the work and writings of students like Sir Isaac Newton and preachers like John Wesley, the Church's original belief in the Millennium began to be restored. The Bible was being more closely studied and the opinions of mediæval theologians given less weight, so that by the beginning of the nineteenth century men were much more ready for the flood of light that was shortly to break upon them.

Almost as soon as the century dawned there was activity. Christians were getting together to study the prophecies, the signs of the times, the nature and time of the Second Advent, and rapid progress was made in restoring and amplifying the knowledge on these subjects that had been possessed by the early Church. In the early part of the century men looked for the destruction of the earth by fire after the Second Advent and the Judgment, but towards the end of the century it began to be realised that the Day of Judgment is intended by God to be, not only a time of passing sentence upon sin, but a time of trial in which men will have opportunity to accept Jesus Christ and so become worthy of everlasting life. It began to be seen that the purpose for which the Church has been developed during

this Age is that she may be qualified to be God's instrument of world conversion in the next. The fact that the wages of sin is death, and not eternal torment, was realised, and with this a great stride forward in Millennial understanding became possible, for now it could be seen that in "that day" God can with perfect propriety offer all men "one offer of salvation" on His own terms, and if every endeavour to turn a man to righteousness fails, withdraw from him the life He had given but of which he could make no rightful use. This more clear view of the Divine purpose was not glimpsed by everyone; there are still many who hold to the old-fashioned view of the Day of Judgment; but the wider and more rational view of God's benevolent intentions toward all men is solidly founded on Holy Scripture and must ultimately prevail.

So it is that we now look beyond the present trouble and distress that is upon the world, seeing it as a sign of the imminent establishment of the Millennium for which God's people throughout the ages have looked and prayed. We see an order of society in which evil is restrained and righteousness exalted, in which death is unknown and disease, pain and suffering steadily eliminated, in which all men are brought to a knowledge of Christ the Saviour and, then, unhampered by the retarding effects of inherited or outward sin, make an intelligent and voluntary choice between righteousness and everlasting life, or sin and everlasting death. That is the logical end to which the whole development of the doctrine of the Millennium has been leading the minds of men since the days of Isaiah twenty-six centuries ago.

## A TESTIMONY

*This is the testimony of an unknown brother or sister, penned for the encouragement of others of "like precious faith".*

\* \* \* \*

*"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."*  
(Acts 26. 19.)

Many claim to have received a vision of God's Plan, in some part or other, heavenly or earthly. To those who have received a vision of the Heavenly Calling, the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, it would be well for us to examine ourselves, to see if we have been obedient to the heavenly vision which has been granted to us by our Heavenly Father's grace and love. Through the Second epistle of Peter we know that we have obtained precious faith because of the exceeding great and precious

promises He has made to us, therefore, knowing that all things are possible with God, the exhortation is for us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. If we do this we are being obedient to the vision. If obedient, I know that when I put off this tabernacle I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Romans 8. 1 becomes a reality to me; there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; they walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. The Apostle Paul told King Agrippa that none of these things were hidden from him, and also that he knew that Agrippa believed the prophets. What then did Agrippa lack? Obedience; not being diligent in these things! Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. 3. 12).

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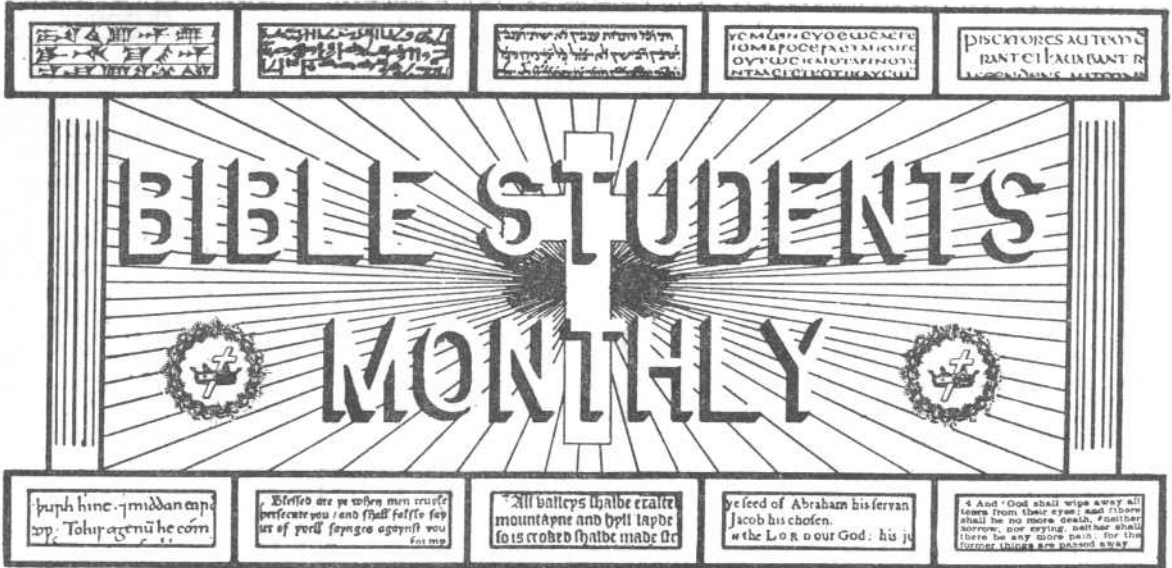
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## BETWEEN OURSELVES

Sister Langley, of Kettering, passed to her reward on 16th October last. Sister had been associated with the Kettering class for thirty years and will be greatly missed by the brethren, who loved her very much and admired her faithful and steadfast devotion to the Lord.

\* \* \* \*

Will the brother, or sister, who sent the "Monthly" a specially composed hymn on 13th October last please write again. We would like to have their permission to reproduce both words and music in such form as seems helpful to the friends, feeling that to many it will be an inspiration.

\* \* \* \*

Plans for the British visit of Bro. J. T. Read of U.S.A. are now being formulated. The arrangements are being handled by an informal committee of four brothers, appointed by the friends primarily responsible for the invitation. This committee consists of Bros. S. A. Couling (Rugby); A. O. Hudson (Welling); A. J. Lodge (London); W. R. Walton (Coventry), and will dissolve when the visit has ended. Bro. Read will be happy to visit any gathering of friends, no matter how small, and it is particularly urged that inability to contribute to the expenses is not allowed to stand in the way of making request for a visit; for the Master provides. Since it is necessary to proceed with detailed planning early in the New Year, it will be appreciated if brethren who have not yet applied will do so, as soon as possible, to Bro. W. R. Walton, 14, Coniston Road, Coventry.

\* \* \* \*

The friends at Warrington advise us that plans are in hand for the Easter Convention of next year. These gatherings have been held now for the past fourteen years and have become almost traditional amongst us, it being found possible to continue without a break even through the war years. The brethren may begin therefore to look forward to another time of real refreshment. Further information will appear in future issues of the Monthly or may be obtained from Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington, Lancs.

\* \* \* \*

The Midlands classes hope to hold the usual Whitsun Convention at Birmingham next year. It is their sincere desire to use this gathering as a means of promoting and strengthening the spirit of true Christian fellowship in the service of the Truth and all their endeavours are to this end. Further information will appear in future issues of the Monthly or may be obtained from Bro. H. W. Burge, 46, Tillingham Street, Birmingham 12.

A Convention of Bible Students in London, arranged by the meetings at Central London, Forest Gate, Petts Wood, Putney, Welling and Windsor, is being arranged for the August holiday of 1947 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. It is hoped that American and Continental brethren will address the convention. Further announcements will be made in due course, and all enquiries should be sent to the Convention Secretary, Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

\* \* \* \*

The friends of the Forest Gate class wish it to be known that their meetings are now held at the Aldersbrook Bowling Club Pavilion, Aldersbrook Road, Wánstead, on Sundays at 11 and 6.30. A warm welcome awaits all who come.

\* \* \* \*

Increasing attention is being given in these days to the more careful production of evangelical, or as we call it, "public witness" literature. One periodical, the "Record", in its special evangelical issue of October 17th last, had this remark:

*"We know how pictures stick in the mind. If ever the Christian world is going to go back to the use of tracts, it will have to use picture tracts which appeal to the eye."*

Of course the Christian world has never really given up the use of tracts. But for some time we have felt that our own literature might well be enriched with some examples of illustrated leaflets, and with a view to gauging the feelings of our brethren on this subject it was decided some time ago to prepare two folders of this nature. These folders are now in stock and available to all who are interested and would like to try out this means of witnessing to our faith in the Holy Scriptures and the Kingdom which is the hope of the world. The folders are printed in green and black, the one, entitled "The Bible—the Book for To-day", being a reprint of the article which appeared in the September Monthly, and the other, "The Dawn of a New Era", being a reprint of the article which appeared in the November Monthly. Each folder has an attractive title page bearing two photographic reproductions appropriate to the subject, whilst the text is illustrated with one or two line drawings. As with all our "witness" literature, these folders can be obtained with local imprint if desired, by special arrangement, for quantities of 1,000 or above. They will be eminently suited for personal use, for enclosing in correspondence, or for the literature table in meeting-rooms. The price is 7/6 per 100 or 1/3 per doz., post free. Samples will be sent gladly, upon request.

## "Thou Crownest the Year with Thy Goodness"

A REFLECTION AND AN ANTICIPATION

Christmas comes at the end of the year, after the harvest has been gathered in and men's labours have measurably ceased, after all the activities of summer days, all the outworkings of plans and schemes, all the planting and building, have reached their climax and attained their object. Christmas is a time for casting the mind back upon the events and achievements of twelve months, and for rejoicing in that which has been done. The work of the year is complete, and Christmas crowns that work.

The Jews began their New Year in the Autumn, after the fruits of their labours had been gathered in and the work of sowing for next year's crops was about to commence. It was then that they observed their Feast of Tabernacles, and in the fiftieth year sounded the Trumpet of Jubilee which proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, calling every man to enter once more upon his inheritance; an inheritance which, perchance, he had lost many years before by reason of sin or misfortune. The Feast of Tabernacles was to the Jews what Christmas is to us—the glory of achievement for one year's work, the anticipation of another year of sowing and reaping and building and sitting down under the vine and fig tree; of release from past disabilities and freedom to make a fresh start. Small wonder that the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of rejoicing. Small wonder that our God, in His wisdom, chose this season of the year for the birth upon earth of His dearly-loved Son—for we know that Christmas, the traditional birthday of Jesus, was not actually the time of that event. It was Autumn when He came, Autumn, the time of beginning again, the time for a fresh start in the things of men, and the things of God. But because we in our state of civilisation are more accustomed to think of the turn of the sun to longer and brighter days as being the beginning of better things; because we look longingly for the "shortest day" and then say one to another "the evenings will soon be drawing out again", it is appropriate that we look upon Christmas as did the Jews upon the Feast of Tabernacles, and celebrate with our friends and neighbours the birth of Jesus, the dawn of new hope for the world, and a guarantee that there shall be a beginning again.

To-day we can look back on our first complete year of freedom from war in this land in this light.

We cannot celebrate the end of war. The fighting has not ceased in the world. In that day when the conscience of the whole civilised world was, for a moment, jolted and stunned by one previously unknown word, "*Hiroshima*", there was no mystic influence that in an instant made wars cease to the end of the earth. Although Japan surrendered, war went on, in Indonesia, India, Persia, China, Greece, and it is still continuing in every one of those countries, with the later addition of Palestine. The statesmen of the world still grope their way unseeingly, feeling for peace, and finding it not, because the way of peace is not in their hearts. The shadow of war still hangs over us. The menace of rivalry between America and Russia glowers at us from the darkness. Distrust is rampant everywhere. India is in revolt, Arabia is in revolt, Palestine is in revolt, Indonesia is in revolt, seeking independence by means of open warfare, if so be they can attain independence only by resource to that final arbiter. Europe is devastated and Germany lies under the heel of a conqueror. There will be no happiness this Christmas for the defeated peoples and little enough for the so-called victors. The few remaining Jews of Europe wander, homeless and outcast, seeking shelter in the dens and caves of the earth. They have nowhere to go. Food shortage and housing shortage is world-wide. There seems, on the surface, little enough reason for man to look up to God and say "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness".

And the reason is not far to seek. It is because the shadow of sin still lies over mankind. There is to be a day when God will "destroy the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25. 7) but that day is not yet. We look for the coming of a Kingdom that will remove sin from the hearts of men and then all these evils from which the world now suffers will take flight and be gone, but that Kingdom is not yet here, and we must take heed of the present. It is a great and glorious part of our commission to tell men of the coming Age with its rule of righteousness and its opportunities of blessing and advancement toward human perfection. It is good that we comfort weary hearts with the golden promises of the golden future, with its shimmering vistas of a world at peace, a world in which disease and pain, sorrow and crying are done away. All this is part of the Christian gospel. But there is

another part which is terribly important because it is related so closely to things that are around us every day. It speaks, not of health, but of pain; not of peace, but of war; not of good, but of evil, and it points to the fact that the cause of all these things is sin, and that sin must be removed, and that sin cannot be removed until there is first repentance, and conversion, and a coming to Jesus in full surrender of life to be moulded by Him into the fashion of that new life of the future Age. And although it is true that the great day of this work is the future day, the Millennial Age, it is also true that the gospel we preach now is the same gospel that will be preached then, and we too, in this our day, must call men, as Peter called men two thousand years ago, to repentance and conversion, before they can properly appreciate the glorious promises of the future Age.

We as a people tend to come short in this. We are too apt to assume a Christian standing in those to whom we witness, and endeavour to convert them to our own understanding of the Divine Plan before we are sure that they are already converted to Christ. We think, perhaps, rather too much in terms of adding adherents to our fellowship and not enough of adding believers to Christ. Do we, one wonders, need to take to heart, more seriously than we have done, the words of Jesus "*Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and . . .*"? In this dark day of the world's distress surely we need above all things to establish the faith of men in Christ the Lord, and on that basis begin to instruct them in things concerning His Kingdom.

Another thing we tend to forget is that we cannot convert others until we have been converted ourselves. We cannot lead other men into a Kingdom into which we ourselves have not yet entered. And there is a very real sense in which we, who have "come in" to Christ, are called to enter His Kingdom here and now. Have we done so? Is it true of us that "the Kingdom of God is within you"? Have we "entered into rest" (Heb. 4. 3) or are we like those of old who failed to enter in "because of unbelief"? Men will ask us concerning our faith and hope for the future, and the way of life which we declare that men will be called upon to follow in that day, "Does it work?" Unless we can show that it *does* work, and *has* worked, in our own lives now, how can we expect them to heed our witness regarding the future? There is danger of spiritual complacency. We are so sure of our own personal salvation—and it is a good thing to be sure—but that very certainty tends to beget a carelessness with regard to others, and when, as at the present time, men are generally indifferent to the message of Truth there is a tendency to leave the world to its sin and

unbelief and take refuge in the consciousness of personal acceptance with the Lord. Evangelical fervour is dulled by apathy, and the final result is seen in those little companies—not unknown even in our own fellowship—who have frankly and avowedly abandoned the Christian commission to preach the gospel and are waiting in quietude and seclusion until they are carried away to heavenly glory.

And all of this is because we have been unable to "endure to the end". It is only when the end has come that we can expect to see the fruition of our work, and only by patient continuance in well-doing that we shall receive the prize of immortality (Rom. 2. 7.) It is noteworthy how often the Scripture stresses this fact. "The Gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and *then shall the end come.*" (Matt. 24. 14) "Go thou thy way *till the end be*" (Dan. 12. 13) "Receiving *the end of your faith*" (1 Pet. 1. 9) "*At the end* it shall speak, and not lie" (Hab. 2. 3). "*Then cometh the end*, when He . . . shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power" (1 Cor. 15. 24.) It is at the *end* that we shall realise the fruitage of our sowing, and not before.

We can therefore read a new meaning into the Psalmist's words, putting emphasis on "crownest" instead of on "goodness". "Thou *crownest* the year with thy goodness!" It is not until the *end* of things that God as it were puts the topstone on His structure and His goodness stands revealed to all men. It is not until the *end* of this present evil world that the light of the glory of the Kingdom shines at length to all men; not until the *end* of the Church's career in the flesh that she shines forth "as the sun" in the Kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13. 43).

So Christmas becomes to us a symbol and an earnest of the end that shall come, even though the past and present be dark and discouraging. We enter upon its familiar customs with knowledge that a greater and more glorious time of festivity and gladness awaits the world "at the time of the end". The short passage in Psa. 65 in which this phrase occurs is quite evidently framed to fit Millennial conditions. If not a direct prophecy of the coming Age, it certainly is a wonderful illustration and the "crowning" of that Age with God's goodness the natural climax. "*They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy tokens*" (signs—*Heb.*) says the Psalmist in verse 8. Surely he here takes his stand during the great Time of Trouble which is concluding this present Age and "present evil world". Men are admittedly afraid at His signs—the signs of the long-promised coming again to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Men's hearts failing them for fear." "They shall seek the dens and caves of the rocks." We are quite familiar with

many such Scriptures and their manifest fulfilment in this our day. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice." The "outgoing of the morning" is the sunrising, and that of the evening the moonrising. Both these signs are to be witnessed at this time, the dawn of the Millennial Age. The sunrising is the manifestation of Jesus at His Second Advent—"as the bright shining, (the sunrise), cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24. 27). "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4. 2.). And the moonrising is the restoration of God's ancient people Israel to their own land to be a missionary people and to declare His salvation to the end of the earth (Isa. 49. 6). "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60. 1.). Here the sunrise is associated with the moonrise which shines by reflected glory from the sun. So, Israel in that day will reflect the glory of the returned Lord to mankind. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." That river of God is the Church, complete and ready for her task of bringing life to the nations; "full of water". "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." (Psa. 46. 4.) "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." All things being ready, the pure sustenance of Millennial teaching, of missionary endeavour, of "life from the dead" is prepared for

and offered to mankind, "corn" that will give them everlasting life. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6. 51). "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12. 24). "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly. Thou settlest the furrows thereof. Thou makest it soft with showers. Thou blestest the springing thereof." Could language better describe the work of God with man during the next Age? "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations (Isa. 61. 11). So we come to the climax of that glorious Age when "thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness". "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isa. 25. 6)

This is the hope we have for mankind. Surely as we approach this Christmas season we can take fresh heart of courage, remembering that there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, and that just as now we look forward to the ending of this year and the hope of better things in the next, so in this end of this present evil world, dark and fearsome though it may be, there is the sure and certain knowledge of a new and better world "wherein dwelleth righteousness".

### "AND ALL MEN SHALL FEAR"

"And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing." (Psalm 64. 9.)

Here is a text which will find its fulfilment when the thousand year reign of Christ has begun to bring forth its fruits of knowledge and blessing for all nations. It is God's design that all men shall come to a knowledge of the Truth (I Tim. 2. 4) and having done so to face for themselves the issue of life or death. The Psalmist speaks of that time when He has made wars to cease to the end of the earth, (Psa. 46. 9) has put down injustice and oppression and every evil thing, and shown men just what can be made of a world that is organised and governed along lines of love and righteousness. Surely the majority of men then will "wisely consider of his doing" and choose the way of life, that they might live.

\* \* \* \*

"Prayer is the key to open the day and the bolt to shut in the night."

### RESTING IN CHRIST

"Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be moulded more and more after the life of Christ.

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell on self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love,—this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness."

# THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

## 5. Conclusion

A series of notes on the principles underlying prophetic interpretation

The coming of the angel Gabriel to Daniel in answer to his prayer is one instance of the curtain that divides us from the spiritual world being lifted, even though ever so slightly. We are permitted to glimpse just a little of those activities that are going on "beyond the veil". "At the beginning of thy supplications *the commandment went forth*" says Gabriel to Daniel "and I am come to shew thee". Imagine this mighty and glorious being, resplendent in his spiritual perfection, being summoned into the presence of the Most High, entering as it were into conference with the Father and the Son over this matter of Daniel's petition, and receiving his commission to go to earth and make known to Daniel "things that shall be hereafter". Some such thing as this must have happened at that time in the heavenly courts.

Gabriel came to earth with a clear and detailed picture of the events that were yet to happen over a period of something like twenty-five hundred years. That much is evident even if we do not fully understand the fulfilment of all that he told Daniel. The question of immediate interest to us is this: how could these detailed happenings be known to him so long before they occurred? The account in Daniel 11 is no general statement of the ultimate purpose of God, no set of terms that cover in a general way the main drift of world events into the Kingdom; the detailed and precise nature of the narrative implies that Gabriel could see, or had seen, a clear panorama or chart of world history as yet not enacted, and was able to speak to Daniel with the precision of absolute knowledge.

It is here that we are brought face to face with one of the most intriguing statements in the whole of the Scriptures; one that seems to have received less than its due share of notice from scholars and commentators. "*I will shew thee*" says Gabriel "*that which is noted in the scripture of truth*" (i.e., in the "true writings", this being the literal meaning of the expression). It takes a moment or two to realise that these "true writings" which Gabriel proposed to reveal to Daniel, and did reveal in what we now have as the 11th and 12th chapters of the latter's prophecy, *are not recorded in any "true writings" which now exist upon earth!* These two chapters, with their detailed account of world history from Daniel's time to the consummation of the Kingdom, stand unique in literature. There is nothing like them in the Bible or anywhere else. Whatever may

be the nature of those "true writings" from which the angel Gabriel drew his authority to speak, they are not of this world or this order of things!

Then what can they be? Are there indeed books in Heaven? Did the angel bring with him a celestial scroll, from which as he unrolled he could read to the prophet concerning things to come? Is there a literal "Book of Life", and another, a "Book of Remembrance", and another, one that Moses, speaking to God, called "Thy Book", reposing in some kind of heavenly library, containing all the records which are to be made known when the Last Day shall have come? Will the angels turn over literal pages to find the judgments recorded, when all men stand before the great Throne, and "the judgment was set, and the books were opened"?

We do not think so. What we do know is that there must be counterparts to these things in the heavenly realm, and that just as the records of men upon earth, preserved in book form, exist as aids to memory, so in that spiritual realm there must be the "records of memory" waiting to be called upon when the time of decision and judgment shall have come. *But not only of memory*; for the angel spoke of things *yet to come* as being already recorded in the "true writings." What then can these "true writings" be but the eternal purpose of God, known unto Him from the foundation of the world, made known by Him, to angels or to men, as He sees fit? The expression "*true writings*" in such a connection gives a terrible finality to the things to which reference is made. There can be no escape from the fulfilment predicted. There can be no possibility of turning the current of events so that the details of prophecy given by the angel do not come to pass after all. These things *shall* be; they are so written, and the only explanation of that irrevocable finality consistent with God's gift of free will to man is that God, having set in motion the forces which are leading men to their destined end, sees into the future and perceives what is coming, much as a railway train driver from his cabin looks forward along the track and perceives the trees and rivers and towns advancing toward him whilst the passengers, limited to their sideways vision, can have no conception at all of what they will be seeing five minutes or five hours hence.

We naturally ask ourselves what determines the nature and sequence of those coming events. Were they arbitrarily devised and ordained by God in the

dim long ago before as yet any of them began, before man had been created or the earth brought into being, in which case man has no choice or volition at all in the matter of his future destiny? Or can we conceive of God, in the immensity of His power and wisdom, being able to take a comprehensive view of the world as it now is, all its creatures with all the thoughts and intents of all their minds, and discerning in His infinite knowledge just how every one of those creatures will react to each of the influences that will be brought to bear upon him during life, thus perceiving the end from the beginning, not because He has arbitrarily willed the minutiae and detail of that end, but because He can foresee what is going to be the effect of every thought and word and action of every man at this particular moment, and then the further effects of those effects, and so on into infinity, so that from the state of the world and the men in it at this present time, He can as it were calculate the precise outcome at the end of the "world"?

Let Isaiah, who knew the majesty and power of God more intimately, perhaps, than any other of the prophets, give his testimony as to what he perceived of this aspect of God's character.

*"I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, AND FROM ANCIENT TIMES THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT YET DONE."* (Isa. 46. 10.)

*"Bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and shew us what shall happen. Let them shew the former things (things before us—coming things) what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know THAT YE ARE GODS. Yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together"* (i.e., perceive that man can tell the end from the beginning; Isa. 41. 21-23). The point so noticeable when pondering over these Scriptures is that the certainty of the prophecy is due, not so much to God's exercise of fore-ordination, but to God's knowledge of things to come. It is as though He sees what is not yet apparent to men, and tells them what He sees. Moreover, it would seem as if this power to foresee future happenings is one that can be shared by others in the spiritual realm. "Shew us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that YE are GODS!" It is evident though that this clear perception of the future is not normally possessed by the angelic host, for we are told that the mysteries of coming things respecting the outworking of the Plan concerning the Church are matters "which the angels DESIRE to look into" (I Pet. 1. 12). Gabriel certainly had know-

ledge of coming things when he spoke to Daniel; so did the angels who appeared to Ezekiel and Zechariah, and, above all, our Lord, appearing to John on the island of Patmos, declared that He was about to show him "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1. 1). One wonders if our Lord at that time had a clearer knowledge of the events and time of His own Second Advent than He possessed sixty years earlier when, in the days of His flesh, He said *"Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, NEITHER THE SON, but the Father"* (Mark 13. 32).

What is it, then, in the nature of time and the future that makes this thing possible. Men have speculated for several generations on the possibility of "travelling through Time" going forward into the future, at least in mind, and then coming back into the present again. Such notions appear to us fantastic—but only because they are so remote from everyday experience. Several serious investigators have achieved results in this direction which seem to indicate that the idea, even though beyond the power of the average man to grasp, may not in the end prove to be so fantastic as it sounds. It may be literally true that God does "see" down the "stream of time" and, without necessarily consciously ordaining or commanding specific events and happenings, does perceive what those happenings are going to be.

If this be indeed the case, we may rest assured that men like Daniel and Ezekiel are the very ones to whom the visions of remote futurity would be given; men whose hearts were earnestly set on the fulfilment of all God's gracious plans, men whose minds were closely attuned to God in their endeavour to see what He could see, and to hear what He would say to them. Hence Paul, caught up into the "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12. 2) was able to hear and see things which could never be repeated or imparted in their detail to his fellows, because so different from anything with which we are familiar upon earth.

This brings us to the greatest difficulty in the imparting of this type of prophecy. The conditions of far distant days must of necessity differ so widely from those of to-day that a great many statements and allusions must of necessity be quite unintelligible unless re-expressed in terms familiar by reason of everyday use. Suppose an angel from heaven had appeared, for instance, to Sir Francis Drake in A.D. 1588 to tell him of the great war of 1939-45. It would be supremely difficult for the Elizabethan Admiral to understand the angel's description of naval warfare with its dive-bombers, submarines and super-Dreadnoughts. The angel would have to recast his description along the lines of wooden sailing-

ships, bows and arrows, primitive ball-firing cannon, and cutlasses. His reference to American participation would leave Sir Francis puzzled, for North America, although vaguely known to Europeans, had not then been colonised and its only inhabitants were Red Indians. Holland and Belgium would have to be referred to by their mediæval name of Flanders, and Russia as Muscovy. The whole story would have to be cast in the atmosphere and within the limits of knowledge of the sixteenth century. And the angel would be hard put to it to convince the sceptical sailor that men would be flying in winged ships five miles above the earth and, so doing, converse easily with their fellows on the ground a hundred miles away.

So when the angel spoke to Daniel, and Jesus spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, their language had to be accommodated to the knowledge of the times. Gabriel spoke of kings, warring one with another down to the end of the Age. In the reality those "kings" may be local powers, petty kingdoms; they may represent empires, presided over by mighty military conquerors; they may depict whole races of mankind exercising a period of world supremacy and then declining and giving place in turn to other races even mightier. But to Daniel they were kings. The angel spoke of Michael standing up; we know that he referred to the One Who is to take control at the time of the resurrection, in the dawn of the Millennial Age. But Daniel knew nothing of Christ; like other Jews of his day, he looked on "Michael the archangel" as being the great spiritual prince and champion of his people, and hence quite naturally Gabriel used the name of the archangel to represent that One Whose name, Jesus, Daniel had never heard.

So Jesus, viewing the events of to-day from two thousand years ago, could not describe those things to his disciples without enshrining them in words and terms familiar to His hearers. Men do not live on house-tops to-day, neither do women grind at corn-mills except perhaps in isolated country districts. But He could not have said "Let not the factory worker return to his bench, nor the train-driver to his engine-shed" for such words would convey nothing to the disciples. We must interpret the words Jesus did use in the realisation of this fact.

It is probable that Ezekiel, viewing the Temple, did see an accurate picture of a building that is literally to be erected. His was a vision; his eyes beheld Judea as it will be, and he described what he saw as best he could. There was not the same difficulty of translating his vision into the everyday terms of his own day, for temples were familiar sights in that day and land. But even if so, the wonder of the thing remains that Ezekiel should have beheld with

his own eyes the similitude of an architectural creation which has not yet existed in reality. And it is only when we hold these differences of the Spirit's revelation in mind that we shall be able correctly to interpret the prophecies, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual", "rightly dividing the Word of Truth".

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These notes have been very fragmentary. They are intended to be so. They were written to arouse interest and stimulate the study of the prophecies rather than to put forward definite or dogmatic conclusions. When all that we can say has been said, it remains that we know very little of the power behind prophecy. If the foregoing articles have helped to demonstrate that prophecy is in fact based upon a sure knowledge of the future, that God Himself is the possessor of that knowledge, that He reveals it to those whose minds and hearts are attuned to Him, and that the revelation of such knowledge is of inestimable value in the development of Christian character and the preservation of Christian faith, then they have served their purpose. It will be necessary for many minds to be exercised and many pens to be busy if the "sure word of prophecy" is to be expounded in all its fulness of light for our day, for such things can never be the peculiar privilege of any one man. The subject is too vast to be comprehended from one viewpoint. But whilst remembering this we need also to remember that in prophecy, as in perhaps no other Scriptural subject, it is necessary that old understandings be continuously amplified and enlarged, and oft-times drastically revised, as we progress along that upward pathway that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day".

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*"A tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth His fruit in His season" (Psa. 1. 3).*

Every consecrated child of God who is faithful to His covenant will become such a tree in the coming Age; "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified" (Isa. 61. 3). There they stand, dotted about the sunlit landscape of that fair Millennial land, calling attention to the sparkling streams of Divine Truth that will be for all to share, taking "of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22. 17). There will their fruit be gathered for the sustenance of the nations and their leaves plucked for the healing of sin-sick peoples (Ezek. 47. 12); and both fruit and leaves will owe their efficacy to the life-giving waters which in the growing time—this Gospel Age—have nourished the tree. This is God's plan for those who in this our day have consecrated themselves unreservedly to His service.

# THE PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE

A discussion on the relation of faith to Divine intervention

*"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distress . . . ."*

The noble strains of the 107th Psalm come very readily to the mind as soon as one thinks of Divine intervention. That song of praise is a wonderful rhapsody, with the goodness of God for its theme and the story of faithless Israel as its background. Time after time they left Him and went their way, but just so soon as they manifested sincere repentance and cried unto Him for succour, His ear was open to their plea and He reached down from Heaven to save them.

It is not only in the history of Israel that we discern the principles upon which God acts in saving those who are in sore need. We have the thrilling stories of stalwart heroes of faith, and, too, of men whose faith was not so deeply rooted but who called upon their God when the experiences of life had taught the needed lesson; we have the story of the dispensations and the marks left upon history by the "stately steppings of our God". There is much in the way of material to be explored in the course of our investigation.

It is frequently suggested that the purpose of the Time of Trouble is to reduce mankind to a condition of utter despair in which they will be ready to accept proffered help from Heaven to restore order and tranquillity upon earth, and that, in the final phase of this same Time of Trouble, Israel, regathered in unbelief, hard pressed by the nations of the world, will be miraculously delivered by direct intervention of God; that this miracle will open their eyes and that it will produce an immediate national conversion. The conclusions arrived at in this article point to another factor that should be taken into account—stated here as a general principle, it is that *God can only deliver when there is faith and belief*. Before Israel can be physically delivered, they must be nationally converted.

Our key scriptures for this study are Rom. 10. 21 and Heb. 3. 18-19. "*All day long*," declares God, in the former scripture, "*all day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*" Paul is quoting from the 65th chapter of Isaiah, a chapter in which the prophet shows how impossible it is for God to deal with a people who deliberately turn away. The writer to the Hebrews, in his mournful recapitulation of the shortcomings of Israel, declared sadly "We see that they *could*

*not enter in because of unbelief.*" (Heb. 3. 19). As one reads the stirring story of speedy entrance to the land of milk and honey, and perceives how quickly the veil of unbelief blotted out the fair vision of Canaan, one senses something of the tragedy which overtook this people who failed to realise that the first essential to the receiving of Divine bounty is—faith!

Right at the outset this principle was laid down. Israel in the wilderness stood in great need of deliverance from the native tribes of Canaan. If they were to inherit the land these peoples must be removed. God promised them that they would have no need to fight; He Himself would cast out those great nations, *if Israel would manifest faith and act accordingly* (Exod. 23. 20-28). The long story of war and fighting which characterised Israel's history both before and after they gained access to the Promised Land is a sorry commentary upon the high hopes with which they set forward after the signal overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. They "stood still" to "see the salvation of God" on that occasion (Exod. 14. 10-31), they had faith to cross Jordan at the time appointed, when the river was held back (Josh. 3. 9-17), and "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days" (Heb. 12. 30). Nevertheless the people generally were always hovering on the edge of unbelief (see Num. 14. 10 and compare with verse 31), and apart from these three incidents they were normally in a condition of doubt at best and frank rebellion at worst; their hearts were not right before God and so He could not give them that free and open passage into the land which would have been possible had they taken Him at His word.

The next striking illustration germane to this study is that provided by the story of the Judges. For several centuries after their settlement in Canaan, the children of Israel were ruled by "judges", national heroes who came to the fore in times of crisis and became the means of deliverance. Upon each such occasion the misery and calamity of Israel is said to have been due to their apostasy from God, and at each time, *except one*, we are told that when they realised their undone state, and *cried unto the Lord*, deliverance came; but not before they had thus demonstrated their repentance. Quite soon after their entrance into the land, it is said that "the children of Israel did evil . . . . therefore the anger

of the Lord was hot . . . and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia . . . and when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer . . . Othniel . . ." (Jud. 3.5-11). So the land had rest forty years, "and the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . (and) served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud . ." (Jud. 3. 22-30). This time the land had rest fourscore years, but once again the sad tale was repeated, and after Israel's repentance and once more crying to the Lord, Deborah and Barak were raised up (Jud. 4. 1-26); and after Barak there was Gideon (Jud. 6. 7 & 8); and after Gideon came the time of Jephthah, when Israel "cried unto the Lord, saying, we have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim" (Jud. 10. 10); and after Jephthah the most renowned of all the Judges, Samson.

With Samson there was a difference. It was not said of him, as it was said of all the others, that Israel cried unto the Lord, and He raised a deliverer. Israel had groaned under the yoke of the Philistines forty years (Jud. 13. 1), but there is no indication that there was any true repentance or that they had come before God in faith for promised help in time of need. So it is not surprising, perhaps, that Samson, for all his boasted prowess, utterly failed to deliver Israel. He judged Israel twenty years (Jud. 15. 20), but during all that time, as is made clear in the Book of Judges, the Philistine yoke lay heavy on Israel, and at Samson's death Israel was still in bondage. Samson had not wrought any deliverance at all. Surely this is significant. The five judges who went forward on a basis of national repentance brought deliverance. The sixth, in some respects the mightiest of them all, failed to achieve any release; and this was the occasion when the people had failed to "cry unto the Lord".

There are several incidents in the later history of Israel which throw further light upon the operation of this principle. In the days of Samuel the Ark of the Covenant, rashly taken into battle against the Philistines, had been lost to the enemy (I. Sam. 4. 17), and after its recovery, in chastened repentant mood, the people of Israel "gathered together to Mizpeh . . . and said there, 'We have sinned against the Lord'" (I. Sam. 7. 6). It was in this condition of mind that they heard of the renewed aggression of their enemies, and were afraid, and called upon Samuel "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines" (vs 8). Their newborn, fledgling faith was honoured, and the story tells how the Lord

thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines and discomfited them.

Centuries later the same problem confronted Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The story recounted in the 20th chapter of 2 Chronicles is eloquent as it describes the complete faith of Judah and Judah's king. "*Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Stand still, and see the salvation of your God.*" Judah was saved without the necessity of striking a single blow in their own defence. Perhaps some recollection of this story stirred in the mind of king Hezekiah as he went up to the Temple and spread Sennacherib's ultimatum before the Lord—because it was the Lord's business and He was quite able to defend His own people (Isa. chap. 37). Once again a right faith attitude triumphed and the city and people were saved, *because they believed.*

There is one very striking case of personal deliverance recorded in the Old Testament. It is that of Jonah. Whilst in a rebellious frame of mind, deliberately refusing to carry out the Divine commission, he became involved in what seemed to be the prelude to certain death. There was no apparent escape from his terrible plight. Deliverance came at length, but only *after* he had repented and cried to the Lord. Hear his own words "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple . . . I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2. 7-9).

*"And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon dry land."*

It is worthy of note that at times of dispensational changes in the development of the Divine Plan, there have been further instances of the fact that belief and faith are necessary to salvation. At the time of the Flood, when the "world that was" came to an end, deliverance was dependent upon this attitude of heart. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to a world of ungodly men (2 Pet. 2. 5). Quite evidently his message was not believed, there was no repentance and calling upon God, and the day of opportunity passed. The return from the Babylonian captivity was marked by a similar call to repentance, heeded by the few and ignored by the many, and only those who believed undertook the journey and were delivered. "Thus saith the Lord, 'After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you . . . then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart . . . and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive'" (Jer. 29. 10-14). The inference here is quite definite that restoration is con-

ditional upon repentance, and Ezra 1. 5 and 3. 1 tell how sincere was the new found faith of the returned captives.

That return from Babylon captivity was a great event in the chosen people's history—but there is a greater one yet to come, but still conditional upon the same requirement—prior conversion. Paul alludes to it when he says of Israel in the latter days "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graff them in again" (Rom. 11. 23). As with the Church of this Gospel Age, so with that earthly people which will be gathered for God's service at the end of the Age, *God places a premium upon faith.* After all, this is but the principle expounded by Peter at Pentecost when he called upon his countrymen to "repent . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3. 19) and by Paul when he said "If thou shalt confess . . . and shalt believe . . . thou shalt be saved, for . . . with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10. 9-10).

This then is why Jesus declared "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3. 14-15). It was belief, faith, that enabled the dying Israelite in the wilderness to look up to the brazen serpent, held aloft in the sight of all men, and feel new life coursing through his veins as his gaze lighted upon that glittering symbol. So he that would taste of God's deliverance must first believe and "cry unto the Lord" in faith.

Perhaps this explains why Jesus could do no mighty work in His native district. The people there needed His ministrations just as much as in other parts. His desire and willingness to minister His healing power to them could not have been less than elsewhere. Yet we read "He could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6. 5-6) There is only one thing proof against the power of Jesus—unbelief.

Unbelief—unbelief—unbelief. Forever standing as a barrier which must be broken down before there can be deliverance. Mankind in the next Age must believe before they can even make a start upon the way that leads to deliverance—for the mere fact of awakening from death is not deliverance at all; it is but a revivifying and a taking up of human experience at the point where it was left. So the mere gathering of a chosen people into the land of Promise at the Time of the End can achieve nothing in the plans of God unless that people be truly converted and devoted to Him, that in them and through them He may reveal His power to all

nations. It was that kind of regathering surely that Jeremiah saw when he said "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (Jer. 31. 9.) Zechariah speaks of a great mourning "in that day," as the "mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12. 9-11). This morning of the End Time is over One slain, One Who was pierced, and is an indication of repentance and remorse, and an acceptance of the One Who had been rejected.

The Divine Law respecting this matter was laid down for all time when the Lord spoke with Moses on the Mount. Faithfully did the "meekest man in all the earth" transmit his Lord's words. The twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus tells plainly of the blessings that are contingent upon faith, blessings which include deliverance from enemies. It tells also of the woes that come as the result of unbelief, woes that include captivity in the land of the enemy. All through that chapter no hint is given that deliverance can be secured on any other basis than prior faith.

At the first Advent Jewry demonstrated the opposite position. They stood in sore need of deliverance; they ardently desired deliverance; but they were still a faithless and unbelieving generation, and the deliverance they could have had passed them by "*How often,*" cried Jesus, "*would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings—and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" (Matt. 23. 28.) "The days shall come," He said, "when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee . . . and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19. 43-44). That time of distress which closed the Jewish Age was a figure of the greater Time of Trouble which closes the Gospel Age. Just as those believers who formed the nucleus of the Christian Church were saved out of the destruction and captivity which befell Jerusalem and its people in A.D. 70, so the "people of faith" at this end of the Age will experience Divine deliverance from their trouble and stand forth revealed as the earthly people who are to carry Divine law to the nations. "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1. 21).

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"Disappointment is a wholesome medicine; and . . . in the secret of it, as in the twilight so beloved by Titian, we may see colours of things with deeper truth than in the most dazzling sunshine."

—RUSKIN.

## “THEN SAID THOMAS”

“Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him.” (John 11. 16.) The Jews were seeking Jesus to stone Him, when news came of the death of Lazarus, and He set out to go to Bethany despite the entreaties of the disciples, who were apprehensive for His safety. It was then that Thomas came out in such a favourable light. He was the first to express his desire to follow Jesus even though it seemed to be into certain death. Because of his refusal to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus until he could see his Lord in His pre-crucifixion likeness, he has become known in later times as

“doubting Thomas”; maybe the slight is undeserved, for in this incident his loyalty to Jesus shows up very strongly. He was prepared to take the lead of the others in following Jesus into death. Perhaps it was that same intense loyalty which forbade him believe until he had identified the wound-prints in hands and feet. If so, it seems clear that loyalty is not enough if it is not accompanied by spiritual discernment. “Blessed are they who, *having not seen*, have believed” (i.e. have not seen with the natural sight, but have done so with the spiritual sight). Thomas is reputed to have carried the Gospel to Mesopotamia and then to India, where the memory of his name is cherished to this day.

### Christmas Items

A few suggestions for friends thinking of Christmas gifts.

“*The Man who did not Sin*” by Newman Watts. Cloth, 5/6 post free. This story of the Millennial Age is intensely interesting and has many points of contact with our expectations.

\* \* \* \*

“*The Mission of Jonah*.” Semi-narrative form—especially useful for young people. 2/9 post free.

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All above can be sent from stock.

### Book Reviews

WHERE IS CALVARY? (L. T. Pearson) *Uplift Books Ltd.* 1/2 post free.

This little booklet of 28 pages is an interesting study of the evidence for the position of Golgotha and the Tomb of Jesus just outside the Damascus Gate. Written by one who has lived and worked on the spot and knows the locality thoroughly, it presents the facts in an able manner. The book is well produced and contains nine photographs of the tomb and its surroundings, a plan of Jerusalem in Jesus’ day and a plan of the Tomb itself. A useful addition to any Bible Student’s library.

\* \* \* \*

PALESTINE AND THE BIBLE (Samuel Schor) D. G. Pearson. 2/9 post free.

A most interesting collection of Eastern customs and facts alluded to in the Bible, comprising 128 pages, including six illustrations and index, with stiff paper cover. A feature of the book is the wealth of Scripture quotations—ten pages taken at random contained references to 80 texts, explained by the customs, etc., described. One chapter gives a clear description of the Tabernacle, and the author’s recollection of watching a camel pass through the “needle’s eye” is worth reading. The author was born in Jerusalem and spent his life in Jewish mission work, thereby becoming well qualified for the preparation of this book. It is written in simple yet convincing style, suitable for young and old alike, making a useful little gift for any Christian believer.

Both the above can be supplied from the Book-room.

# The Promise of Restitution

## SOME FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES

The doctrine of the Millennium has its roots in the soil of Eden. In that intensely interesting record there are two important elements. One is that man was created sinless and physically perfect, capable of living for ever, the subsequent entry of sin being responsible for death and every other evil. The other is that God has permitted the dominion of sin for a wise purpose and for a limited time; but its power will eventually be destroyed and mankind will be restored to the primal perfection and attain everlasting life upon earth. The Millennium is the period during which this restoration process takes place, for those that are capable of conversion and reconciliation to God, and the exaction of sin's ultimate penalty in the case of those that are incorrigibly wicked.

The story of Eden is not only one of condemnation; it is one of hope, speaking of God's intention to undo the evil effects of sin. Historically it records the conditions that existed when God, having brought the earth into existence and furnished it with plant and animal life, placed Man, its crowning glory, upon it, and commissioned him to increase and multiply, bring the earth under control, and make use of all its amenities in harmony with Divine law. Man was free to repudiate that law, but the consequence of violating the principles which God had ordained was cessation of his existence—death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man did transgress; death reigned in consequence.

We do not fully understand the necessity of this temporary power of sin over the human race, but that it can be and is being used by God as a means toward achieving His designs for the human race is undeniable. That in some sense we do not fully comprehend—or perhaps do not comprehend at all—perfection is attained through suffering (Heb. 2. 10) is indicated in the Scriptures. Something of this may be meant by the cryptic statement that was man's first ray of hope. "I will put enmity between . . . thy seed and her (the women's) seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3. 15). That text has been conventionalised into an oft-quoted saying: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head", and all Bible history and prophecy is a record of the development of this "seed" through the ages, and its final and complete victory over the "serpent" during the Millennium.

The next indication of the Divine purposes came when Abraham received his call to leave his native city and go into a land which God would show him. The Sumerians were the earliest civilised people of which records are available to us, and Sumerian Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, was a repository of learning and knowledge inherited from a still older civilisation of which no records have survived. It was from this people that Abraham came, and in the knowledge of their glorious past, when the true God was better known among them, that he left Ur to follow the leadings of that God. He eventually received the promise "I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee . . . and in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12. 2-3, 22. 18). By virtue of this declaration Abraham, and his posterity as yet unborn, were destined to become the means of fulfilling God's benevolent intentions to all mankind. Bible history records the vicissitudes that befell the descendants of Abraham until the promise, narrowed down to one specific line, that of Isaac and Jacob, began to bear fruit in the creation of a nation, the nation of Israel, at Mount Sinai in the fifteenth century B.C.

The significance of this event was profound. For the first time in history a nation was formally dedicated to God and commissioned to demonstrate the operation of Divine principles in national life, whilst being trained and fitted for the ultimate conveyance of God's blessings to all men. It could, in fact, have been the Kingdom of God upon earth in miniature. Israel as a nation came short of that ideal, and eventually lost its nationhood during the troubled period 600 B.C. to 135 A.D., but during the fifteen hundred years of its existence it acquired characteristics which peculiarly fitted many of its sons for God's future purposes in the administration of the world during the Millennium.

Two-thirds of the Old Testament was written during this period, and these books trace the gradual revelation of God's purpose regarding the coming of Messiah to deliver the world from the power of sin and death. At first the emphasis was laid upon the deliverance of Israel and Divine retribution upon Israel's enemies, but intermingled with this theme there was consciousness of Israel's mission to "declare His salvation to the ends of the earth." The Psalms of David show the first real hope of an ultimate Messianic Kingdom in which "righteousness shall flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the

moon endureth" (Psa. 72. 7), over which the Son of God will reign as King for the elimination of all evil (see the Second Psalm). Isaiah, the most farsighted of all the Hebrew prophets, described this Messianic kingdom as a time in which "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isa. 35. 1). He dwelt at length on the nature of the physical changes that will characterise that day, saying that God will create a new heavens and a new earth, a condition of things in which His elect will long enjoy the work of their hands. But in contrast to this sunlit picture of the Messianic Age Isaiah also drew another one of more sombre hue, that of Jehovah's "suffering servant" who by means of his suffering *now* becomes fitted to be God's minister *then*, an instructor and guide of the nations. In the supreme sense these prophecies were fulfilled in the person and life of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for men, and having been raised from the dead awaits the time to set up His Kingdom on earth, in fulfilment of all the Messianic prophecies and hopes of old. Isaiah spoke of both His Advents, the First, when He took upon Himself human nature in order to suffer and die as a man, and the Second, when He returns in the glory of His spiritual being to establish the Kingdom that is to restore the willing of mankind to human perfection and so complete the Divine purpose.

Jeremiah, two centuries later, described God's purpose concerning the Messianic Kingdom in terms of a covenant made between God and man. God is to put His law in the inward parts of men and write it in their hearts (Jer. 31. 33). All men will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Vs. 34; compare Isa. 11. 9). Daniel, nearly contemporary with Jeremiah, by virtue of his position as Prime Minister of Babylon brought into contact with the highest political movements of his day, stressed the essentially practical nature of the coming Kingdom, how that it is the world's only hope for peace and security; how that all existing forms of government and power must yield place to this universal empire of righteousness that is destined to rule the whole earth (Dan. chaps. 2 and 7). It was Daniel who saw clearly, more clearly, perhaps, than any before, that God must have trained and qualified men, thoroughly experienced in His laws and His righteousness, to administer that Kingdom, and this understanding had a profound effect upon later teaching regarding the Messianic Age. Ezekiel, the priest, a man gifted with prophetic vision of a very high order, described the forces of evil in the world hurling themselves in vain against the incoming

Kingdom, and failing, vanishing away, to be succeeded by the orderly and beneficent system of Millennial government which he symbolised in his description of a vast and fair Temple from which proceeded a River of Life to the nations. This was the theme which led directly to John's description of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation nearly seven centuries later.

Thus, then, does the Old Testament describe this coming Age of blessing which will abolish evil, undo the havoc wrought at the time of Eden, reconcile man to God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The work of converting the nations is to be effected by the "servant" which God has appointed and trained for that purpose, an essential factor in that training being the endurance of "suffering". In the end, death will be ended, the dead will have been raised, the righteous made perfect, sinners cut off, and sin no longer mar Divine creation.

The coming of Jesus Christ to earth threw a tremendous flood of light upon this almost purely material, earthly, expectation. Until only a few centuries before Christ there was no idea that God's plans included any kind of spiritual salvation, and it was expected that the "righteous" would all attain their ultimate destiny here on earth. The teaching of Jesus as understood and expounded by the apostles and other New Testament writers reveals another phase, a spiritual phase, to God's plan, and shows that some from among the nations during the period between the First and Second Advents are called to inherit a spiritual or heavenly state of being by becoming personal disciples of Jesus Christ. In the wisdom of God all such are trained and fitted by suffering, as were their Israelitish predecessors, that they might be qualified to occupy a supremely important position in the work of the Messianic Age. That position is one of association with Christ, in the spiritual glory of His exalted station as King over the earth during the Millennium. The New Testament thus shows that the "Seed of Abraham" through which all families of the earth are to be blessed has a three-fold aspect. In the first place, Christ Himself is the Seed. Associated with Him in the heavens, having the oversight of all that is done during the Age of Blessing is His Church, comprising the faithful consecrated disciples of this present Age; for "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3. 29). Associated with both Christ and His Church in service, but stationed upon the earth, is the restored and purified nation of Israel, administering the Kingdom arrangements. Within these three aspects the whole of the promise concerning the "Seed" is contained.

Additional to this new understanding of the "two salvations," the teaching of Jesus made plain another principle upon which the work of the coming Age must rest, *the necessity for conversion and intelligent, willing acceptance of the moral laws which God has ordained for the orderly conduct of life.* The Jews of the time shortly before Christ visualised the righteousness of the Kingdom as a formal and ritualistic righteousness, a state in which observance of the Mosaic Law was the indispensable and all-sufficient condition of eternal life. Jesus changed all that and described a system in which every man will be led to see for himself the rightness of righteousness and the sinfulness of sin, and make his choice accordingly. God seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4. 23). Hence Jesus called attention to the necessity of repentance and conversion to His way of life. For this reason He commissioned His disciples to become missionaries and preachers, calling men to repentance, and although they were thus bidden to preach in all the world for a witness during this Age, it is evident that this is only by way of preparation for the next Age, when that missionary work will receive an impetus such as could not be given whilst the world is still in bondage to sin and death.

The New Testament, then, completes the Old Testament picture by revealing God's purpose to "send Jesus Christ" (Act 3. 20), at His Second Advent, to establish an order of society upon earth in which all evil will be progressively eliminated, and men encouraged to repentance and conversion, and so to everlasting life. The resurrection of the dead to human life will take place at the commencement of this era, and thereafter death, except as the end of those who are incorrigibly determined to continue in evil, will cease. At the close of the period the formal Kingship of Christ over the nations will end, their probationary period having expired, and men will enter into full relationship with their Creator as sons of God, inhabiting and enjoying the earth to all eternity.

Friends who look to obtain the usual Scripture Art Calendar from Bro. Lardent will be glad to know that they are obtainable this year, as usual, at 2/9 each post free, from Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23. The paper is of rather better quality than was the case during the war years and the calendar has coloured Scripture illustrations with daily text.

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